



# SELF-STUDY

Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
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<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Self-Study Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
The Self Study Process.....	3
Self-Study Intended Outcomes .....	3
<b>Standard I: Mission and Goals .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Analysis .....	6
Partnerships Advancing the Mission .....	9
Periodic Assessment of Mission and Goals Ensure They Are Deliverable and Achievable .....	9
Conclusion.....	10
<b>Standard II: Ethics and Integrity .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Analysis .....	12
Creating a Climate of Mutual Respect at OCC.....	13
Transparency as the Key to Ethics at OCC.....	17
Assessment as Ethical Practice .....	22
Conclusion.....	24
<b>Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Analysis .....	26
Diverse Learning Experiences .....	27
Delivering and Assessing the Curriculum .....	32
Online Learning.....	34
Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom .....	36
Third-Party Providers.....	37
Conclusion.....	37
<b>Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Analysis .....	39
Prospective Students.....	39
Attending OCC .....	40
Student Success Beyond OCC .....	49
Conclusion.....	50
<b>Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Analysis .....	52
Academic Assessment.....	53
Institutional Effectiveness Redesign.....	55
Tools for Communication and Effective Use of Data .....	57
Conclusion.....	60

**Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement..... 61**

    Analysis ..... 62

        Resources to Support Operations ..... 63

        Long Term Planning..... 67

        The Budget ..... 69

        Responsible Fiscal Management and Assessment..... 72

    Conclusion..... 74

**Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration..... 75**

    Analysis ..... 76

        Shared Governance Structure ..... 76

        Board of Trustees..... 80

        Office of the President..... 81

        Assessment and Closing the Loop ..... 83

    Conclusion..... 84

**Self-Study Conclusion ..... 85**

## Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College's (OCC) primary strengths are its resilience, adaptability, and unity in working toward student success. The College has weathered many challenges since 2018 and will undoubtedly face more, but these qualities will allow it to survive and thrive in the future.

**Standard I** demonstrates how OCC stays relevant to the community by adapting to changing needs. It has made substantial progress in student persistence and associated success measures. OCC is, however, still working on attracting new student audiences as it enhances or expands transfer opportunities for students in Liberal Arts Programs.

**Standard II** makes clear OCC's foundational culture of ethics and integrity and its commitment to transparency and communication. The campus climate survey, the audit of student facing communications, and the re-writing of the Academic Rules to ensure clarity are evidence of this culture. The College is also working on increasing workforce diversity to better match student and community demographics as well as improving and maintaining its website for accuracy and ease of navigation. OCC has documented complaint/grievance processes for students organized by area/office, but it would benefit from a comprehensive, cross campus assessment of them.

**Standard III** outlines how OCC provides challenging, clear, and connected learning experiences across all degrees, certificates, and modalities of instruction, ensuring all learning experiences align with higher education expectations. The College has systems in place for assessment across programs, including mechanisms for reviewing and improving programs, as well as developing new ones in response to community need. The implementation of Guided Pathways and the Schools model has helped all students successfully navigate these programs. OCC is still working on increasing scheduling flexibility as it continues outreach to new audiences. Additionally, faculty are standardizing the syllabus audit model across departments to ensure fidelity to Course Outlines.

**Standard IV** illustrates how OCC is becoming more of a "*student ready*" college via holistic supports at every stage in the student lifecycle. Schools, Navigators, and the Financial Aid Service Center provide personalized student support, and OCC has implemented innovative, award-winning developmental education reforms. The College is working to minimize disruption caused by staff turnover in student-facing roles, especially Navigators.

**Standard V** shows the maturation of OCC's culture of assessment to its current state of continuous quality improvement, even as it continues to develop and innovate. Now that faculty have taken full ownership of assessment, they are working toward 100% compliance in terms of reporting assessment data.

**Standard VI** outlines OCC's strategic planning, clear budgeting, and ongoing assessment to manage resources effectively and align financial decisions with its Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan in an evidence-based, transparent manner. The College's commitment to student success is also supported by external funding and partnerships. It must, however, continue to adapt to demographic and funding shifts while enhancing student success, maintaining financial stability, and modernizing infrastructure.

**Standard VII** confirms OCC's governance structures and processes are unified toward the common goal of student success. These structures allow for active and engaged collaboration and are assessed for effectiveness as individual units, but OCC must work on assessing the holistic operation of governance, especially as it relates to communication-focused bodies.

See [E0\\_Acronyms](#) for an alphabetized list of acronyms used in the document and the index/crosswalk for each Standard, linking each piece of evidence to the relevant Criteria ([E1\\_IntroCrosswalk](#); [E2\\_Standard1Crosswalk](#); [E3\\_Standard2Crosswalk](#); [E4\\_Standard3Crosswalk](#); [E5\\_Standard4Crosswalk](#); [E6\\_Standard5Crosswalk](#); [E7\\_Standard6Crosswalk](#); [E8\\_Standard7Crosswalk](#); [E9\\_ConclusionCrosswalk](#)).

## Self-Study Introduction

Established in 1961, OCC is an accredited, two-year, comprehensive, community college located in Onondaga County, New York. OCC began instruction in three and one-half floors of the former L.C. Smith typewriter factory located in downtown Syracuse. Initial enrollment in September 1962 numbered approximately 500 students, with the first graduating class totaling 160.

While much has changed over the last 64 years, OCC's commitment to its students and community has not. Central New York is anchored by its population center, Onondaga County (pop. 476,516) and the City of Syracuse (Pop. 146,103), which has the highest poverty rate (29.6%) of places in New York State with a population of 65,000 or more and the highest child poverty rate (46.5%) in the nation. Moreover, poverty in Syracuse is concentrated by race with 39.3% of Black or African American residents and 41.5% of Hispanic or Latino residents living in poverty, whereas only 22.9% of White residents live in poverty ([E10\\_CensusData](#)). Educational attainment is the most reliable path out of poverty, and OCC gives all students affordable access to a high-quality education.

2015 marked a turning point for the College when it joined Achieving the Dream (ATD), giving it the tools it needed to effectively use data for decision-making. This led to a redesign of the student experience using a Guided Pathways model, starting in 2017. It formed the foundation of a 2018 Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant, *Guided Pathways to Success*, giving OCC resources to accelerate work in three primary areas ([E11\\_T3Narrative](#)):

1. Academic program mapping to successful transfer or career entry
2. Acceleration or elimination of developmental education in English, Reading, and Mathematics
3. Implementation of evidenced-based coaching (Bettinger & Baker 2011) at scale

Guided Pathways led to the design or redesign of 20 academic programs, 5 certificates, 6 microcredentials, and 5 non-credit certifications to focus on areas of greatest community need, especially healthcare and technology pathways; discontinuance of programs no longer serving community needs; elimination of developmental education in English and Reading ([E12\\_TETCYMar23](#); [E13\\_TETCYDec24](#)); redesigned advising, career services, and academic support for students within Schools/meta-majors; and launched the equity-focused *Box of Books* project, ensuring every student has access to required materials on the first day of classes.

Despite these innovations and successes, student attrition was a persistent challenge. OCC was in an enrollment crisis and needed yet more changes to successfully respond. Change at this scale is difficult. For example, during an administrative presentation to faculty, it was suggested the administration was giving a skewed impression of enrollment to justify unpopular decisions. The administration published the College's enrollment every year since inception, demonstrating that then-current enrollment was at its lowest rate since 1976 ([E14\\_EnrollmentSinceInception](#)). Data transparency and literacy was going to be a necessary component of a successful, campus-wide response.

Leaders from every area of the staff, faculty, and administration responded to the enrollment crisis by working together and ensuring stakeholders understood the economic issues and how each employee, regardless of job title, could make an impact. Through efforts in data sharing and transparency, as well as the renewed commitment to our common goal of serving students, OCC maintained its relevancy to the community and region.

As a result, College enrollment has grown over 14% since 2023, largely due to 10% gains in retention. The original Schools model was redesigned to include both faculty departments and staff serving students in specific majors. The number of student Navigators increased, reducing staff to student ratios from 1:300+ to 1:181 to the research-based 1:150 by Fall 2025 ([E15\\_IES2021, p. 122, Citation 67](#)). The College also reached broad faculty use of the EAB Starfish software, a software platform used to streamline communication between students, faculty, staff, and support services (known locally as Lazer Success).



Despite these successes, the budget was still a major concern. In Spring 2023, the union and administration negotiated a voluntary early retirement incentive (VERI) for eligible faculty. This augmented efforts, started in 2020, to move faculty from departments where they struggled to make teaching loads into administrative roles or, if credentialed, other academic departments with greater need. This helped ease the budget strain, avoiding retrenchments and layoffs. The VERI and voluntary movements gave faculty a sense of agency in a very uncertain time.

New, industry partners have also joined with OCC to deliver programs. Micron Technology, Inc. announced plans to invest \$100B in Onondaga County over the next 20 years to manufacture semiconductor memory chips and named OCC its community college partner in the training of the 9,000 technicians they anticipate hiring ([E16\\_MicronPartner](#)). OCC also has partnerships with Upstate Medical University, Loretto, Amazon, Lockheed Martin, and others.

OCC successfully adapted to its changing environment by enacting sweeping, organizational change facilitated through internal collaboration across all areas, with a shared commitment to student success and data driven decision making. While many challenges lay ahead, OCC's commitment to its mission, tradition of shared governance, prudent fiscal planning, engaged faculty and staff, and culture of assessment are all contributing to a bright future.

### The Self Study Process

This document was created through the shared efforts of the Re-Accreditation Steering Committee, the workgroups for each standard, and the Requirements of Affiliation and Evidence teams. OCC held several, interactive, campus-wide events in Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Fall 2025 to update and educate the campus on the re-accreditation process and also solicited feedback via surveys ([E17\\_ArtOfAccreditationPoster](#); [E18\\_ArtOfAccreditationPP](#); [E19\\_IPSurveyStaffFaculty](#)). Diverse student voices were collected via surveys throughout the process (one with 301 unique responses) as well as focus groups with the Student Government Association, Unity Day Student Committee, and the Council of Club ([E20\\_IPSurveyStudents](#); [E21\\_IPSurveyStudentResults](#); [E22\\_CouncilMeetingNotes](#)). Drafts were shared with different, campus groups for targeted feedback throughout the process and were shared with the entire campus community in Fall 2025. See the Self-Study Design for a complete committee structure, lines of inquiry, institutional priorities, and other information ([E23\\_FinalSSD](#)).

### Self-Study Intended Outcomes

1. Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Fourteenth Edition) and provides evidence by Standard in alignment with the Evidence Expectations by Standard.
2. Leverage periodic assessment through each standard, using assessment results for continuous improvement and innovation to ensure levels of quality for constituents and the attainment of the institution's priorities, mission, and goals.
3. Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process, including analysis of a range of data, including disaggregated data, to ensure students are appropriately served and institutional mission and goals are met.
4. Create, operationalize, and assess tactics to achieve the outcomes of the newly adopted Strategic Plan.

**Approved at College Leadership Committee on February 2, 2024.**

**Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria**

<b>Institutional Priorities</b>	<b>1.</b> Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	<b>2.</b> Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	<b>3.</b> Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	<b>4.</b> Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
<b>I. Mission and Goals</b>				
<b>II. Ethics and Integrity</b>				
<b>III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience</b>				
<b>IV. Support of the Student Experience</b>				
<b>V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment</b>				
<b>VI. Planning, Re-sources, and Institutional Improvement</b>				
<b>VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration</b>				

# STANDARD I

## Mission and Goals



### Standard I: Mission and Goals



*The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College's Mission + Vision and Values endure by remaining relevant to the community it serves. The current Strategic Plan, focusing on *persistence*, recognizes the College must evolve to continue to help students make progress toward their academic and professional goals.



## Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
I. Mission and Goals				

## Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria

1. How are OCC's Mission and Goals developed in an inclusive, collaborative, and transparent process that addresses all key stakeholders? **Criteria 1.a**
2. How are goals and objectives clearly defined, aligned with the Mission, and speak to internal and external stakeholders? **Criteria 2**
3. How are the Mission and Goals reviewed, assessed, and updated periodically to ensure the College's Strategic Priorities are relevant and achievable? **Criteria 4**
4. How are the Mission and Goals communicated broadly both internally and externally? **Criteria 1.f**
5. How well is the College demonstrating its commitment to its Core Values? How do we measure our Core Values? **Criteria 4**

## Analysis

OCC's local context provides the impetus for its Mission + Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan ([E24\\_AboutOCCWeb](#); [E25\\_StrategicPlanWeb](#)). Many in the community continue to be systematically underserved, and OCC provides a chance for economic and social mobility (see Introduction). Originally developed in 2015, the current Mission + Vision and associated Values have remained relevant. OCC remains committed to liberal arts education, preparation for transfer, and delivering programs directly aligned with in demand careers, expanding career and technical programs to meet community needs.

Starting Fall 2014, then President Casey Crabill assigned the Programs and Academic Support Committee (a standing committee of the College Leadership Council, see S7) to review the mission in preparation for the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan ([E26\\_MissionSPTimeline14-16](#)). The committee surveyed the campus about the then-current statement. The survey had 433 respondents, representing a demographically diverse audience of students, full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, and administrators. While 72.4% agreed or strongly agreed (increasing to 91.4% when "neutral" was excluded) the Mission "*accurately reflect[ed] the College's purpose, essential functions, and reason for existence,*" qualitative analysis showed a strong preference for making the language more accessible to everyone in the community ([E27\\_MissionPASreport1-15](#); [E28\\_MissionCLC4-15](#)). In response, the College Leadership Committee created the current version of the Mission + Vision and Values. The statements were formally approved in 2016 by the Board of Trustees (BoT) and were again approved with the updated Strategic Plan in 2023 ([E29\\_MissionSP16](#); [E30\\_BOT16-82](#); [E31\\_BOT23-71](#)).

## Mission

Onondaga Community College is Central New York's partner in education for success. Achieving our mission through:

- Student Access, Retention, Completion, Transfer
- Academic Excellence
- Student Engagement and Support
- Career and Workforce Advancement
- Responsible Stewardship of Resources
- Community Engagement

## Vision

Onondaga Community College will be recognized as a dynamic leader in higher education and as one of the nation's most innovative community colleges.

## Core Values

- **Student First** – Keep students at the center of all we do.
- **Learning** – Embrace the lifelong pursuit of knowledge and free expression of ideas in a safe environment to advance the individual and the community.
- **Excellence** – Strive for continual improvement and innovation to seek our highest potential.
- **Diversity** – Enrich learning through an inclusive campus environment that respects human dignity and difference.
- **Community** – Foster active and productive participation in building a mutually supportive environment for members of the campus and broader communities.
- **Responsibility** – Build a culture of integrity and accountability to develop both self and others.

The Mission + Vision underpin communications with students, staff, and community members ([E32\\_EmployeeHandbook](#); [E33\\_Viewbook](#)). They are available on the public website in multiple places, such as the About page as well as in the Strategic Plan ([E24](#); [E34\\_StrategicPlan23-28](#)). Certain promotional materials, like the Executive Search Profile used in 2021, also feature it ([E35\\_PresidentSearch](#)).

Mission + Vision impact everything on campus, explicitly or implicitly. For example, the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation's travel and training grant requires applicants to connect the funding request to "the College's core mission" ([E36\\_CTLITravelForm](#)). In Liberal Arts 101, a requirement for all students in OCC's Humanities and Social Sciences Program, students explore the value and purpose of a liberal arts education, often using OCC's Mission + Vision as part of this work. ([E37\\_LBLWeb](#); [E38\\_LBL101](#)).

President Warren Hilton arrived in July of 2022 and determined updating the strategic plan took priority over reviewing the Mission + Vision and Values to allow the College to maintain progress in key areas. Pres. Hilton established a Strategic Planning Task Force in November 2022, composed of one student, four faculty members (approved by the Faculty Senate), three professional administrators, one staff member, and two vice-presidents. The Task Force was charged with crafting a new strategic plan that would be ready for implementation at the start of Fall 2023. Alla Breve Consulting was hired to assist with the process because of the demanding timeline ([E39\\_StrategicPlanConsultant](#)).

