

BOWDOIN COLLEGE

February 19, 2018

Institutional Response to Team Report

Bowdoin College is grateful to the team of evaluators who visited campus in November and met with Bowdoin's leadership, trustees, faculty, students and staff. The team's commitment to learning about Bowdoin and its mission, probing questions related to the nine standards, and dedication to the reaccreditation process resulted in a fruitful experience. We especially thank Carol Quillen, team chair, and Mark Johnson, who assisted Carol, for their superb leadership and adept management of the team.

The team report demonstrates the understanding of Bowdoin College that the team gained through their review of the self-study, supplementary materials and campus visit. The team accurately portrays the mission of Bowdoin and the guidance and purpose that the mission sets for Bowdoin's administration, faculty, staff and students. Here, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the report by providing updates and further clarification.

As the report accurately describes, planning at Bowdoin is accomplished by identifying priorities and establishing plans with those priorities in mind, pivoting when necessary. While this agile method requires significant communication and energy from senior administration, Bowdoin has found it more effective than a traditional strategic planning processes and more appropriate for today's rapidly changing world. A current example demonstrates President Rose's commitment to this method. To determine funding priorities for the next comprehensive fundraising campaign, President Rose conducted multiple conversations with faculty, staff, students and trustees. The venues included monthly faculty meetings, dedicated open meetings with faculty and staff, meetings with student government representatives, and an opportunity for all students to provide input through an online survey. These dialogs created opportunities for the community to shape future funding priorities and for President Rose to communicate his vision of the longer-term needs for the College.

Bowdoin has embarked on a comprehensive effort to create and sustain a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The process of having 100% of departments formally articulate their learning goals was accomplished through workshops and rich discussions about the importance of learning goals and, more specifically, the intended outcomes for majors when they leave with a Bowdoin diploma. Next steps include articulating assessment plans that map and link student opportunities to meet learning goals at all levels (course, program, institution) and that provide opportunities for faculty to discuss the evidence of student learning and make appropriate changes in their programs.

Bowdoin is well poised to build on this momentum for meaningful assessment. Members of the Office of the Dean for Academic Affairs understand the work of assessment and can leverage policies and practices to support this work. The associate deans are committed to the value of assessment, each within their own disciplinary perspective, enabling them to convey relevant examples across the curriculum. Since the November visit, the Dean for Academic Affairs has added an assessment section to the annual departmental reports. The Dean has asked the Curriculum Implementation Committee to consider making course learning goals and syllabi submission a requirement for course proposals, rather than an optional part of the submission. The decennial departmental reviews will also provide a cyclical means to review departmental learning goals and assessment plans. Finally, the Dean has engaged the Committee on Education Policy in a review of our general education requirements at the College to assess their effectiveness for student attainment of institutional learning goals.

The report states that institutional-level learning goals were absent from the self-study materials. We note here that Bowdoin's institutional-level learning goals are articulated in the *Statement on Liberal Education*¹ adopted by the faculty in 2004. The College will benefit from reiterating these goals in more visited documents, such as the Academic Handbook and orientation materials, so that they are more prominent and visible. The "Intentional Pedagogy" faculty workshops where all departments established student learning goals did reference our institutional learning goals and they informed the work at the program level. While the team commended us for strong indirect assessment of these goals through our annual Senior Survey, we agree, direct assessment of their achievement needs more development.

Direct assessment of institutional-level learning goals is most meaningful when conducted within the context of student coursework and in some cases, co-curricular activities. The "Intentional Pedagogy" workshops will continue to guide faculty in mapping and linking assignments and activities to learning goals at all levels. Opportunities for faculty to develop such plans and to discuss evidence of student learning in the major and in courses used to fulfill general education requirements will continue in Departmental meetings during the term and through faculty summer working groups.

At the time of the visit, Bowdoin was developing new methods of instituting faculty visits to others' classrooms to provide feedback on teaching. In the spring 2018 semester, the Center for Learning and Teaching launched two new programs (Teaching Mirrors² and Teaching Triangles³) that offer peer observation and formative assessment for faculty to hone their teaching skills.

¹ <https://www.bowdoin.edu/academics/curriculum/statement-liberal-education.shtml>

² <http://www.bowdoin.edu/center-learning-teaching/pdf/teaching-mirrors.pdf>

³ <http://www.bowdoin.edu/center-learning-teaching/pdf/teaching-triangles-overview.pdf>

The capacity for assessment extends beyond the Office for Academic Affairs to the Center for Learning and Teaching and the Office for Institutional Research, Analytics & Consulting. For example, the Center for Learning and Teaching is currently assessing the First Year Seminars and their effectiveness in teaching writing and the Office for Institutional Research, Analytics & Consulting is participating in an assessment of the revised BCQ (student course evaluation instrument).

Bowdoin's search to fill the newly created position of Senior Vice President for Inclusion & Diversity has been successful. Michael Reed will join Bowdoin on March 1st, after serving in similar roles at Williams and Dickinson Colleges and co-founding the Liberal Arts Diversity Officer (LADO) consortium. Coinciding with Michael Reed's arrival is Bowdoin's new Chief Information Officer, Michael Cato. For the first time in Bowdoin's history, two of the senior officers at the College will be individuals of color.

Reed will be joining the College at a time when many efforts are underway to support diversity and inclusion. Bowdoin is focused on attracting and supporting under-represented students through a multitude of efforts, such as, dedicated admissions recruiting with community-based organizations and Questbridge partners, comprehensive BASE faculty training for whole-student advising, the Bowdoin Science Scholars program during the January term, the THRIVE initiative which includes the Geoffrey Canada Scholars cohort summer bridge and leadership program, and comprehensive financial aid policies which include need-blind admission, grants to meet the full demonstrated financial need of the total cost of attendance, and stipends for unpaid internships. In tandem, Bowdoin is developing faculty capacity to create and leverage diverse and inclusive learning environments (e.g., CLT Faculty Fellows Program⁴) and to recruit and retain a diverse faculty (e.g., Romney Associates training). While the CLT Faculty Fellows program is new this year, the Romney Associates faculty training for hiring diverse faculty has been in place for three years and indications are that it has been effective. Since its introduction the percentage of faculty hired that identified as non-white and non-international has grown from 22% (13/60 new tenure track hires from '08-'14) to 42% (12/28 new tenure track hires from '15-'17).

Through the self-study process and the team's visit, Bowdoin, as a community, has been affirmed of our strengths and the important work ahead for us to improve as an institution. Bowdoin thanks the visiting team, the NEASC staff, and the commissioners for the time and effort in making the reaccreditation process a constructive experience for the entire campus.

⁴ <http://www.bowdoin.edu/center-learning-teaching/clt-fellows/>