The Strategic Planning Task Force examined trends in enrollment, retention, graduation and long-term plans ([E40\\_SEMPlan](#); [E41\\_DEIPlan17-22](#); [E42\\_FacilitiesPlan](#)). Alla Breve organized focus groups and interviews with internal and external stakeholders with a broad range of perspectives, including students, faculty, staff, Pre-K-12 leaders and educators, and a broad spectrum of community members ([E43\\_StrategicPlanProcessWeb](#)). The Task Force identified *Persistence* as the primary focus of the Strategic Plan, supported by three, key areas: 1. academic success, 2. student experience, and 3. communication. As stated on page 9 of the Strategic Plan, "*Persistence was selected as the primary focus [...] to ensure the college's systems, processes, and support*

*services [...] enable students to achieve their goals despite challenges that come their way.”* The Plan understands students as holistic beings with unique strengths and challenges (E34).

Efficient development of the Strategic Plan could not have happened without robust shared governance systems (E44\_GovOrgNov2025). The Task Force solicited feedback from Expanded Executive Council (E45\_StrategicPlanEEC) and the entire College starting in August 2023 with an option for anonymous feedback (E46\_StrategicPlanForm). It was discussed in several different venues, e.g. Faculty Plenary, the College Leadership Council, and open Campus forums (E47\_EmailSP23; E48\_Plenary23; E49\_CLCMtg9-23; E50\_CLCMinutes9-23). The Task Force made its final presentation to the Board of Trustees (BoT) in September 2023, and the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan was approved in November 2023 (E51\_StrategicPlanBOT; E31). Following BoT approval, the Plan was communicated to the campus community through the website, forums facilitated by Task Force members, and at the Spring 2024 Faculty Plenary (E34; E25).

The Strategic Plan is being operationalized through the development and implementation of both campus-wide and functional-area initiatives using assessment and data-informed decision making. Franklin Covey's 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX), a method to improve an organization's strategic execution, was adopted to support these efforts in Fall 2024 (E52\_4DXEmail24; E53\_EmailOpPlansKPIs). All areas use data and assessment results to drive decision making, e.g. the 2023-2028 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Master Plan and the intentional recruiting of employees to reflect community demographics (E54\_DEIPlan23-28; E55\_HRData; E56\_DEIBCouncilStudy).

OCC's Mission + Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan impact every aspect of the institution. For example, all funding requests and approvals are based upon their connection to these foundational documents (E57\_OCCBudgetBooks21-25). When the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation considers funding for full-time and post-probationary, adjunct faculty and staff pursuing creative or scholarly activities, applicants must explain how the results will benefit OCC and be brought “back home” (E36). The Faculty Collective Bargaining agreement provides for sabbatical leave of one or two semesters for “study, formal education, research, writing, travel, and/or other experience of professional value, in each instance relating to the applicant's discipline or for the purpose of increasing the recipient's value to the College” (E58\_FacultyCBA24-28, p.23). Since 2019, two OCC full time faculty have won the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity (E59\_ChancellorsAward). The thread that runs through all OCC's mechanisms for supporting scholarly and creative work is that the College, and ultimately its students, benefit. In all cases, the goal is to steward resources responsibly while supporting institutional priorities. Standard VI discusses the budgetary process.

Successfully operationalizing strategic goals depends on a comprehensive understanding of students' lived experiences, needs, and aspirations. Demographic data combined with questions on the institutional application for admission (E60\_OCCApplication) and Register NOW form (E61\_RegisterNow) provide that information. For example, the application asks students if they received extra support in high school (504/IEP), and those who answer yes receive outreach from the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR). The Register NOW form collects information on student availability and preference to create customized schedules. See Standard IV for details on Register NOW.

Strategic planning and related efforts led to an 11.3% increase in continuing student enrollment from Fall 2022 to Fall 2024. Retention of matriculated, underrepresented minority students rose from 41% in Fall 2021 to 44% in Fall 2023 (E62\_OCCbythe#s). Standard IV contains an in-depth discussion of student enrollment, graduation, and transfer trends. Stronger student retention has kept overall student enrollment stable, allowing the College to fulfill its mission while maintaining fiscal stability. OCC, however, must attract new audiences, such as adult learners, online students, and non-credit workforce students. See Standard IV for a discussion of how OCC is working toward this goal.

### Partnerships Advancing the Mission

OCC advances its mission to serve the community by expanding collaborations with employers, public workforce agencies and programs, and community-based organizations to create stronger career pathways ([E63\\_CommunityReport](#)). Partnerships include the State University of New York (SUNY) HealthCARES Consortium, SUNY Semiconductor education and training, and growing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs delivered in collaboration with employers, SUNY, and the Manufacturers Association of New York ([E64\\_HealthCARESWeb](#); [E65\\_EquipTechDACUM](#); [E66\\_EmployerPanel](#)). In addition to these career pathways, OCC has expanded and developed services to meet students' holistic needs. These include:

- Establishing OCC's Counseling and Community Care Hub to connect students to on and off-campus resources ([E67\\_CCHResourceGuide](#)),
- Launching the English Language Institute and coordinating services with community partners ([E68\\_ELIPresentation](#)), and
- Bringing the Syracuse Community Health Center on campus, providing affordable medical care for residential and commuter students, employees, and the Syracuse community ([E69\\_SCHCUsage3-25](#)).

Local industry and employers inform curricular and co-curricular development and program updates in healthcare and technology disciplines through service on Program Advisory Committees, employer panels, and contributions to Developing A Curriculum (DACUM) studies to identify and validate in-demand competencies. Examples of these programs include OCC's Supply Chain Management A.A.S., the new Electromechanical Technology Certificate and A.A.S. (developed in collaboration with Micron and other industry partners), the Heavy/Commercial Equipment Technician program, and Amazon's Career Choice program ([E70\\_AdvisoryMtg](#); [E71\\_HCETechDACUM](#); [E72\\_SupplyChainFeasibility](#); [E73\\_AmazonCareerChoice](#); [E74\\_FinancialAudits](#)). OCC partners with SUNY Upstate Medical University (Upstate), the largest employer in central New York, to create seamless student pathways while filling critical employment needs in the region. It jointly offers the Paramedic, A.A.S. program in which students take coursework at both OCC and SUNY Upstate, combining rigorous academic coursework with hands on training ([E75\\_ParamedicWeb](#)). Other examples of seamless transfer pathways are the Health Sciences A.S. program, collaboratively built for direct transfer to the Medical Imaging, Radiation Therapy, and Respiratory Therapy programs at Upstate and the Laboratory Science A.S., built at the request of Upstate to help expand biosciences research capacity in Central New York ([E76\\_HealthSciencesWeb](#)).

OCC also partners with area secondary schools to support credit and degree attainment for their students. These partnerships include College Credit Now, Early OCC, OCC Advantage, Pathways in Technology Early College High School, Liberty Partnership Program, SAT Prep, Interactive Video Classroom Program, Smart Scholars, and Success Academy ([E77\\_EarlyCollegeWeb](#)).

### Periodic Assessment of Mission and Goals Ensure They Are Deliverable and Achievable

OCC assessed its Mission + Vision and Values statements to ensure alignment with core principles and priorities in 2015, 2018, and 2025 (see above for details). Previously facilitated through the Executive Council (EC), the College Leadership Council (CLC) assumed responsibility for periodic assessment of the Mission + Vision in March 2025, with the BoT making the ultimate decision as to how these documents best serve the College ([E78\\_StrategicPlanCheckIn2019](#); [E79\\_CLCNewsLtJan25](#); [E80\\_CLCNewsLtMar25](#); [E81\\_MissionSurvey25](#)). As College Policy B2: Strategic Planning, Section VII states: *"Stakeholders are encouraged to continually review the College's Strategic Plan, considering whether specific revisions [...] may be warranted within their respective areas of responsibility or concern, and to submit suggested revisions for review"* ([E82\\_PolicyB2](#)). For example, the BoT reviewed the Strategic Plan and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in May 2025, and the Institutional Effectiveness committee was charged with a mid-point review of the Strategic Plan and KPI ([E83\\_StrategicPlanKPIs](#); [E84\\_StrategicPlanUpdate](#); [E85\\_IWeb](#)).

KPIs were developed to track progress toward Strategic Plan goals using trend analysis and achievement data and impact on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Reviews of proposed KPIs were completed by multiple shared

governance bodies, including the CLC, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and the BoT. While their measures may change over time, the KPIs themselves serve as benchmarks for success across all areas of the College ([E86\\_IEPlan25](#); [E54](#)).

To meet KPIs, each department aligns its work with the Strategic Plan by identifying one to three departmental goals using the Strategic Plan Operational Plan template. These goals, developed in consultation with their respective vice president (VP), include specific actions, trackable progress, and measurable outcomes ([E87\\_SampleOpsPlans](#)). Departments report progress and outcomes to their VP in January and June of each year. The Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research (IPAR) team collects and analyzes these reports annually to provide a comprehensive overview at the Division level of OCC's progress achieving its strategic goals ([E88\\_OpPlanFin](#); [E89\\_OpPlanASA](#)). The VP of IPAR reviews the plans, provides feedback directly to VPs, and summarizes them for EC, Expanded EC, and the CLC.

In addition to assessing the Strategic Plan, assessments of academic and programmatic efforts inform institutional decision-making (see Standard V). Programmatic assessments are supplemented by enrollment, retention, completion, and other data ([E90\\_IPEDSSummary](#); [E62](#); [E91\\_CurrentEnrollment](#); [E92\\_GradWages](#)). Assessments of these kinds led to enhancing services provided by the Counseling and Community Care Hub, developing a cleanroom lab for advanced manufacturing, and remodeling Ferrante Hall to meet the needs of future healthcare students ([E74](#)).

### Conclusion

OCC has demonstrated its ability to change and will continue to adapt as circumstances dictate. No matter what the future brings, the goal remains clear: to be Central New York's trusted partner in education, empowering students to achieve their highest potential and strengthening the communities it serves.

OCC's Mission + Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan are reflected in the daily thoughts and actions of the campus community. Transparent communication and campus-wide collaboration ensure the Strategic Plan functions as a living framework, guiding both short and long-term goals, and its implementation is delivering results at every level.

Current Strengths	<b>1.</b> Demonstrates flexibility and innovation in adapting to a changing educational landscape and the needs of its local community (e.g. business and industry partnerships).	<b>Criteria 1.a,</b> <b>Criteria 1.b</b>
	<b>2.</b> Has made substantial progress in student persistence and, as a result, increased student success metrics.	<b>Criteria 3.a</b>
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	<b>1.</b> Enhance or expand transfer pathway opportunities for Liberal Arts programs.	<b>Criteria 3.a</b>
	<b>2.</b> Attract new student audiences.	<b>Criteria 3.b</b>



# STANDARD II

## Ethics and Integrity






### Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

*Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College (OCC) upholds its Mission + Vision through a culture of ethics and integrity. OCC has long prioritized honesty, fairness, and transparency, delivering on its promises while improving its assessment of policies and practices, making the results comprehensible to stakeholders.

<b>Institutional Priorities</b>	<b>1.</b> Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	<b>2.</b> Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	<b>3.</b> Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	<b>4.</b> Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
<b>II. Ethics and Integrity</b>				

### Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria

- How are contracts honored and monitored at all levels of the College (including third parties and unions) with a demonstrated avoidance of conflict of interest and timely, formal grievance policies for fairness and impartiality? How does OCC demonstrate a commitment to fairness and impartiality in these procedures across all employee classifications? **Criteria 2, Criteria 3, Cv 4**
- How and in what ways does OCC demonstrate truth and honesty across all audiences and groups? **Criteria 6**
- To what extent does OCC demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion, meeting the wide-ranging needs of its varied constituents, to ensure an authentic sense of belonging for students, faculty, employees, and other campus groups? **Criteria 2, Criteria 5, Criteria 7.a**
- What mechanisms exist to ensure OCC's commitment to, and the responsible practice of, academic integrity, academic freedom, and the freedom of expression and speech? **Criteria 1**
- How does OCC demonstrate a commitment to financial responsibility and transparency in its marketing and communication with students, prospective students, and their families? **Criteria 6, Criteria 7.b, Criteria 7.c**

### Analysis

OCC gives the people of this region, many of whom are historically underserved (see Introduction), tools for success and a way out of poverty through education. The Core Values informing OCC's day-to-day operations and long-term planning are predicated on ethics and integrity. OCC cannot create an environment that puts students first, celebrates diversity, creates an inclusive community, and builds a *"culture of integrity and accountability to develop both self and others"* without living these concepts at every turn. This requires giving students tools to act ethically, as well as creating an environment that guides ethical choice-making. This can be explicitly seen in OCC's Values as well as in Strategic Plan goal 2, Student Experience, and goal 3, Communication ([E24\\_AboutOCCWeb](#); [E34\\_StrategicPlan23-28](#), p. 11-12).

Examples of ethics and integrity in action are found throughout the campus. The Centralized Policy Manual outlines all institutional policies ([E93\\_PolicyManual](#)). For example, OCC adheres to all copyright laws and regulations, including the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and the Copyright Act of 1976. The Centralized Policy Manual, the Faculty Handbook, and SUNY policies all document how OCC protects copyrighted material and minimizes the risk of infringement ([E94\\_SUNYCopyrightPolicy](#); [E95\\_FctyHandbookSect3](#), p. 8). Other policies address issues such as peer-to-peer file sharing, fair use, and copyright ownership of faculty and staff creative works. ([E96\\_CopyrightPolicyL2](#); [E97\\_TrademarkUsePolicyL3](#); [E98\\_ExportLawsPolicyL4](#); [E99\\_CreativeWorksPolicyL1](#)). Effective Fall 2026, SUNY's Information Literacy Core Competency will require students to demonstrate ethical ways to use emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. OCC's English discipline modified the learning outcomes for its first-year composition course to explicitly require this and partnered with Coulter Library to develop modular resources for instructors ([E100\\_ENG103ChangeForm](#); [E101\\_ENG103InfoLitAI](#)). In Fall 2024, the Faculty Senate President gave a presentation on academic freedom in the context of the presidential election to reinforce these core principles and give faculty practical, classroom tools ([E102\\_FA24Plenary](#)).

OCC supports academic and intellectual freedom in and out of the classroom. In terms of classroom activities, the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement outline the policy on Academic Freedom ([E95, p. 4](#); [E58\\_FacultyCBA24-28, p. 6](#)). It is OCC's policy

*to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching and research. In the exercise of this freedom, the faculty member may, without limitation, discuss his own subject in the classroom [...]*

Outside the classroom, OCC has policies on expressive activity and academic freedom for students, staff, and community members while on campus ([E103\\_FreeSpeechPolicyD10](#); [E104\\_FreedomOfExpression](#); [E105\\_1stAmendmentFlyers](#)). OCC wants community members to exercise their rights to freedom of speech and free expression safely and without disruption to learning or campus operations. To support this, the College created the First Amendment Support Team in September 2024; members are trained in relevant OCC policies and procedures and act as liaisons between the College and anyone engaged in expressive activity on campus ([E106\\_FASTPolicyD26](#)).

A key example of ethics in action is the re-writing of the Academic Rules for clarity and ease of student use. In 2022, a mixed faculty and administrative committee reviewed the Academic Rules to improve documentation of academic integrity issues, revising Academic Rule IV, Academic Dishonesty. This work evolved into a review of all Academic rules through Scholastic Standards, a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, and implementation of the revised rules in August 2025. OCC now has a professor-initiated Academic Dishonesty Form, along with a process for students to report other academic concerns to department chairs ([E107\\_AcadRuleVI](#)). These new rules aim to standardize reporting and promote transparency. Once submitted, the information resides in a database, facilitating the identification of trends as well as simplifying record keeping.

In addition to updating content, faculty were conscious of making the language and format more accessible. For example, Rule II. Academic Forgiveness went from four dense paragraphs of 272 words to 192 words split into clear sections and bullet points ([E108\\_AcademicForgivenessRev](#)). All Academic Rules were re-written for a student audience who may themselves not be familiar with academic jargon and may not have a support person who is.

OCC also has policies and procedures for students who decide that they need to withdraw from a class, take a leave of absence, or withdraw from the College and attempts to educate students throughout the process and help them make informed decisions ([E109\\_WithdrawalPolicyC14](#); [E110\\_TitleIVWeb](#)). The Drop/Withdrawal Request page states, "Before submitting this form, students are strongly encouraged to speak with both a Financial Aid representative and their assigned Navigator to understand the impacts that dropping a course may have on their financial aid eligibility and academic progress" ([E111\\_DropRequest](#)).

### **Creating a Climate of Mutual Respect at OCC Students**

OCC has not yet achieved parity of outcomes for all student demographics, but policies, services, and programs are in place to promote equity and inclusion. Students from a wide range of backgrounds attend OCC, and the College works to ensure they feel welcomed and supported. Formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) assessments go back as far as 2015, and DEI is an integral part of the College's Values, Mission + Vision, and Strategic Plan ([E112\\_IPEDSEnroll](#)). Assessment results disaggregated by demographic are integrated into the Strategic Plan, Enrollment Plan, and the DEI Master Plan. The Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research page as well as the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Council's page make DEI focused assessment results available to the campus community ([E113\\_IPARSurveysWeb](#); [E114\\_DEIAssessmentWeb](#)). OCC has completed internal assessments like *Qualitative Study: The Lived Experiences of OCC Students of Color*, as well as instruments like the Diverse Learning Environments Survey (2015, 2019), and the ViewFinder DEI Campus Climate Survey (2024), with participants expressing higher satisfaction with the College's overall services, support systems, physical health resources, interactions with staff and administrators, and classroom experiences than peers at comparable institutions ([E115\\_DiverseLearningSurvey](#); [E56\\_DEIBCouncilStudy](#); [E116\\_ViewFinderDEISurvey, p. 15](#)).

Findings from these surveys help shape the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Master Plan, and improve current practices to foster a sense of belonging among students. For example, the Diverse Learning Environments Survey, 2019, revealed White students feel a greater sense of belonging and academic validation than the College's underrepresented minority and LGBTQ+ students; in the *Qualitative Study [...]*, students described how their college experience was affected by their relationships with peers and the level of belonging and connectedness they felt, especially through student clubs and specialized programs ([E54\\_DEIPlan23-28, p.8-9, 10](#)). One of the DEI Plan's five goals directly shaped by these assessments is "Goal 3. Improve campus culture relative to inclusion, equity, acceptance, and respect for human dignity through diversity awareness programs and activities," with the stated strategy of "Expand[ing] student clubs focused on advancing awareness of diverse ethnic and underrepresented populations. (Baseline data: 2022-23, N=5 active clubs)" (p.15-16).

Programing like Student Conversation Circles and Unity Day (started 2015), both recognized by the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity and the National Diversity Council, occur every semester and provide opportunities for students to share experiences, challenge biases, and learn from one another ([E117\\_ConvCirclesFA25; E118\\_UnityDayWeb](#)). In Fall of 2025, for example, 95% of the 349 responses indicated a high or moderate increase in "their appreciation for the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion at OCC" ([E119\\_UnityDaySurvey; E120\\_UnitySurveyResults](#)). Student Conversation Circle participants complete pre- and post- self-assessments measuring growth in several areas, such as their comfort in discussing race-related issues and willingness to advocate for others ([E121\\_ConvCirclesSelfAssessments](#)).

OCC supports this DEI work through its Equity Statement, reinforcing its commitment to promoting equitable policies and practices while fostering an inclusive environment ([E122\\_StatementOnEquity](#)). Endorsed by all internal stakeholders and adopted by the OCC Board of Trustees in 2021, it states,

*We are invested in addressing the imbalances of power that contribute to patterns of exclusion and disparities in access to education, retention, and completion [...] It is our priority to ensure our students and employees receive access to the resources they need to thrive and achieve their goals [...] we collectively affirm equity as not only an institutional value, but our promise.*

Two notable examples of this promise in action are the Meg O'Connell Center for Social Justice and Community Impact, focusing on community engaged learning, and the Office for Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion, hosting student events and programming ([E123\\_SJScholars](#)). In terms of professional development, OCC hosted an in-person *Culture of Dignity* training in Fall 2022 (27 faculty and staff completed) and offered related, asynchronous opportunities through ACUE's *Culture of Belonging* module in Spring 2023 (23 faculty completed) ([E124\\_CoBApprovalTitleIII; E125\\_CredlyCoDBadge; E126\\_CoDBadgeEarners; E127\\_ACUEcompleters](#)).

Another aspect of ethics and integrity is ensuring institutional responsiveness to student concerns and complaints. As mentioned above, the Academic Rules, found in the College Catalog, were revised to increase transparency and student understanding, and there is a centralized collection of policies and forms available through the student landing page ([E128\\_AcademicRulesWeb; E129\\_StudentHomeWeb; E130\\_StudentBillOfRights](#)). There is also a dedicated page with information specific to students who reside outside of New York and are taking online classes at OCC ([E131\\_NCSARAComplaintWeb](#)). Policy A4 describes how a student can dispute final course grades, and Academic Rule IV outlines the appeals process for students facing academic integrity violations ([E132\\_FinalGradeDisputePolicyA4; E133\\_AcademicDishonesty](#)). Policy B18, the Complaint and Grievance Policy, is the primary mechanism for addressing student complaints related to discrimination and harassment, also providing contact information for external agencies, such as the New York State Division of Human Rights. ([E134\\_ComplaintsPolicyB18; E135\\_NYSEDComplaintProcess](#)). Recognizing the unique ways hate/bias behavior impact the community, OCC established a Bias Response Team (BRT) in 2021. The BRT does not replace any of formal procedures and protocols but reaches out to impacted students, supporting and referring them to campus or other resources ([E136\\_BiasResponseWeb](#)). Together, these policies and procedures provide distinct pathways tailored to different types of student concerns ([E137\\_ComplaintsWeb](#)).



Concerns touching on civil rights issues such as Title VI, Title IX, or other legal compliance areas are escalated by the department chair and/or dean to the appropriate coordinator or forum. A department chair has the discretion to elevate a concern to the dean's level for serious or recurrent patterns of behavior. The Annual Campus Security Report lists 0 hate/bias crimes reported on OCC's main campus or OCC@Liverpool in 2021, 2022, and 2023 (note, the report only includes incidents with Campus Safety involvement or notification) ([E138\\_SecurityReport, p. 35 & 37](#)).

Students contribute to creating a climate of mutual respect through Student Government Association (SGA) and clubs. The SGA president and vice president have as part of their duties the gathering of *"information related to the student experience through open forums to give students opportunities to voice their views and concerns,"* and SGA officer positions include chairs of Adult Student Success and Inclusion and Support ([E139\\_SGABylaws, p. 3](#)).

## Employees

Post-Covid, the landscape of higher education was very uncertain, and that uncertainty was felt at OCC every day. The College underwent major structural and curricular re-organizations, departures of personnel, consolidations of job duties, etc. Not all decisions by the administration were communicated with clear rationales, and when they were, there was not always consensus amongst employees. Given the far-reaching campus changes in response to the enrollment downturn, a fair and impartial assessment of the campus climate was necessary. In Fall 2022, the President assigned a work group to identify a vendor to administer a campus-wide, climate survey. The work group included representatives from all campus constituencies, including a student who was, unfortunately, not able to participate. The workgroup presented recommendations, and the Executive Council ultimately selected the Belk Center at North Carolina State and their PACE survey. The survey was sent to all full and part-time, non-student employees and had a 47.6% response rate (360 out of 756) ([E140\\_PACEInviteEmail](#)). The Director of Employee and Labor Relations then led the workgroup in its analysis of results and subsequent recommendations. All survey results are published on IPAR's web page with identifiers redacted from qualitative responses. Information sessions about the results were held in person and online for employees in April 2025 ([E141\\_PACEQualitativeReport](#); [E142\\_PACEInstitutionalStructure](#); [E143\\_PACEReportDEI](#); [E144\\_PACEPresentationCLC](#); [E140](#)).

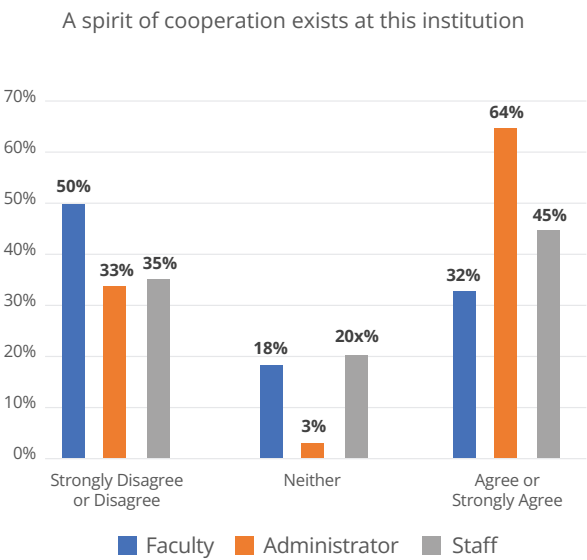
Employees rated Teamwork highest, followed by Student Focus and Supervisory Relationships, with Institutional Structure scoring significantly lower. This suggests relative strength and trust within immediate work units and a shared focus on students, evidenced by high agreement that supervisors express confidence in employees (approx. 81%), are open to ideas (approx. 76%), and that employees have opportunities for creativity (approx. 78%). Additionally, while the survey showed general agreement that the institution promotes diversity (60% agree/strongly agree), qualitative feedback presented a more complex view, including praise for DEI efforts but also concerns about perceived inequities, the limited scope of DEI initiatives, and potential gaps between values and practice.

IPEDS data from 2018 to 2024 showing changes in the representation of staff and faculty provides some context for the concerns around DEI in the PACE qualitative feedback ([E55\\_HRDData](#)). Gender percentages over time have been relatively even and stable, while racial diversity is minimal and has declined significantly since 2018. OCC experienced considerable faculty attrition during COVID and as part of the voluntary early retirement incentive, including among people of color. Many of these positions were vacated permanently; others are still in the process of being filled. Current faculty hiring shows a continuing commitment to diversity (see below for detailed discussion).

Also concerning are the scores from PACE's Institutional Structure category, particularly *"appropriate organization"* (only 28% agree/strongly agree), *"employee influence"* (29% agree/strongly agree), *"information sharing"* (31% agree/strongly agree), and *"decision-making"* (32% agree/strongly agree). Cumulatively, these show challenges related to broader institutional climate and trust. Perceptions of institutional cooperation also varied significantly by employee group ([E144](#)).



EMPLOYEES HAVE DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE



A spirit of cooperation exists at this institution	
Employee Group	Mean
Faculty	2.572
Administrator	3.224
Staff	3.085
Overall	2.927

The survey revealed, however, that some fundamentals are sound. For example, statement 3, “There is respect among employees at the college” had a mean score of 3.096. Statement 13, “The college is a welcoming environment for individuals of diverse backgrounds (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, ability, economic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious beliefs)” has a mean score of 3.869, the highest of all statements. Statement 14, “People from all backgrounds are treated equitably” has a mean score of 3.564. All scores are on a 5-point scale (E145\_PACECustomReport, p. 6-7).

In brief, the survey shows OCC’s constituents were siloed into administration, faculty, and non-instructional staff. Each group thought it was doing what was best for students but mistrusted the motives of the others. While OCC is now well organized to do its work, the process to get here was difficult and not always clear to those impacted by it. Trust appeared to be the primary issue underlying many other concerns. The PACE survey will be administered every 3 years moving forward, supplementing the regular administration of the Post-Graduate and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (see Standard III) for an overall sense of the campus climate from all constituents (E146\_CCSSEReport; E113; E147\_GradSurveyReport).

The original work group, charged with finding ways to address the issues raised through PACE, recommended *Leading At the Speed of Trust* by FranklinCovey as a starting point. The first iteration of the workshop in January 2025 included Executive Council, Expanded Executive Council, College Leadership Council, future training facilitators, and members of the campus climate workgroup. The training presupposes that when trust is high communication, creativity, and engagement improve and provides a common vocabulary to discuss and build trust. Select OCC staff and faculty have been trained to deliver it, and all current campus leaders, supervisors, and administrators will take the training by the end of Spring 2026 (E148\_TrustFacilitatorPP; E149\_PACEResultsSampleComm; E150\_PACEWorkgroupMinutes; E151\_PACEWorkgroupAgenda; E152\_PACESupervisoryRelations; E153\_PACERecommendations). The training is best facilitated in small groups to enable maximum interaction. Facilitators conducted training in May 2025, two are scheduled for December 2025, and sessions will be held monthly during Spring 2026.

While these efforts will take time to bear fruit, more immediate steps have been taken and will continue or be enhanced. For example, the CFO presents at faculty plenaries to discuss the College’s financial outlook, a concern indicated in the survey results. Additionally, in direct response to the PACE survey results, the President

added language to his monthly updates explaining the importance of communication at OCC. The updates highlight important accomplishments, initiatives, and ongoing projects ([E154\\_PresHiltonMonthlyEmailEx](#)). The Core Values of Community and Responsibility (points 5 and 6) that help shape OCC are evident in these and similar efforts to assess the workplace and ‘close the loop’ with deliberate action ([E24](#)).

When employee complaints or concerns do arise, the OCC Employee Handbook outlines different reporting methods ([E32\\_EmployeeHandbook](#), p. 8-9). In the case of discrimination or harassment, employees can report verbally or in writing to supervisors, the Title IX Coordinator, or HR, with supervisors mandated to report incidents to HR ([E155\\_ComplaintForms](#); [E156\\_TitleIXWeb](#); [E137](#); [E134](#)). For general workplace concerns, the Open Door Policy encourages discussion with a supervisor, then escalation if needed, emphasizing openness but not replacing formal grievance procedures ([E32](#), p.9). As of Summer 2025, OCC also has a SUNY mandated Title VI coordinator who can receive complaints.

The OCC Federation of Teachers and Administrators, AFT, NYSUT, Local 1845 contract outlines policies for faculty and professional administrators ([E58](#), p. 67-68; [E157\\_ProfAdminCBA24-28](#), p. 30-32). The Union grievance committee facilitates resolution of employee complaints regarding alleged violations, misinterpretations, or inequitable applications of the collective bargaining agreement ([E158\\_NYSUTMeetingMinutes](#)). The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) union at OCC has separate processes for discipline-related grievances and contractual grievances ([E159\\_CSEAContract23-26](#), p. 37-42). Fourteen grievances have been received since 2022, with all resolved in 2022, 2023, 2024, and, as of this writing, two resolved and two pending in 2025. These grievances come from the faculty, professional administrators, and CSEA members. Grievance records are kept as both digitally and as secured hardcopy. 7 of the 14 total grievances are appeals of employee discipline ([E160\\_GrievanceSummary](#)).

### **Transparency as the Key to Ethics at OCC**

OCC’s approach to ethics and integrity is rooted in its goal of transparency which extends to all aspects of the College and its interactions with students, employees, and the community.

#### **Students**

The College provides detailed information about tuition, deadlines, and payment options on its website and through direct mail and email contact with prospective students ([E161\\_FederalLoansWeb](#)). OCC also provides tuition information for in-county and out-of-county students who provide Certificates of Residence, as well as Out-of-State Residents ([E162\\_CostOfAttendanceWeb](#); [E163\\_NetPriceCalc](#); [E164\\_TuitionRefundWeb](#); [E110](#); [E165\\_TuitionFeesWeb](#)).

OCC wants students to have a plan to pay their bill at the point of registration. In 2015, the College developed a custom pop-up screen detailing a student’s financial responsibility at registration. This method proved unreliable, however, because the pop-up could be closed without signing and some students experienced issues with pop-up blockers. The pop-up was replaced in 2024 with Colleague Agreements, a newer functionality from OCC’s student information system software; students cannot register unless they agree to be financially responsible for their courses ([E166\\_FinancialAgreement](#)).

Once registered, the Student Accounts Office has a schedule for sending out Notices of Payment Due ([E167\\_PaymentDueEmails](#); [E168\\_PaymentDueMail](#)). Notices are sent out in various formats (text, email, paper) throughout the semester, and students always have access to live account details in MyOCC. Each notice states the semester for which the student owes, the options to pay, the link to payment information on the website, and the main phone number. If a late fee is to be charged to the account, the date it will be added is included. An analysis of all late fee data from Fall 2022 to Spring 2025 shows no dramatic shifts but small fluctuations each year with a slight decrease in recent years ([E169\\_LateFeesSummary](#)).

OCC has also been making the financial aid process more accessible. In the 2016–2017 academic year, the College

established the Financial Aid Service Center (FASC), increasing the transparency of the financial aid application and improving the counseling process ([E170\\_FASCWeb](#); [E171\\_TuitionFAWeb](#)). It uses social media, digital messaging, and campus flyers to boost engagement and awareness ([E172\\_FASCFlyers](#); [E173\\_FASCSocialMediaEx](#)). In April 2022, FASC began using Lazer Success to track student interactions and allow students to schedule appointments, resulting in improved assessment and a streamlined appointment process. Student interactions with FASC increased 18%, from 2,780 in Fall 2022 to 3,271 in Spring 2025 ([E174\\_FASCAppSummary](#)). FAFSA completion rose from 76.4% in Fall 2022 to 78.1% in Fall 2025 ([E175\\_FAFSASummary](#)).

The College ensures that financial aid policies are applied fairly and consistently to all students, adhering to federal, state, and institutional regulations ([E176\\_DeptOfEdPPA](#)). OCC regularly reports on the distribution and utilization of financial aid funds, conducting regular internal and external audits of the financial aid office and processes, with mechanisms for addressing any issues or discrepancies. The institution tracks and evaluates loan burden and default rates annually to continuously improve financial advising (See S4 for an in-depth discussion of student debt) ([E177\\_AvgLoanIndebtedness](#); [E178\\_PercentStudentsLoans](#); [E179\\_3yrDefaultRates](#)). Financial Aid is also collaborating with the departments of Information Technology Services and Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research to develop interactive dashboards to further enhance assessment ([E180\\_FADashboards](#)).

OCC recognizes that paying for college is not easy, and textbook costs have historically been a barrier for many students. To address this, the College partnered with Barnes and Noble, which runs OCC's bookstore, to reduce the cost of textbooks for students and include those costs in the net cost calculator. This first-of-its-kind program debuted in 2019 and sets the cost of required books and supplies at \$21.50 per credit hour, reducing the overall costs of textbooks by approximately 50% ([E181\\_BoxOfBooksWeb](#)). Unless a student opts out, costs are billed to the student account and included in financial aid award letters. Faculty originally conceived of the project, known as Box of Books, as part of a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant. The program fosters an equitable and inclusive campus, removing barriers to success and ensuring all students, regardless of financial background, have access to the same academic resources on the first day of classes.

Policies and procedures can only protect students if they know what they are and where to find them, underscoring the importance of communication efforts outlined in the Strategic Plan. OCC informs students of applicable policies, engagement opportunities, and information predominantly via e-mail, social media, regular updates to the student landing page on its website, and messaging in the learning management system, D2L Brightspace. The Office of Student Orientation, Leadership, & Engagement takes the lead on advertising student activities and engagement opportunities through campus posters, the Community Connect app, the management of student clubs and organizations, and the Student Government Association ([E182\\_SOLEWeb](#); [E183\\_ConnectApp](#); [E129](#)).

As outlined in the Marketing Operational Plan, marketing efforts align with the Strategic Plan ([E184\\_OpPlanMarketing24-25](#)). For example, the redesigned Viewbook emphasizes transparency, outlining outcomes, costs, programs, support services, and student life in a clear and engaging manner ([E33\\_Viewbook](#)). Supporting Strategic Plan Goal 2, Strategic Priority 2.3, and KPI 2.3.1, current students can participate in an internship program in which they create 1 to 5-minute videos telling their OCC "story," shared via social media ([E185\\_SocialMediaReportFA24](#); [E186\\_SocialMediaPolicy](#)). Marketing efforts also include digital and radio as well as the reintroduction of physical advertising like billboards ([E187\\_EncouraDigitalCampaign](#)). Starting in Fall 2022, targeted messaging has been delivered to specific populations, from those thinking about enrolling for the first time to those who could return to complete a credential ([E188\\_MotimaticReviewSP25](#)). Combined, these strategies have led to increased enrollment ([E112](#)).

OCC's commitment to ethical transparency also extends to recruiting. The Admissions and Marketing teams collaborate to ensure all materials are clear, accurate, and easy to navigate. Spending on recruitment, marketing, and the user experience have remained stable over the last four years ([E189\\_MarketingRecruitmentAnalysis](#)). These materials include step-by-step guidance on the admissions process, tuition and fees, and financial aid

(E33; E162). The Catalog and website provide detailed information about academic programs, policies, and strategies for success. With nearly 36% of degree/certificate seekers identifying as first-generation college students, OCC recognizes the importance of providing accessible and straightforward information. To help students and their families find important information, the Consumer Information page on the OCC website is organized into the following categories: Academic Information, Financial Information, General Institutional Information, Health and Safety Information, State Student Complaint Process, Student Outcomes Information, and a Contact List for further assistance (E163; E190\_InternetPrivacyPolicyJ2; E191\_ConsumerInfoWeb; E162). The College also redesigned its Financial Aid Offer Letter for clarity (see Standard IV).

As part of the efforts to improve communication, the Student Success Communication Team was charged with auditing communications to students (E192\_SSCUpdateFA24). The committee collected logs from all student-facing departments across campus in Fall 2024 to evaluate content, timing, and the method of communication with the goal of streamlining communication to students. The committee partnered with students in Prof. Costello's Marketing 121 course to design and distribute surveys, reaching over 150 students, to better understand student preferences for receiving information. Students reported they receive too many emails, and there are too many different places to look for important information (email, text, social media, the website, the LMS, etc.). The committee focused on messaging sent to all or most students but discovered many departments send regular messaging to specific populations. A student who participates in athletics and the EOP program, lives in the residence halls, and has been referred to tutoring at the Learning Center, would get all the general, student focused communication as well as specialized messaging tailored to each of those groups. In light of the decentralized nature of communications and the abundance of messaging, the Team came up with three major recommendations for Executive Council. The first is that the Committee become a standing committee with charges, including the development of a style-guide and training for all offices that send out messaging. Secondly, the college should explore centralizing student communications through customer relationship management software to ensure consistency and minimize duplication. Lastly, a Communications Coordinator position should be created in the Enrollment Management Division to chair the committee and implement the recommendations (E193\_SSCPresentation). The communications audit demonstrates that various divisions on campus are comfortable with accountability and improvement, alluding to a positive culture of self-assessment. Silos do exist, but people and offices are working together for the sake of the students.

Students not only receive communications electronically, but 23% of OCC's students take courses online, and 6% of OCC students are fully online (E194\_DistanceEducationIPEDS). Student identity in distance education is verified through mechanisms outlined in Policy J1: Acceptable and Responsible Use of OCC Technology and Information Systems. A single sign-on and multi-factor authentication process, managed through the College's Central Authentication Service, ensures students (and employees) can only access materials they are authorized to use, safeguarding academic integrity in online courses. The policy also explains the requirements of maintaining access. Students with difficulties logging in and other security issues are assisted by the OCC Helpdesk. OCC does not assess additional charges specifically for identity verification; standard tuition and fees associated with enrollment cover technology access and course delivery costs (E195\_OCCTechPolicyJ1; E196\_LoggingIntoOCC). The Student Computing Info page contains information on secure log in, cyber-security, and protecting passwords (E197\_ComputingInfoWeb). Coulter Library has a limited number of laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and other equipment available for long-term loan to students (E198\_TechnologyLoans).

This same oversight extends to OCC's other offerings, like its College Credit Now (CCN) program (offered at seven high schools designated as "additional locations") and the comprehensive services offered at OCC@Liverpool campus (E199\_OffCampusDataIPEDS). OCC ensures that the student experience at all additional locations maintains parity with the main campus. OCC@Liverpool is currently used for non-credit health professions/workforce programs such as Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy, Certified Nursing Assistant, and



Home Health Aide ([E200\\_OCCLiverpoolWeb](#)). The only program offered at this site that is Title IV eligible is Medical Assisting, and these students are assigned a Navigator who reaches out periodically to check in and provide information on how they can access supports offered on campus, e.g. the Learning Center, Counseling, and Office of Accessibility Resources ([E201\\_OCCLiverpoolSupport](#)). For-credit classes have not been offered there since 2021. When for-credit classes were offered at OCC@Liverpool, students had access to essential academic and support services through staff specific to that location and support office visits on a rotating basis. The CCN program gives high school students the opportunity to earn college credits at no cost and may allow for earlier graduation from two- or four-year degree programs. The program has been accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) since 2005 and was reaccredited in 2020 ([E202\\_NACEPAnnual](#); [E203\\_NACEPCert](#)). NACEP accreditation ensures that courses taught by high school teachers, in accordance with the faculty Credential Manual, meet the same academic rigor and learning outcomes as those taught on OCC's main campus. NACEP also requires continuous oversight and professional development for instructors, ensuring consistency in educational quality and instructional integrity ([E204\\_ELMGuide](#)).

In addition to CCN, the College has other dual enrollment programs that demonstrate a commitment to accessibility, alignment, and academic preparedness. For students in and around Syracuse, OCC offers Early College and P-TECH programs. Through its partnership with the Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation, OCC offers interactive video classrooms, allowing students in rural communities access to college courses taught by OCC faculty, reducing geographic barriers ([E205\\_IVCWeb](#); [E77\\_EarlyCollegeWeb](#); [E206\\_CCNWeb](#)). Privacy for dual enrollment students is protected under Policy C1: Compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, outlining student rights regarding their education records and disclosure limitations. This policy is reinforced in communications such as the College Credit Now Student Parent Handbook ([E207\\_CCNStuHandbook](#), p. 7; [E208\\_FERPAPolicyC1](#)).

## Employees

OCC has fair and impartial employment practices across hiring, evaluation, promotion, and separation, with specific attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion (see Creating a Climate of Mutual Respect at OCC, Employees above). College policies, Collective Bargaining Agreements, and HR materials govern these phases ([E209\\_EEOPolicy1](#); [E210\\_AffirmativeActionPolicy12](#); [E211\\_ADAPolicy13](#)). All search committees receive training and require diverse representation. HR has ongoing projects to increase diversity in hiring to closer match student and community demographics (see Standard VI for details).

OCC's staff and faculty do not reflect the student population it serves. As discussed above, IPEDS data from 2018 to 2024 shows that gender percentages have not changed meaningfully while racial diversity has declined significantly ([E212\\_HiringDataAnalysis](#)). Some gaps are the result of minimal hiring due to economic constraints while the number of staff and faculty declined. Hiring has increased in areas supporting partnerships with Micron, local hospitals, assisted living facilities, and other local, industry needs, such as in Engineering Technology and Healthcare. New student support roles were also developed to meet changing student needs and provide individualized support, fostering space for additional employee positions and diverse recruitment efforts. Additionally, OCC has an Affirmative Action Plan in place along with other diverse recruiting efforts such as participation in the SUNY PRODiG+ Fellowship initiative ([E213\\_AffirmativeActionPlan24-25](#); [E214\\_PRODiGPosting](#); [E215\\_SUNYReport2024](#), p. 16). Current employee demographics and recruitment efforts for diverse applicants, however, remain an area for growth. HR has increased targeted advertising and developed partnerships with minority professional organizations to strengthen outreach and attract qualified candidates. For example, HR has partnered with Job Elephant, a consulting firm that advises on places to advertise to help OCC meet its recruitment goals. By Spring 2025, 32 new relationships or resources were developed ([E216\\_OpPlanHR24-25](#)).

When it hires, OCC ensures faculty possess appropriate qualifications for their teaching assignments through Faculty Credential Guidelines, outlining the minimum degree, relevant experience, and discipline-specific requirements for each course ([E217\\_FacultyCredentials](#)). New faculty participate in a New Employee Orientation



covering essential institutional policies, procedures, diversity and belonging principles, student support services, and safety protocols ([E218\\_NewEmployeeOrientation](#)). The Faculty Handbook, last updated Summer 2025, collects essential information in one place and is intended to supplement OCC's policy manual ([E219\\_FacultyHandbookPreface](#); [E32](#)). To provide quick access to essential documents and information, all faculty have access to the *Introduction to OCC* module in OCC's LMS ([E220\\_D2LIntroToOCC](#)).

Established evaluation processes exist for all employee groups, and defined pathways support promotion opportunities. Faculty reappointment, tenure, and promotion follow a process outlined in the OCC Federation of Teachers and Administrators (OCCFTA) union contract ([E58, p. 46-52, p. 55-56, p. 57-58](#)). Professional Administrators undergo an annual evaluation specified in Article V of their agreement, utilizing the PA Annual Evaluation Form ([E157, p. 9-11](#); [E221\\_PAEvalForm](#)). CSEA staff evaluations use the Staff Performance Evaluation Form to determine the granting of permanent status ([E222\\_StaffFinalEvalMemo](#); [E223\\_StaffEvalForm](#); [E224\\_CSEASelfEvalForm](#)). Management Confidential employees also undergo an annual evaluation process that mirrors the PA evaluation, highlighting progress on the prior year's goals and setting goals for the upcoming year. All processes provide transparent mechanisms for consistent performance feedback and assessment.

Analysis of data on hiring and promotion, disaggregated by relevant populations, shows that more females apply to jobs at OCC than males, although the number and percent of male applicants has increased over time. The average percentage of applicants hired by gender from 2021 to 2024 (last four years of available data) is 14.8% for females, 14.7% for males, and 18.2% for those identifying as Other. There is not a consistent gap in hiring rates by gender. In terms of race/ethnicity, the percentage of applicants hired has remained relatively consistent across the years, with some fluctuations in specific groups, although a significantly larger number of White individuals apply to jobs at OCC compared to other races/ethnicities. There is not a consistent gap in hiring rates by race/ethnicity. For example, from 2021 to 2024 (last four years of available data), 14.7% of Black/ African American and 14.7% of White applicants were hired ([E212](#); [E213](#)).

OCC also has established procedures for employee separation to ensure fairness, impartiality, and respect. Standard separation, as outlined in the Exiting Checklist, involves employees providing written notice, meeting with supervisors regarding work projects, returning College property, and meeting with Human Resources for an exit interview and benefits discussion ([E225\\_EmployeeExitChecklist](#)). The confidential Exit Interview Survey gathers feedback on the employee's experience and asks for constructive feedback, including reasons for leaving, quality of supervision, work conditions, compensation, communications, and suggestions for improvement ([E226\\_ExitInterview](#)).

An example of managing separation transparently, with grace and dignity for all, occurred during the 2022-2023 academic year, when the College, working with the OCCFTA, implemented a Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive as a strategic response to a decade of declining enrollment ([E227\\_VERIPressRelease](#)). The College issued a comprehensive press release detailing the rationale for the program, eligibility criteria, incentive packages, funding sources, and the anticipated benefits for taxpayers. Twenty-eight faculty took the offer and some additional faculty moved into administrative positions, saving jobs and maintaining services at OCC.

The commitment to transparency is further evident in the way OCC manages potential conflicts of interest through Policy B22, ([E228\\_ConflictOfInterestPolicyB22](#)), which applies broadly to all trustees, employees, affiliated organization directors and employees, volunteers, and vendors. Any known current or potential conflict must be reported to the constituent's supervisor or the President's Office, with specific disclosure procedures mandated for personnel leading externally sponsored projects and for Institutional Review Board members reviewing research proposals ([E229\\_ConflictDisclosure](#)). This policy framework ensures that potential conflicts are identified and disclosed, protecting the institution and its constituents. Principal investigators and project directors working on externally funded projects must fill out a form annually affirming no conflicts exist or disclosing potential or actual financial conflicts relating to the project, including those of immediate family, along with mitigation plans. The form also requires affirmation of an ongoing duty to update the disclosure should circumstances change.

## Community

Ultimately, OCC works to serve and improve the lives of students, the campus community, and the Central New York region through its educational and workforce/training offerings, enhancing the trust and confidence of elected leaders and partners/investors (see Standard I for a discussion of partners). OCC understands the importance of public support and being good stewards of public investment, partnering with federal, state, county, and municipal government with a focus on advocacy for capital or operational support.

To promote compliance with applicable laws, government regulations, and MSCHE's policies and procedures, OCC created a Director of Compliance in 2012. The Director works collaboratively across institutional compliance functions, maintaining a repository of all compliance related campus obligations (excluding grant compliance, which is handled by the AVP of Grants) ([E230\\_ComplianceSpreadsheet](#)). This repository ensures continuity in the case of employee turnover in campus offices that rely on this information. The Director also maintains the Consumer Information webpage, discussed above ([E191](#)).

OCC's accreditation information is publicly available in the College Catalog, where it clearly documents institutional accreditation by MSCHE and makes required professional licensure disclosures available for relevant programs. Specific academic programs maintain accreditation from relevant professional bodies, including Health Information Technology (CAHIIM), Nursing (ACEN), Paramedic (CoAEMSP), Physical Therapist Assistant (CAPTE), Surgical Technology (CAAHEP), and the College Credit Now concurrent enrollment program (NACEP) ([E231\\_AuthorizationAccreditation](#); [E232\\_ProgramAccreditation](#)). The College provides public disclosures on its *Professional Licensure Disclosures - NCSARA* webpage, which informs prospective and current students whether specific OCC programs meet the educational requirements for professional licensure or certification in states other than New York, creating transparency for students planning to practice outside the state ([E233\\_ProfLicensureDisclosuresWeb](#)). Institutional assessment information (including the MSCHE Self-Study and Compliance reports) and outcomes data are available on the Consumer Information page ([E191](#)).

OCC's official scope of accreditation, including approved credential levels (Associate's Degree, Postsecondary award 1-2 years) and locations, is publicly available via the Statement of Accreditation Status ([E234\\_StatementOfAccreditation](#)), as is its SUNY and Onondaga County authorization to operate ([E235\\_SUNYandOnondagaAuthorization](#)). This document, along with the College's Eligibility and Certification Approval Report and Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Aid Programs, confirms the approved main campus, additional locations (e.g., OCC@Liverpool and various high schools), and other instructional sites ([E236\\_ECAR24](#); [E237\\_FAProgramApprovalApp](#); [E191](#)). The College reports substantive changes to MSCHE as required and updates public information accordingly through catalog revisions and website updates. Student headcount data for all locations is maintained and reported as required for state and federal purposes (e.g., IPEDS). The College ensures comparable student learning, support, and academic services across locations through standardized curriculum, faculty credentialing, and access to resources ([E202](#); [E238\\_NACEPMembership, p. 4](#)). These comprehensive compliance activities, coupled with transparent communication of policies and outcomes, underscore OCC's dedication to ethical operations and continuous improvement based on regulatory standards and institutional assessment.

## Assessment as Ethical Practice

The College employs regular assessments and evaluations of policies, procedures, and practices to identify potential areas for improvement, ensuring operations align with ethical principles and institutional values. The framework for this assessment is documented in Policy B11: Formulation, Issuance, Amendment and Repeal of Policies ([E239\\_PolicyFormationPolicyB11](#)). This 'policy on policies' outlines a standardized format and a clear process for developing, reviewing, approving, and distributing all policies. Proposals for new policies or substantive amendments are initiated with the relevant vice president, reviewed by the President, and approved by the Board of Trustees (BOT) when required. Policy B11 also mandates an annual review of existing policies by each vice president to determine the necessity of updates or repeals, ensuring policies remain accurate and relevant.

Non-substantive changes, like contact updates, are handled on an as-needed basis, while emergency actions can be taken by the President when necessary. Approved policies are centrally maintained and communicated to the College community via the website ([E93](#)). An example of the policy development and review process are the updates approved by the BOT in June 2024, including revisions to existing policies, the repeal of outdated policies, and the creation of new policies, B21: Student Success and N8: Name, Image, and Likeness ([E240\\_PolicyReviewResolutionEx](#)).

OCC was not required to complete a full Single Audit during the years 2021-2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this circumstance, an external audit firm was engaged to complete a full financial aid compliance audit during this period. OCC took this step because it recognizes the importance of ensuring compliance and the integrity of the student financial aid process. The audit returned a clean opinion, as have all other Single Audits done between 2018 and this writing.

OCC gives students the opportunity to provide feedback, share concerns, or file complaints on all practices at the College. This includes requesting forgiveness on tuition and fee responsibilities, filing general complaints about their experiences at the College, reporting concerns about an individual's behavior on campus (both students and employees), and academic issues. As a response to MSCHE reviewer recommendations in 2018, OCC created online forms for students to initiate complaints or document concerns for all but the academic issues. Completed forms are stored in databases, routed to the appropriate office, and allow for tracking of individual complaints. As a result, staff revised relevant procedures and messaging as they became aware of issues, and the College started several initiatives to head off miscommunications and misunderstanding related to student billing, e.g. starting in Fall 2024, all students living on campus review their financial commitment prior to receiving residence hall keys ([E241\\_FAInitiatives](#); [E242\\_ComplaintResolutionData](#)). OCC has at least four years of assessment data in these areas.

Academic issues are broken down into three categories: general academic concerns, academic dishonesty, and grade disputes. The process for these specific concerns/complaints are found in the Academic Rules portion of the catalog and were developed by Faculty Senate ([E128](#)). Until recently, relevant Academic Rules instructed initiators on whom to contact, deadlines, pertinent policies, etc., and the intention was that records would be kept at the department and dean level. Not all department chairs, however, kept consistent records ([E243\\_PASReportToCLC](#)). Different chairs kept records in different ways, as did the deans, but there was no centralized tracking or assessment with the aim of improving outcomes. In response, OCC faculty revised the Academic Rules for readability and access (see above), and the College created three academic reporting forms in Fall 2025 (General Academic Concern, Academic Dishonesty, and Final Grade Appeal) held in a central database providing the ability to track individual complaints as well as perform trend analysis.

While OCC's new structures ensure that, moving forward, it has reliable record keeping and a centralized database for tracking concerns, more work is needed ([E137](#); [E155](#); [E242](#)). In the areas where OCC has at least four years of assessment data, it was not regularly or systematically used to make improvements. As a result of preparation for the 2026 MSCHE reaccreditation visit, it became clear that comprehensive assessment of the complaint/grievance process is difficult because of the way it was designed. The various processes were created in response to different student needs by different offices, with some processes and forms overlapping in scope but managed by different personnel housed in different databases. For example, a student might use a General Academic Concern report to question a tuition bill, only to be referred to the *Tuition and Fees* process. That specific complaint might have been marked as "unresolved" in the original database. These different and sometimes competing systems combine to make regular assessment difficult. OCC recognizes that it must do an annual assessment of both the efficiency and outcomes of its complaint processes. Work done in the preparation of this document suggests the first step is to streamline and simplify the reporting processes where possible, ensuring forms collecting similar information are combined, have the same name wherever they appear, link to the same database, etc. The Programs and Academic Support Committee, a sub-committee of the College Leadership Council, has an assessment of these processes as part of their 2025-2026 charges.

OCC assesses and improves ethics and integrity as defined by this standard. Four examples of assessment used to improve ethics and integrity discussed in the standard stand out. The Student Success Communication Team’s audit of all student-facing departments and subsequent recommendations to streamline such communication is an explicit example of this assessment and illustrates how different areas of the College, including students, can work together on important issues. The tracking of non-academic, student complaints and the College’s data-driven adjustments to messaging, student billing correspondence, and assistance, like the creation of the FASC, have led to a notable reduction in complaints (see Standard IV for a detailed explanation of how the financial aid process and related communications have been improved because of ongoing assessment). The formal assessment of the student academic complaint process resulted in a new system that better tracks and responds to student concerns in the classroom ([E244\\_StudentComplaintAnalysis](#)). Finally, President Hilton’s monthly updates directly address transparency and communication, a need indicated by the PACE survey.

The College’s Third-Party Contract Assessment Policy, effective January 2024, embeds required assessment language into new and renewed agreements, ensuring systematic review via departmental assessment upon renewal. The review verifies that vendor performance and deliverables meet contractual expectations.

OCC’s website is its primary mechanism for communication with the public, students, and employees and complies with federal accessibility standards. It is continuously updated with the goal of ensuring accuracy and ease of use, and employees can request changes when content becomes out-of-date ([E245\\_WebRequest](#)). The College recognizes, however, that more regular and comprehensive reviews are needed. Parts of the website get out-of-date due to personnel changes, new initiatives, etc., and some pages are not as easy to navigate as they could be. In 2024, website management transitioned to the newly created Enrollment Systems and User Experience (ESUE) department, established to improve the user experience across all enrollment platforms. Website content area ‘owners’ are being identified across campus and an annual review process will be put in place to ensure information is updated and accurate. One of ESUE’s goals, documented in its Annual Operational plan, includes a full website redesign ([E246\\_WebProjectRoadmap](#); [E40\\_SEMPlan](#), [p.21](#) and [A13](#)).

Conclusion

To fulfill its mission, OCC actively builds and maintains an institutional culture that holds itself to high standards of ethics and integrity, putting into practice its stated Values, Mission + Vision, and goals. The College strives to be a partner the community can trust and rely on through continuous assessment, policy review, and transparent practices and procedures.

Current Strengths	1. Committed to measuring campus climate and building trust and communication between employees (e.g. PACE survey).	Criteria 2
	2. Committed to making student processes (e.g. Academic Rules) transparent and clear.	Criteria 3
	3. A culture that supports assessment, continuous growth and learning across all levels of the institution (e.g. communications audit).	Criteria 9
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	1. Increase diversity of workforce to better match student and community demographics.	Criteria 2, Criteria 7.a
	2. Ongoing website review.	Criteria 6
	3. Comprehensive, cross-campus assessment of student complaint data.	Criteria 9



# STANDARD III

## Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience



### Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience




*An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.*

#### Executive Summary

To become a place where students from all backgrounds can grow intellectually, professionally, and personally, Onondaga Community College (OCC) offers career and transfer paths that allow students to see a future for themselves in Central New York and beyond. OCC provides challenging, clear, and connected learning experience across all degrees, certificates, and modalities of instruction, ensuring all learning experiences align with higher education expectations.



## Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience				

## Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria

- How does OCC determine the rigor and coherence of its educational offerings? What evaluation methods are utilized to ensure educational excellence? **Criteria 8**
- In what ways does OCC support the design and execution of challenging and engaging coursework to foster both personal growth and career readiness among students? **Criteria 1.a., Criteria 2.a**
  - How is the value of coursework made legible to students? **Criteria 1.b**
  - How has OCC responded to the community's needs in both career and transfer program development, such as new programs, credentials, and micro-credentials? **Criteria 1.a**
- How are the academic offerings and student services at OCC designed to support the institution's commitment to cultivating a diverse and inclusive learning environment that supports student retention and success? **Criteria 2.d**
- How is OCC identifying and creating accessible and equitable educational opportunities and resources that cater to the varied needs of its student body? In what manner does OCC provide both sufficient targeted and general support systems and structures to guarantee that all students have equal chances to thrive academically? **Criteria 4**

## Analysis

OCC regularly assesses the impact of its educational experiences on students via Learning Outcomes assessment (see Standard V) and through the administration of surveys that give students a chance to share their perceptions, aligning with the communication goal in the Strategic Plan. OCC administers the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) every three years and the Post Graduate Survey annually to solicit feedback on student experiences ([E113\\_IPARSurveysWeb](#)). In 2025, 85.3% of respondents (743 of 4312) rated their overall educational experience Good/Excellent. Although a slight decrease from 2022 (85.7%), it is significantly higher than the 2015 (78.4%) and 2018 (72.8%) survey results ([E146\\_CCSSEReport, p. 2](#)). In 2024, 38% of expected graduates (307 of 807) completed the Post Graduate Survey (up from 35.5% in 2023), and 98% indicated they achieved or are in the process of achieving their educational goal, and 94.5% of respondents indicated they definitely or probably would recommend OCC to others. In each of the areas relating to the College's Institutional Learning Outcomes, every category received a rating higher than 89.0%, with

- 97.1% of respondents strongly agree or agree their overall educational experience helped them to acquire a broad general education,
- 97.1 % of respondents strongly agree or agree their overall educational experience helped them develop effective communication skills, and

- 98% of respondents strongly agree or agree their overall educational experience helped them to think critically, solve problems, and conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner (ILOs on [E24\\_AboutOCCWeb, p. 3](#)).

59.9% of respondents planned to continue education, and 37.5% planned to work or search for work within 12 months after graduation. Of the respondents pursuing further education, 62.5% indicated OCC prepared them to a great or moderate degree for further study ([E147\\_GradSurveyReport, p. 3, 8, 13](#)).

### Diverse Learning Experiences

OCC maintains its liberal arts identity while meeting changing community needs through new or updated offerings of transfer degrees (A.A., A.S.), careers programs (A.A.S.), certificates, microcredentials, and non-credit workforce certifications. OCC's curriculum process and assessment practices ensure that new and existing programs are designed to give students rigorous and coherent learning experiences. OCC does not offer graduate education, and all credit-bearing courses at OCC are overseen solely by OCC faculty (not third parties).

Well-designed student learning experiences begin with rational programs leading to clear outcomes. Starting in 2018, every program created a Guided Pathway to Success (GPS) map, modeled on the Community College Research Center's work on removing ambiguity from program navigation and increasing student success ([E11\\_T3Narrative, p. 20-21](#); [E247\\_CybersecurityGPS](#); [E248\\_CybersecurityGPSctlg](#)). This initiative, combined with OCC's regular program assessments, resulted in reevaluation and revision of program pathways outlined in the Assessment of Student Learning ([E249\\_AssessStuLrng, p. 6, 9-13](#)). Since the start of these efforts, 20 A.A./A.S./A.A.S. programs, 5 certificates, 6 microcredentials, and 5 non-credit certifications have been significantly revised or created to respond to community and industry needs ([E250\\_HumanServicesRevPrg2025](#)). See Standard V for a detailed discussion of how program review is used to update OCC's curricula and phase out programs no longer meeting community need.

A.A.	A.S.	A.A.S.	CERT	Microcredential	Workforce Non-Credit
Creative Writing	Cybersecurity	Architectural Design Studies	Automotive Technology	Business Spreadsheets	Certified Nurse Aid
Creative Writing (online)	Healthcare Administration	Automotive Technology	Direct Support Professional	CNC Machining (fall 2026 launch)	Emergency Medical Technician
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Humanities and Social Sciences (online)	Health Sciences	Business & Entrepreneurship	Electromechanical Technology	Database	Home Health Aide
	Laboratory Science	Commercial/Heavy Equipment Service Repair (fall 2026 launch)	Health Studies	Direct Support Professional I	Intro to Robotic Material Handling course-FANUC Robotics
	Social Media and Digital Communications	Construction Management	Paramedic (jointly registered with Upstate Medical University)	Direct Support Professional II	Licensed Practical Nurse (fall 2026 launch)
	Sound Recording	Electromechanical Technology		Networking	
		Health Information Technology/Medical Records (online)			
		Paramedic (jointly registered with Upstate Medical University)			
		Supply Chain Management			
		Welding Technology			

([E251\\_NewPrgrms2022-2026](#))

Program review and, if warranted, revitalization require the participation of program faculty and impacted academic departments, the faculty Senate, the OCC Federation of Teachers and Administrators, Academic Affairs, and, ultimately, the Board of Trustees (BOT). If revisions involve substantive changes, such as altering program learning outcomes, credit requirements, or core courses, external approval from SUNY may be required. The process ensures revisions maintain compliance with New York State Education Department regulations, which stipulate that curricula must be carefully planned with clearly defined goals, objectives, and assessment methods. Revised programs are evaluated for rigor, coherence, and alignment with OCC's Mission + Vision and accreditation standards before implementation ([E252\\_CurrHandbook, p. 3, 11, 20-30, 33-34](#)).

Program deactivation or discontinuance may result for several reasons, such as persistent low enrollment, outdated content, or strategic realignment. Deactivation, limited to no more than three years, is typically used to reassess the program's viability, restructure it, or phase it out. The program must then be either reactivated or permanently discontinued and removed from the College's offerings once all enrolled students have graduated. Discontinued programs cannot be reactivated; similar offerings require a new program proposal ([E252, p. 31-32](#)).

OCC maintains a close relationship with the community and employers to ensure programs meet their needs and help students transfer or find meaningful employment after graduation. For example, the of Engineering, Science, and Technology (EST) department was developing a new program for semiconductor technicians when Micron announced a \$100B manufacturing center and named OCC its education partner. EST adapted the training to Micron's needs while also supporting existing industry partners. The new program, Electromechanical Technology (ELM), was constructed as both a "stackable" certificate and an A.A.S. program, meaning coursework taken for the certificate will count toward the ELM A.A.S., giving students flexibility and a chance to return to OCC after completion of the certificate.

The evolution of the ELM degree illustrates OCC's curriculum process. The Curriculum Handbook offers the following questions to consider before requesting a feasibility study from the BOT:

- Is the proposed program consistent with the College's mission and strategic plan?
- Is the program likely to be financially sustainable?
- Does the proposed program duplicate curriculum currently being offered at the College or in the region?
- Is there employer and/or student demand for the program?
- Do graduates employed in the field earn an adequate wage?
- For A.A. and A.S. programs, are there transfer institutions in the region to support graduates in pursuit of a bachelor's degree? ([E252, p. 20](#))

After the feasibility study for ELM was approved, EST faculty worked with OCC's Director of Industry Partnerships and Certified DACUM (Designing a Curriculum) Facilitator to conduct an analysis, bringing together industry experts to identify the skills needed to be successful as a semiconductor technician and in related fields. The faculty built a curriculum focusing on hands-on and skills-based training, following guidelines on course design, instructional modalities, Carnegie Unit requirements ([E253\\_CurrDevWeb](#)), and assessment in the Curriculum Handbook. The Curriculum Handbook ensures rigor, coherence, and adherence to SUNY and accreditor policies (e.g. Credit/Contact Hour) ([E252, p. 4-7](#)). EST faculty worked with colleagues in Mathematics to create MAT 103 Technical Math Fundamentals ([E254\\_MAT103CourseOutline](#)), a two-credit course using hands-on activities to bolster skills students use in first semester ELM courses, and MAT 108 Introduction to Statistical Process Control ([E255\\_MAT108CourseOutline](#)), a two-credit course in which students create programs used in industry/manufacturing quality control processes.

Once approved at the departmental level (11/18/2022), the complete curriculum package, including planned assessments of Program and Institutional Learning Outcomes, was sent to the Curriculum Coordinator for technical review, which involved business areas of the College, such as Academic Affairs, Financial Aid, and Registration and Records. Technical review focuses on finding errors and compliance issues and working with

faculty to make corrections. The proposed ELM program then moved to the Curriculum Committee and Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee for faculty review of curriculum, general education requirements, learning outcomes, and program mapping for assessment purposes ([E256\\_CurrCommMinutes2022](#)). Each of the two faculty committees includes non-voting representatives from Registration and Records and Academic Affairs ([E257\\_CurrCommMinutes2025](#)). Once approved at the committee level (12/5/2022), the curriculum moved to the faculty Senate (12/12/2022) and then to Academic Affairs for review by the Provost and Chief Academic Officer (12/22/2022), who presents it to the Board of Trustees. Finally, it was submitted to SUNY and the State Education Department for ultimate approval ([E258\\_ELMSUNYApproval02.21.2023](#); [E259\\_ELMNYSEDAApproval03.27.2023](#)). Students could begin registration on 4/03/2023 for a program start in Fall 2023. This process incorporates multiple levels of checks to ensure the approved courses and programs offer students a valuable education.

Once a program and related courses are approved and active, faculty use the Course Outline as a basis to construct student facing syllabi, which must include the information stated in the Faculty Handbook's Instructional Policies and Procedures section ([E95\\_FctyHandbookSect3, p.9](#); [E260\\_SenatePresSyllabiFaculty1of2](#); [E261\\_SenatePresSyllabiFaculty2of2](#)). Faculty can customize their syllabi to accommodate their teaching style, but all syllabi must contain the same basic elements and be faithful to the Course Outline ([E262\\_ELM100CourseOutlineSyllabus](#); [E263\\_SyllabiExamples](#)). All syllabi are collected by department secretaries at the start of the semester, and department chairs should review syllabi for adherence to approved content/policies. The workload required for chairs to consistently review syllabi, however, is an ongoing concern and the reality is that errors in fidelity to the Course Outline and missing, required elements in syllabi slip through. The number of syllabi to be reviewed is not distributed equally across all eight chairs, with one having hundreds while another has 40-50. As of Fall 2025, different chairs approach the work differently. For example, the chair of Humanities and Social Sciences, a "mega-department," completed an exhaustive syllabus audit in Spring 2024; since that time, they complete comprehensive reviews only of new syllabi ([E264\\_SyllabiAuditRubric](#)). As a result of assessment in preparation for the MSCHE visit, faculty decided to standardize the process across departments, to the degree possible given the differences in size and makeup. To minimize the chance of elements being omitted, the faculty Curriculum Committee is developing and will maintain a universal syllabus template that includes all required elements and statements (available Fall 2026). Faculty will be encouraged, but not required, to use this template. To ensure fidelity to Course Outlines, a comprehensive audit will be completed in Spring 2026 by academic chairs, and the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee will propose an appropriate time frame for continuously auditing faculty syllabi to verify the presence of all required elements and up-to-date learning outcomes, course descriptions, etc. ([E265\\_FacultySenateMin11.24.2025](#)).

Program and accreditation reviews at OCC function as tools used to make change and are a large part of its culture of assessment and data use. In Fall 2024, for example, the Nursing program completed its 8-year reaccreditation process, which led to revisions at the program and course level ([E266\\_ACENReport](#)). While programs may run successfully for years, continuous changes in technology, skillsets, and best practices mean every program and course has the potential for revision. Faculty-driven processes account for most programmatic changes, but Academic Affairs is able to initiate review of a program's viability (see Standard V).

OCC is creating a "stackable" credential pathway to becoming a Registered Nurse (RN). Once complete (planned for Spring 2026), the pathway will stack Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credentials to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) credentials to an RN degree. The CNA program will articulate into the RN program for 3 credits and serves as the first 5 weeks of the LPN program. CNA graduates or practicing CNAs will be able to join the LPN program, bypassing the initial 5 weeks and reducing overall costs. Completing the CNA program will award 3 credits towards the RN degree, while completing the LPN program grants the first semester of the RN degree. Practicing LPNs who did not complete OCC's program will receive 10 credits toward the RN program through Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). Students can also join the RN program at any point if they meet the necessary prerequisites ([E267\\_CreditPriorLrngWeb](#); [E268\\_NursingAAS](#)). The CNA to LPN to RN pathway will accommodate

students' varying life circumstances, enabling them to earn shorter-term credentials for faster career entry while maintaining a pathway for advancement, all while fulfilling a need in the region. Additionally, the tuition for the CNA and LPN programs is within the allowable Individualized Training Account rate, using federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding. These healthcare pathways foster student success and address regional workforce shortages while also providing graduates with in-demand skills and high growth careers.

OCC's mission is to meet community needs in the programs and courses offered as well as the way they are offered. Between 2018 and 2020, a joint taskforce consisting of faculty, Academic Affairs, and Registration and Records personnel revised the academic calendar, a demanding process rooted in shared governance and stakeholder input. Implemented in Fall 2020, OCC moved from a 15-week semester to a 14-week semester and created deconflicted time blocks to improve student mobility through the schedule. Course blocks were created for one to four-day per week classes, taking into account course and lab credit hour and clock hour requirements ([E269\\_AcadCalSp2025](#); [E270\\_MasterSchedTimeBlks](#); [E253](#)). See Standard VII for a discussion of how the Student Government Association substantially influenced the schedule conversation.

The academic calendar revision led to other innovations. For example, the ELM program (discussed above) created new, non-traditional course structures, consisting of a series of one and two credit courses with labs. The smaller instructional units allowed the EST department to implement more hands-on experiences and minimize facility restrictions, leading to the ability to offer four, complete cohorts of the ELM degree. The calendar revision also allowed the department to create a master course schedule minimizing the number of days per week that students are on campus, allowing them to complete their degrees while more easily attending to family and other obligations common to OCC's student population. This design had the added benefit of making adjunct teaching more accessible to the employees of local engineering and advanced manufacturing companies, strengthening the faculty and OCC's relationships with industry while offering students the opportunity to work with professionals in their fields.

Students and the public can see the description of the ELM program, as well as all academic programs of study offered at OCC, described in official publications such as the College catalog, website, and advising materials ([E271\\_CollegeCatalogUrl](#); [E272\\_CollegeCatalog2025-2026](#); [E273\\_EducPrgmsEnrollment](#); [E274\\_DegreePrgmsWeb](#)). Degree program sheets and the Catalog describe the course sequence, program description, mission, program learning outcomes, and, if applicable, any additional costs, considerations, and specific graduation requirements, like clinical placements ([E275\\_PhysTherAsstAAS](#); [E276\\_HumanitiesAA](#)). These resources provide students with comprehensive, easy-to-understand information regarding degree and program requirements, as well as expected time to completion. OCC's Title III project (2018-2023) brought about the revision of all programs using GPS principles, increasing navigability and alignment with career and transfer pathways. All new programs are designed using GPS principles. Beyond traditional degree programs, the College offers a variety of educational opportunities that serve diverse community needs, including dual enrollment, non-credit workforce development programs and certifications, and the English Language Institute, which supports non-native speakers of English ([E277\\_CCNData](#); [E278\\_LCDData2015-2024](#); [E279\\_ELIVWeb](#); [E68\\_ELIPresentation](#), p. 11).

OCC offers many degree, certificate, and non-degree programs designed to lead directly to employment. Individual departments/programs monitor their own programs, but the preparation of this document underscored the need for a periodic, centralized trend analysis for both credit and non-credit programs in this area. OCC has 21 credit-bearing credentials leading directly to employment, and all are trending upwards in terms of completion data, but more analysis is needed. For example, both the EMS/Paramedic A.A.S. and certificate programs are growing in overall enrollment (with the certificate far surpassing the A.A.S.), and both are trending toward gender equity. In terms of race, however, the degrees are, given the local population, overrepresented by White students in enrollment and graduation outcomes ([E280\\_CTEProgramEnrollGrad](#)). Data like this supports the need for the diversity-focused recruiting strategies in the Strategic Enrollment Plan, the DEI Master Plan, and the Strategic Plan (see Standard I for details).



Administration of non-credit, workforce programs was decentralized and moved into the Schools in 2021 for the sake of efficiency, housing them in areas with similar academic programs. In preparation of this document, however, it became clear that differences in record keeping, data collection, and assessment methods for non-credit, workforce programs have changed several times over the last five years, leading to data omissions and irregularities, making a comprehensive trend analysis of the four programs running from 2021 to 2024 difficult. Enrollment and successful completion for the four existing programs (MAS.WF, Medical Assistant; CNA.WF, Certified Nurse Aide; EMT.WF, Emergency Medical Technician; PBY.WF, Phlebotomy) appear to be trending up, but disaggregating the data (where possible) shows there is not parity across demographic groups in terms of successful completion ([E281\\_WorkforceProgData](#)). OCC started HHA.WF, Home Health Aide in Fall 2025. The stackability of non-credit programs leading students toward degree granting programs via credit for prior learning is predicted to be a growth area and serve a vital community need. Starting in Fall 2025, Registration and Records implemented cohort-based terms for workforce programs to start to resolve data collection issues and ensure accurate and consistent data is available going forward.

The implementation of GPS design principles and student support initiatives like Navigators (see Standard II) has led to average time to degree completion improving across all demographic groups, with total, average time to degree completion decreasing from 2.66 years in Fall 2015 to 2.19 years in Fall 2021 ([E282\\_AvgTimeDgrComplDemo](#); [E283\\_AvgTimeDgrComplProg](#); [E284\\_AvgNbrCredGradByProg](#)).

	Average time to degree completion 2015	Average time to degree completion 2021
White	2.57	2.15
Black or African American	2.87	2.26
Asian	2.96	2.24
Hispanic	2.94	2.39
Multiple Races	3.15	2.22
Pell Grant recipients	2.81	2.20

Additionally, the average number of credits earned by OCC graduates has decreased. In 2017-2018, degree completers earned an average of 71.6 credits, which has steadily decreased to 68.1 credits in 2023-2024 ([E284](#)).

Full-time, degree/certificate seeking Fall enrollment cohorts decreased from 2,293 students in Fall 2011 to 1,290 in Fall 2024. Three-year graduation rates for First-time Full-time Degree/Certificate Seeking students, however, have improved steadily from 23% for the 2018 cohort to 28% in 2021 (the most recent four years as of this writing). During this same period, graduation rates for First-Time Part-time Degree/Certificate seeking students fell from an all-time high of 7% in 2018 to 4% in 2019 and 2020 but rose to 5% in 2021. Graduation rates for Pell Grant recipients increased from 21% in 2018 to 23% in 2021, with non-Pell Grant students increasing from 26% in 2018 to 33% in 2021. When disaggregated by race, OCC students show a net increase over the last 4 years of available data, with the dip in 2020 potentially attributable to the Covid-19 pandemic ([E285\\_3YrGradRatesRaceEthnicityGraph](#); [E286\\_IPEDSGradRates](#)).

Overall, graduation outcomes are improving for all demographics except First-Time/Part-time Degree/Certificate Seeking students. All degree/certificate seeking students, regardless of full or part-time status, receive access to the same support. OCC is investigating the best ways to add flexibility to the schedule (e.g. more fully online programs and hybrid course options), which should help these students make progress in their degrees.

Transfer rates for full-time, first-time, degree/certificate seeking students within 150% of normal time have hovered between 17% and 22%, despite cohort sizes steadily decreasing from 2,031 in Fall 2015 to 1,347 in Fall 2020. Female students consistently transfer out at higher rates than males, but the data shows significant variation when looking at race and ethnicity. Among Hispanic/Latino and underrepresented minority students,

transfer rates have ranged from as low as 9% to over 24%. These trends highlight the need for continued investment in targeted, equity-minded student support services. OCC is actively assessing and enhancing its advising, academic support, and culturally responsive initiatives to improve retention and graduation outcomes for historically underserved populations ([E287\\_IPEDSTransferRates](#)). Examples of programs/offices that address this need are the English Language Institute; the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Council and affiliated programming like Unity Day and Conversation Circles; the Schools model and Navigators; OCC's Opportunity Programs (Educational Opportunity Program, Trio-Student Support Services, Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, Advancing Success in Associate Pathways); and increased access and associated success outcomes resulting from OCC's developmental education reforms (see Standard IV for details) ([E288\\_TRiOWeb](#); [E289\\_EOPWeb](#); [E290\\_CSTEPWeb](#); [E291\\_ASAPWeb](#)).

### Delivering and Assessing the Curriculum

From fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2024, instruction has remained the single largest core expenditure category, reflecting OCC's continued commitment to high-quality teaching and student learning ([E292\\_HistoricalExpense](#)):

- \$27,821,986 (44.71%) in FY 2020
- \$25,333,613 (42.17%) in FY 2021
- \$24,719,551 (40.13%) in FY 2022
- \$24,391,147 (40.50%) in FY 2023
- \$21,584,656 (35.84%) in FY 2024

FY 2025 (closing 8/31/25) final expenditures will be presented to the Board of Trustees in February 2026, after all audit adjustments have been made. The decrease between 2023 and 2024 reflects broader enrollment and budgetary shifts, but instructional spending continues to represent over one-third of OCC's total core expenditures annually. Offsetting this decline is a notable increase in the proportion allocated to Student Services, which grew from 10.83% in 2020 to 14.59% in 2024. This rise aligns with OCC's Schools and Navigator model of holistic, non-academic, student support—an approach modeled after the federally funded SSS TRIO program and designed to offer personalized engagement and guidance. Consistent with OCC's institutional profile as a teaching-focused, open-access college, no core expenditures were reported for public service or research between FY 2020 and FY 2024. Public service activities (e.g. community partnerships, continuing education, or civic engagement) are typically grant-funded, unfunded, or integrated into other functional categories like instruction or student services. The overall pattern of resource allocation underscores OCC's mission-driven focus on instructional excellence and student success, with most expenditures directed toward teaching, academic support, and services directly impacting students.

OCC's faculty must meet the criteria specified in each department's credentialing manual, outlining the required education, certification, and skills to teach. Full-time and adjunct faculty are guided by the Faculty Handbook and the Centralized Policy Manual (see Standard II for an in-depth discussion of both). Programs designed for areas like Automotive and Heavy Equipment, Electrical, Electromechanical, and Mechanical Technology allow for faculty with industry experience and certifications as well as traditional academic preparation, giving students the best of both worlds ([E293\\_FTFacultyCredentials](#); [E217\\_FacultyCredentials](#); [E294\\_CredentialingMOA](#)).

In addition to excellent faculty, one of OCC's strengths is class size, averaging 17.5 students. During the 2024-2025 academic year, Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, and the department chairs collaborated on a course size/designated limit (DL) analysis, implemented in Fall 2025 ([E295\\_DLMemo12-24](#)). The shifts reflect both economic realities and a careful look at pedagogy and outcomes. DLs now range from specialty courses of one to three students up to 36 students for lectures. Lab sections have DLs up to 18 students except where otherwise appropriate, with most labs half the size of the corresponding lecture. Average student to faculty ratios remained consistent from Fall 2018 to Fall 2024, decreasing from 19 students per faculty member in Fall 2018 to 17.5 students per faculty member in Fall 2024, with an average of 18 students per faculty member during this period ([E296\\_StudentFacultyStaffRatios](#)).

OCC maintained an average adjunct to full-time faculty ratio of 2.25 from 2018 to 2023. A relatively large number of faculty retirements since the voluntary retirement incentive (see Standard II) caused the ratio to increase to 3.4 during the 2023-2024 year. The ratios are beginning to rebound with new faculty lines in programs experiencing growth. For example, 13 new, full-time faculty lines were added to the School of Technology, Engineering & Computing and four were added to the School of Health, Wellness & Human Services ([E297\\_FacultyAdminStaffHeadcount](#)).

High academic standards require professional development opportunities for faculty. The Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation (CTLI) supports faculty and, starting in 2020, staff. CTLI Travel and Training Grants of up to \$1,200 come from a designated funding source (\$28,500 for academic year 2025-2026), and use of these funds must clearly benefit the institution ([E298\\_CTLIWEB](#); [E299\\_CTLIFacultyAuthorization](#)). The CTLI also has a budget for bringing speakers and trainers to campus, as well as hosting faculty and staff curated events. In 2022, OCC became a member of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development and partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer its full, American Council on Education recognized certification in Effective Teaching Practices. As of May of 2024, 59 full-time and adjunct faculty completed all ACUE micro-credentials to earn the certificate, and 54 others earned at least one micro-credential ([E300\\_ACUEFacultyCompleters](#)). In 2023, OCC joined Quality Matters (QM) to provide training and certify faculty to teach online, ensuring all students receive high-quality, consistent learning experiences across all learning modalities ([E301\\_QMContract](#)).

The CTLI, overseen by the Dean of Instructional Services, has four dedicated staff ([E298](#)). An Academic Technology Specialist oversees and provides training for the D2L/Brightspace, OCC's learning management system (LMS) and other academic technology, working with IT and faculty to ensure smooth operation of the LMS. A Technical Assistant manages the office and helps with business functions. Lastly, a faculty member serves as Chair of the CTLI Coordinating Committee, an advisory committee comprised of faculty and staff. The faculty committee chair receives 3 credits of reassigned time (6 hours per week) to coordinate professional development opportunities.

Contractually, full-time faculty must maintain a regular credit load of 15 credits per semester, which may include a combination of teaching and reassignment of responsibilities such as department chair duties, committee work, and grant work. Due to these additional responsibilities, the average full-time teaching load per semester has been ~13.28 credits over the last 14 semesters (excluding winter and summer), with a high of 14.52 credits in Fall 2018 and a low of 12.37 credits in Spring 2022. The reduction in average credits reflects the decrease in student enrollment and the number of full-time faculty, while also indicating the substantial amount of reassigned curriculum and grant work related to high-growth areas of the College. Note, some faculty, like Librarians, may teach as little as 1 credit, and full-time administrators who teach a section are also counted in the average ([E302\\_AvgCreditsPerFaculty](#)).

Some areas of College service, such as specific committee roles, require faculty serving in them to be tenured. Tenure, like all faculty evaluation procedures, is outlined in the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement ([E303\\_CBAFaculty, p. 43-51](#)). Full-time faculty are evaluated extensively in the minimum five years required for tenure, with at least three classroom observations and annual student evaluations, as well as the completion of a yearly retention packet outlining teaching and service. Packets are reviewed in the candidate's home department and then by a faculty committee, which makes recommendations to Academic Affairs and the President. Similar procedures are followed for promotion. Adjuncts undergo a comparable process, requiring classroom observations and student evaluations throughout the first six terms of receiving an assignment ([E304\\_CBAAdjunctEvalSect15.1](#)). Assessments for all faculty are intended to be both formative and summative, promoting teaching excellence.

Assessment of learning experiences at OCC is structured around Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). ILOs define the broad skills and knowledge that all OCC students are expected to acquire and are available to students and the public on the About page of the Onondaga website

(E24). The ILOs focus on students' ability to learn, think critically and creatively, and act ethically and responsibly in academic, professional, and personal contexts. Each academic program has PLOs that are regularly assessed to ensure alignment with institutional goals and to drive curricular improvements (E249). ILOs and PLOs align vertically, mapping up to each other, allowing program faculty to create authentic assessments of student learning and ensure every student can meet ILOs as they progress through their program.

Faculty own the curriculum and have responsibility for assessing its effectiveness via the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC), a standing committee of Faculty Senate. Academic programs are assessed at three- and six-year intervals as per SUNY guidelines (for example, see Communication Studies A.A. six-year program review) (E305\_COMAAProgReview). LOAC organizes and evaluates program reviews, conducted and submitted by academic departments. In instances of externally accredited programs, faculty may submit their annual reports and self-study to LOAC for evaluation. Non-credit programs undergo similar reviews but are evaluated by the supporting department rather than LOAC (E306\_NonCreditProgEvalAssess). In 2024, chairs collaborated with Academic Affairs to revise the chair job description, making chairs responsible for ensuring consistent oversight and assessment of all curricula within a department. (E307\_ChairsJobDescription).

LOAC also oversees the approval of the General Education Requirements set by SUNY (SUNY-GER) (E308\_SUNYGenEdFramework). OCC's general education requirements, outlined in its Curriculum Handbook (E252, p. 8), are designed to enable *"individuals to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for responsible participation in society. These include the ability to reason and communicate effectively, a capacity for compassionate inquiry, a framework for intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic growth, and a commitment to the well-being of self and the larger community."* Faculty are required to collect data on all courses that meet SUNY-GER requirements every semester, including winter/summer, and complete a formal review and assessment every two years. OCC's programs have been designed using Guided Pathways, which allows faculty to select SUNY-GER designated courses that align best with their programs (E249, p.6).

OCC's commitment to assessment is part of a campus wide focus on continuous quality improvement. Assessment Day and Assessment Fellowships, also overseen by LOAC, foster a culture of assessment, inviting interdisciplinary conversation (see Standard V). OCC also utilizes tools like the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to benchmark student perceptions and identify opportunities for institutional improvement (E249, p. 4). All this information is made available to the campus community via the LOAC website (E309\_LOACWeb).

A point of pride in instructional excellence at OCC is the Lillian Slutzker Honors College (E310\_HonorsCollegeWeb). Starting in Fall 2024, students were no longer required to apply for admission. Instead, any student with a qualifying OCC or high school GPA was automatically welcomed into the program. This new, open-access model expanded the Honors student population from approximately 115 students to over 860. The *I am Honors* campaign, initially funded by an internal Student Success Challenge Grant, aimed to build belonging and visibility because, despite their eligibility, many students were unaware or did not identify as Honors students. The campaign helped these students recognize their place in the Honors College, encouraging them to engage with those opportunities and services. Comparing 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, the number of students in Honors sections increased 37.8% (from 66 to 91 students), and students with Honors contracts increased 70% (from 27 to 46). In Spring 2025, there were 863 honors-eligible students; 145 of these (16.8%) were underrepresented minority students and 261 (30%) were first-generation (E311\_IamHonors). The number of students participating in Honors courses or contracts in Spring 2025 (137) is greater than the total Honors population (115) just a year earlier.

### Online Learning

As with face-to-face programs and courses, OCC's distance education offerings fall under the umbrella of the applicable Academic Rules and College policies, as well as all applicable policies in the *Information Technology (I)* section of the Centralized Policy Manual, such as B21, Student Success and J1: Acceptable and Responsible Use



of OCC Technology and Information Systems ([E312\\_PolicyB21](#); [E195\\_OCCTechPolicyJ1](#)). To ensure the comparability of distance education programs and courses to those in other modalities, OCC uses the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) framework to provide macro level guidance and adheres to the Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education. As stated in the Board of Trustees resolution endorsing College membership in NC-SARA, these policies combine to ensure

*academic rigor and integrity are maintained in delivering distance education programs by setting and adhering to standards for online course development, delivery, and assessment; offering distance education-focused faculty development opportunities [...]; and, assessing distance education programs to ensure that they are of high quality and in compliance with standards set by accrediting agencies.*

OCC uses the Quality Matters (QM) rubric and training to credential faculty to teach online ([E313\\_CSARABoTRes5.10.22](#); [E314\\_CRACGuidelines](#); [E315\\_QMRubric](#)).

OCC became a member of the (NC-SARA) and Quality Matters (QM) in Summer 2022 as part of its strategic effort to enhance the quality, integrity, and reach of its distance education offerings ([E316\\_NCSARAApproval](#); [E301](#); [E317\\_QMInvoice2025](#)). 23% of OCC's students take courses online, and 6% of OCC students are fully online ([E318\\_DistanceEduStatusByPercent](#)). The decision to join NC-SARA was driven by the benefits of multi-state reciprocity, allowing OCC to offer online courses across state lines with reduced regulatory burden. Simultaneously, the adoption of QM provided the institution with a professionally recognized platform for faculty development in online teaching and instructional design. Several programs are offering in an online format, including: Health Information Technology A.A.S., Creative Writing A.A., and Humanities and Social Sciences A.A.

Under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), all faculty not previously credentialed to teach asynchronously must complete the QM Designing Your Online Course training and submit a course for review and approval ([E315](#)). Two, QM certified, faculty trainers deliver QM's Design Your Online Course curriculum in-house to faculty and review and approve courses submitted as part of the QM certification ([E319\\_QMFacultyCompleters](#)). As of this writing, 118 full-time and adjunct faculty are credentialed to teach online, with 49 holding QM certification ([E319](#)). The CTLI regularly offers professional development opportunities, including on-campus workshops and best practice 'brown bag' sessions, as well as advertising those offered by SUNY and other external organizations. The College and the faculty union, as part of a Joint Labor Management Committee established in 2024, have been discussing how to best increase the professional development expectations around online instruction, including the possibility of periodic, mandated training ([E303, p.78](#)). As of this writing, discussion is ongoing.

Analysis of online courses compared to their face-to-face counterparts showed that online course success rates were not consistent with the face-to-face sections. To address this, an ad-hoc committee, working with the Faculty Senate and the Academic Technology Coordinating Committee (ATCC), developed a process to identify online courses that significantly differ in outcomes as compared to their face-to-face counterparts. These courses are identified annually by ATCC and reviewed by department chairs with the goal of improving outcomes. Chairs meet with faculty who regularly teach the online version of the course to explore outcomes data, identify potential causes for the disparity, create a plan for how to address it, and then make changes to courses as needed ([E320\\_OnlineCourseAssessWorkflowSenateMin, p. 4-5](#); [E321\\_CoursesSignifDiffSuccessRates](#)). For example, ENG 104, Critical Writing & Literature II, a course required for transfer degrees and satisfying a SUNY General Education requirement in Humanities, was identified as having lower success rates than face-to-face versions. The chair met with faculty who concluded that, since this class has a large amount of reading and students do not have the built-in structure of an in-person class, it would benefit students by building in more reading checkpoints via low stakes or no stakes assignments ([E322\\_SampleCourseAsmt](#)). The suggestion to build in these reading checkpoints was then shared with all those teaching the course online.



All courses taught at OCC come with a learning management software (LMS) shell, used at the discretion of the instructor. For help with online course creation, instructors can rely on the full-time Academic Technology Specialist in the CTLI. For students, OCC's Online Learning webpage provides instructions on how to access the College's LMS as well as tips on how to be a successful online learner ([E323\\_OnlineLearningWeb](#)). Students and faculty also have access to OCC's Helpdesk and the SUNY Online Helpdesk ([E324\\_SUNYOnlineSuppHelpDesk](#); [E325\\_SummaryD2LIssues](#); [E326\\_Fall24Helpdeskdata](#)). Students can also work with staff in the Learning Center on basic navigation of the LMS ([E327\\_LCApptsTechHelp](#)). Distance learning students have access to the same support and services as students who take classes in person. For example, the Learning Center, which offers face to face as well as online appointments, tracks the modality of the course for which support was requested as well as the modality of the appointment ([E328\\_LCUtilization](#)). Likewise, Navigators, Counseling, and the Office of Accessibility Services (OAR) do not disaggregate based on whether the student is fully online, in-person, or has a hybrid schedule. They do, however, track the modality in which support was given ([E329\\_NavigatorSurveyResults](#); [E330\\_CounselingCCHStats](#); [E331\\_OAREOYReport](#)). It is assumed that online students would utilize online and telephone options, but these options are open to all students. Ongoing and regular assessment of these services is built into each area's annual operational plan. For example, see Academic and Student Affairs' Operational Plan for Learning Center and OAR assessment ([E89\\_OpPlanASA](#)).

### Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom

Coulter Library has changed significantly in the last few years. It introduced a liaison model, assigning dedicated librarians to each of OCC's Schools to strengthen academic integration and outreach. This shift fostered greater insight into student needs, resulting in the expansion of quiet individual and small group study areas, new study tools for health sciences students, and an expanded inventory of laptop computers and calculators available for loan. They completed a mini self-study as part of a 2021 response to the proposed College re-organization and also revised their Collection Development Policy to maintain a relevant, high-quality collection ([E332\\_LibraryProgReview](#), p.19-42; [E333\\_LibraryReorgResponse](#); [E334\\_LibraryCollectionDevPolicy](#)).

Supported by a staff of 11.2 full-time equivalent, Coulter Library's collection includes 75,711 physical items and 653,073 electronic resources. The holdings database is managed through ALMA, a comprehensive cloud-based library services platform. The library's website outlines policies for access and use, which are continually assessed through monthly departmental meetings and participation in surveys like those of the Association of College and Research Libraries. To expand access, OCC has agreements with SUNY Alma Resource Sharing and Empire Library Delivery, allowing students and faculty access to a broad range of materials and reference services across all instructional locations and formats ([E334](#)). At the request of any faculty member, including those teaching dual enrollment, staff will deliver workshops on using library resources, as well as help with integrating information literacy and academic integrity into courses. Library instruction has been formally included in several courses serving students across the College, such as Intro to Liberal Arts (LBL 101) and Library Research Skills (LIB 110), a one-credit course required for students pursuing the Health Studies Certificate and available as an elective to all students ([E335\\_LIB110CourseOutline](#)).

The English Language Institute (ELI) at OCC was launched in Fall 2022 to offer free community education classes that align English instruction with college readiness and workforce goals. Rather than use standardized tests, the ELI offers guided self-placement and aims to build foundational reading comprehension and vocabulary for students preparing for college-level coursework in the pre-credit space. The elimination of non-credit-bearing, remedial classes removed 18 credits of coursework that represented a significant financial and structural barrier for English language learners ([E336\\_ELIREgFlyer](#); [E68](#); [E278](#); [E279](#)). ELI is delivered through a structured sequence—Beginner, Intermediate, and Contextualized—that support progressive skill-building and meet students at their proficiency level: from basic conversational grammar, to expressing complex ideas, to applying contextualized language within medical, technical, and liberal arts disciplines. ELI students are not required to attend OCC at the completion of their sequence; while it does provide a pathway to enrollment at OCC, it also

fills an existing gap in available community services by offering this level of language instruction.

The program, funded almost entirely through philanthropy, has achieved several milestones: transitioning its first cohort into credit-bearing courses, securing Faculty Senate approval for English Language Learner (ELL) testing accommodations, implementing contextualized, technical English through Perkins grant funding, and integrating with Lazer Success to improve student tracking and outreach. Enhanced placement protocols and expanded walk-in support have further strengthened onboarding processes. In 2025, the College increased its investment in ELI success, restructuring academic support services and launching English for Academic Purposes courses off-campus through a partnership with the Syracuse City School District ([E279](#); [E68](#)).

The Learning Center website offers contact information, instructions on making appointments, hours of operation, and, most importantly for online and non-traditional learners, a link to StarNY, after-hours, online tutoring from 7pm-12am ([E337\\_LearningCenterWeb](#)). OCC's Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) website has contact information and information on the Americans with Disabilities Act ([E338\\_OARFacultyGuideWeb](#)). The Helpdesk at OCC and SUNY's helpdesk for Brightspace, OCC's LMS, provide students with technological support ([E339\\_OCCHelpDesk](#); [E340\\_BrightspaceHelpWeb](#)).

Third-Party Providers

As of this writing, OCC has no third-party providers delivering education-related services and/or portions of educational programs. The College has adopted a universal assessment form that would be used to verify these providers are meeting expectations should this change, as well as a Third-Party Provider policy ([E387\\_3rdPartyAssessForm](#); [E386\\_3rdPartyPolicy](#)).

Conclusion

OCC continuously seeks new ways to expand learning opportunities, strengthen industry partnerships, and support students from all walks of life. As the landscape of higher education changes, OCC remains adaptable, resilient, and committed to empowering students through assessment and continuous quality improvement.

Current Strengths	1. Strong structures and systems in place for assessment across programs, including mechanisms for reviewing and improving programs, as well as developing new ones in response to community need.	Criteria 8
	2. Effective implementation of Guided Pathways, especially the student support components. Evident by increasing graduation numbers.	Criteria 3
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	1. Increase scheduling flexibility for students.	Criteria 4
	2. Reach new audiences (e.g. apprenticeships) by more effectively communicating the variety and 'stackability' of credentials.	Criteria 3
	3. Ensure systematic review of syllabi to guarantee fidelity to Course Outlines and presence of required information.	Criteria 4

# STANDARD IV

## Support of the Student Experience






### Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

*Across all educational experiences, settings, levels and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experiences, and fosters student success.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College (OCC) has adopted specialized tools, programs, and practices to enhance the student experience and better support student success. OCC is becoming more of a “student ready” college, seeking to meet its students, with their unique strengths and challenges, where they are. OCC has embraced holistic support at every stage in the student lifecycle to better fulfill its Mission + Vision and advance its Core Values.

Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
IV. Support of the Student Experience				

Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria

1. How does OCC demonstrate a commitment to improve student success for all learners? **Criteria 1.b, Criteria 1.e**
- a. What programs and strategies enhance students' educational experiences? **Criteria 6**

2. What practices does OCC use to admit, retain and support a diverse population of students? **Criteria 1**

3. How does OCC provide programming and resources to support the personal wellness of students? **Criteria 1.e, Criteria 4**

4. What communication systems and processes exist at the College, and how effective are they at supporting students and fostering their success? **Criteria 1.a, Criteria 1.c**

5. How does OCC leverage data to inform the improvement of student services? **Criteria 6**

Analysis

OCC reached its historic enrollment peak in 2011, largely a result of the Great Recession and significant losses within the local manufacturing base. Enrollment subsequently began to decline and accelerated between 2018 and 2024 due to demographic shifts, the global pandemic, and the changing landscape of higher education, prompting refocused efforts on persistence and retention. In response to the decline in enrollment, OCC has both budgeted enrollment projections and strategic enrollment goals, along with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress toward the Strategic Plan goals ([E40\\_SEMPlan, p. 11, 14, 18-27, A13-15; E292\\_HistoricalExpense; E341\\_SPKPI](#)).

Prospective Students

As an open access institution committed to offering affordable and accessible education to all, OCC welcomes all students. Standard II details OCC's ethical marketing practices, but the April 2025 Spring Open House and Accepted Students Day speaks to the student experience. In this new model, students explore their specific academic interests within the framework of the Schools and can apply for admission and financial aid. The 2025 event saw record-breaking attendance of more than 1,100 students and guests. Day one was reserved for 282 local high school students, and day two hosted more than 400 prospective students and over 450 guests. Compared to the 2023 Spring Open House, the 2025 event increased the number of students who registered by 233, the number who attended by 362, and saw an almost 12% rise in students who both registered and attended ([E342\\_OpenHouseDataSp2025; E343\\_OpenHouseAgendas](#)).

Prospective students have multiple on-ramps to OCC, such as dual enrollment programs like P-TECH, Early OCC, Spartan Academy, and the SMART Scholars program ([E77\\_EarlyCollegeWeb](#)). Students receive tuition waivers and discounts to work toward earning transferable college credits up to an associate degree, with approximately 325 high school students taking classes on campus in 2023-2024. More than 3,500 high school



students completed college credits through these programs and College Credit Now ([E277\\_CCNDData](#)).

OCC accepts a range of credits, including Advanced Placement, College-level Examination Program exams, International Baccalaureate, military credit, and credits earned at other colleges and universities ([E344\\_TransferEquivReport](#); [E345\\_TransferCreditPolicy](#)). The transfer credit evaluation coordinator reviews credits (usually within 2 business days of receipt of an official transcript), and students see results in the Student Planning system. All guides for transfer and AP/IB/CLEP equivalencies are available on the website ([E346\\_ExamCreditChart](#); [E267\\_CreditPriorLrngWeb](#)). Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), most recently updated in Fall 2025, can be awarded for standardized testing, departmental exams, military coursework, professional licensures, certifications, and work experience. The process and most current standardized equivalencies, created by the Scholastic Standards Committee and approved by Faculty Senate, are on the College's website. More equivalencies are being developed ([E267](#); [E347\\_CreditPriorLrngRequest](#)). Awarding CPL based on professional licensure and/or certification in health care fields is a key part of OCC's work with the SUNY HealthCARES Consortium (see Standard III).

Post-traditional learners have the potential to benefit most from CPL, and an increasing number of OCC students fit into this category ([E348\\_AdmissionsProfile](#)). In 2022, the Title III grant funded Post-Traditional Learner workgroup made specific recommendations to enhance services for this population in course delivery, pedagogy, scheduling, and outreach and marketing strategies ([E349\\_PostTradLearnerWkgrp](#)). Examples of projects completed as a result include the Parent and Adult Learner Suite, drop-in childcare at the adjoining YMCA, expansion of fully online degrees, and expansion of non-credit workforce credentials/career pathways. OCC is currently developing a two-year academic schedule that will allow adult learners to plan their entire degree at the outset. Beginning in Fall 2025, the SUNY Reconnect program offers free community college for New York adults ages 25-55 with no college degree pursuing associates in high-demand fields. 362 OCC students are taking advantage of this program ([E350\\_ReconnectData](#); [E351\\_ReconnectStories](#)). Additionally, OCC launched a 150-person cohort in June 2025 of the Advancing Success in Associate Pathways Opportunity Program, which will also impact post-traditional students meeting financial eligibility requirements ([E291\\_ASAPWeb](#)).

Consistent with changes in the region's higher education landscape and OCC's lack of targeted recruitment given its community focus, total enrollment of international students has declined since 2011 ([E352\\_InternationalStuEnrollByProg](#)).

### Attending OCC

OCC has implemented different strategies to streamline and personalize student onboarding. From 2019 to 2023, One Team provided outreach and support to students from acceptance through their second semester. Starting in 2023, all applicants are assigned an Admissions Specialist to help with the process. After registration, students are assigned a Navigator within their School, who sends weekly outreach during the months leading up to the student's first semester. Students work with that Navigator during their entire time at the College and only change Navigators if they switch to a major outside their original School. This change was driven by the development of the Schools model. The connection with a Navigator post-registration helps students prepare for their first semester while also fostering a relationship that continues throughout their time at OCC.

New Student Orientation offers incoming students the opportunity to connect with faculty and staff from their School, other students in their cohort, and representatives from important offices like Financial Aid and Student Accounts ([E353\\_OrientationSchedule](#)). From Fall 2022 to Fall 2024, approximately 34% of the total cohort of students new to OCC attended orientation (an average of 1,326 attendees out of 3,857 total students). Attendees consistently demonstrate stronger academic performance compared to non-attendees, earning a higher average GPA (2.34 compared to 1.91) and completing more credits on average their first semester (10.2 versus 8.2). Attendees also experienced a significantly lower rate of unsatisfactory Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), with 29.6% falling below SAP standards compared to 42.0% of non-participants ([E354\\_OrientationAttendance](#)).



Although difficult to prove a causal relationship between participation in New Student Orientation and academic performance, *“Research supports a positive relationship between orientation and retention”* ([E355\\_ProQuestStudy, p. 1](#)). Promising research like this, combined with the recommendations of the external experts like the National Institute of Student Success (NISS), led OCC to revise its orientation ([E356\\_NISSReport, p. 41](#)). NISS was consulted to provide subject matter expertise, give staff an objective view of data, and make recommendations about what to prioritize as projects were scaled.

Beginning in Summer 2025, all incoming students are now *“required”* to complete an online New Student Orientation and then strongly encouraged to attend a school-specific, in-person orientation in mid-August ([E357\\_OrientationWeb](#)). There is no penalty for nonattendance, but the *“required”* language helps students see this as important and follow-up outreach to nonattenders underscores this. The online orientation, designed for flexibility, introduces participants to academic expectations and student responsibilities, key campus resources, support services, and terminology (i.e., *“college-speak”*); it also teaches students how to navigate college systems. 699 students completed the online orientation, and 606 attended one of eight available in-person sessions. Of this group, 966 unique students attended one or both types of orientation. For Fall 2025, 51.6% of students new to OCC (1,872 total) attended some form of orientation, up from an average of 34% in previous years, with attendance expected to grow as communication strategies are refined ([E358\\_OrientationDataSu2025](#)).

Given that 36% of degree/certificate seeking students identify as first-generation, OCC partnered with CampusESP in Fall 2024 to provide resources and support for the families of prospective and enrolled students. Collaborating with families empowers students and their support networks, promoting academic achievement and personal growth. OCC now offers family members and supporters a platform, the Onondaga Family Experience, that supports them in navigating campus support systems, provides contact information for key staff, and extends opportunities to connect with campus resources ([E359\\_CampusESPEarlyResults](#); [E360\\_CampusESPFamilyInvite](#)).

Taking lessons from Achieving the Dream and the Community College Research Center, OCC developed other, new processes to support students. For example, the Register NOW program that started in Spring 2024, simplifies class registration for new students. When a student is ready to register, an Onboarding Specialist assists them in completing a program specific registration form. This form is used by a Navigator in their School to create a personalized class schedule meeting the student’s needs (e.g. work and childcare). Students receive their schedule via email along with important next steps, such as instructions for accessing OCC email and attending New Student Orientation. If a student requests career guidance, they can meet with Career and Transfer staff to explore their values, interests, and goals, connecting them to academic programs that best fit their aspirations ([E61\\_RegisterNow](#)).

In Spring 2024, when Register Now debuted, 727 students made their schedule through the process. The following fall (Fall 2024), 2,481 students did. In Spring 2025, 707 forms were completed, and in Fall 2025, 2,825 forms were completed ([E361\\_RegisterNowSubmissionsData](#)). The Register Now process increases efficiency in admissions and student access and allows Navigators to focus discussions on academic goals and long-term planning. While a net positive for students, the biggest issue for staff is the time intensive nature of manually registering students through Colleague and generating individualized emails. Plans are in place to transition this process to Slate CRM, which will improve efficiency and provide a more seamless experience for students and staff.

Schools, OCC’s name for meta majors, were introduced in 2020 to align with the principles of Guided Pathways ([E11\\_T3Narrative, p.20](#)). Internal research at OCC confirmed that students in Opportunity Programs (approximately 325 students in 2025) persisted and graduated at much higher rates than non-affiliated students, suggesting the personalized support and high levels of engagement in these programs were significant factors in their success. Schools were designed to give every student at OCC a similar experience. This model focuses on three key areas: enhancing advising, integrating career and transfer planning, and fostering a sense of belonging. Schools group academic programs into broad, recognizable categories, helping students select a degree pathway that matches their interests and career goals while minimizing credit loss due to change of major.

The original structure called for eight Schools. In Fall 2023, it was streamlined to the current four: School of Arts, Communication, Business & Entrepreneurship; School of Health, Wellness, and Human Services; School of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and School of Technology, Engineering & Computing ([E362\\_HeadcountBySchoolChart](#)).

Each School has a team that includes a School Specialist, Faculty Liaison, Assistant Director, Student Success Navigators, Career and Transfer Specialists, and Secretaries. Navigators serve as consistent, go-to supports who help students make sense of college, whether that's choosing classes, connecting with resources, or working through personal or academic challenges. Navigators receive comprehensive training, covering a wide range of topics, including academic advisement, transfer assistance, coaching methodology, and campus resources ([E363\\_NavigatorTraining](#)).

The coaching methodology used by Navigators is that used by InsideTrack for Academic Success Coaching. The methodology meets the Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservation ([E11, p. 20](#)). By 2021, relevant OCC staff were trained and certified in coaching, with designated staff able to credential new coaches, creating a sustainable system for support beyond the initial, Title III grant funding that made it possible. Through the coaching methodology, staff members help students explore their knowledge, skills, and beliefs to create a path through college. When asked about their coaching experience, one student replied, *"The college has come a long way since I initially attended 20 years ago. Everyone truly wants the students to succeed!"* ([E364\\_SuccessCoachSurvey](#)).

A five-year, longitudinal Social Policy Research Associates study, required as part of the federal Department of Education 2018-2023 Title III grant, quantified the impact of coaching: students who participated in at least one coaching session completed their English gateway course at a rate of 54%, compared to 46% of students without coaching, difference in proportions test (\*\*\*)  $p < .001$ ). This study also measured the impact of OCC's cumulative reforms. For example, the completion rate for the English gateway course among all first-time, full-time students rose from 59% in 2020 to 64% in 2022, while the average total credits earned increased from 14.7 to 15.8. Black and first-generation students demonstrated significant gains in credits earned, from 8.5 to 11.8 and 12.8 to 13.6, respectively. The percentage of first-time, full-time students earning at least 15 credits per semester grew from 50% to 55%. Retention rates also improved, with Fall-to-Fall retention for first-time, full-time students taking English gateway courses rising from 48% to 53% and Fall-to-Spring retention for the same group increasing from 72% to 76% ([E365\\_SPRAStudy, p. 12-37](#)). These outcomes document the success of OCC's holistic student support reforms, designed to meet students where they are and enhance their use of campus services.

All matriculated students are assigned at least one Navigator within their School based on academic program, and students who are part of an Opportunity Program may have an additional Navigator. Non-matriculated students were advised by the Interim Associate Dean of Students, and Lazer Success flags were followed up by available staff. Beginning in Fall 2025, non-matriculated students have a dedicated Navigator. Students in Early College Programs are supported by a dedicated staff member serving as Navigator. Early College Programs' staff see Lazer Success alerts and collaborate with high school staff to provide wraparound support.

EAB's Starfish, known locally as Lazer Success (LS), allows faculty to provide direct feedback to students about their performance. Faculty can raise flags about academic or attendance concerns or extend *"kudos"* for positive reinforcement. Flags give students direct, timely feedback and are also sent to support teams (which always include Navigators) who perform outreach via phone, text, or email. Flags also enhance communication because students have the option of responding directly to faculty through the same system. The composition of a student's support team varies based on their campus affiliations, such as living on campus, participating in athletics, receiving accessibility accommodations, etc., ensuring students receive support tailored to their unique needs. In Fall 2024 alone, faculty raised over 10,000 flags ([E366\\_FacultyRaisedFlags](#)). Students can also use LS to schedule appointments at the Learning Center, Career Services, Financial Aid Service Center, Student Accounts, Admissions, with Navigators, and, as of Fall 2025, OCC's Opportunity Programs. Providing an easy-to-use and integrated referral/scheduling system removes barriers that might otherwise discourage students from seeking help.

For students who need additional support, there is Growth, Progress, & Skills for College (GPS), a weekly workshop series focusing on building academic, personal, and practical skills while fostering engagement and a sense of belonging ([E367\\_GPSOverviewPresentation](#)). GPS workshops are open to all students, but first-year and at-risk students are specifically encouraged to attend. In Fall 2024, the semester the program started, 215 unique students participated in at least one workshop. Of those, 187 registered for the Spring 2025 semester, and 148 completed the Fall semester with a GPA above 2.0. In response to student feedback, the program now includes evening and virtual options and a peer-led session where students share success strategies.

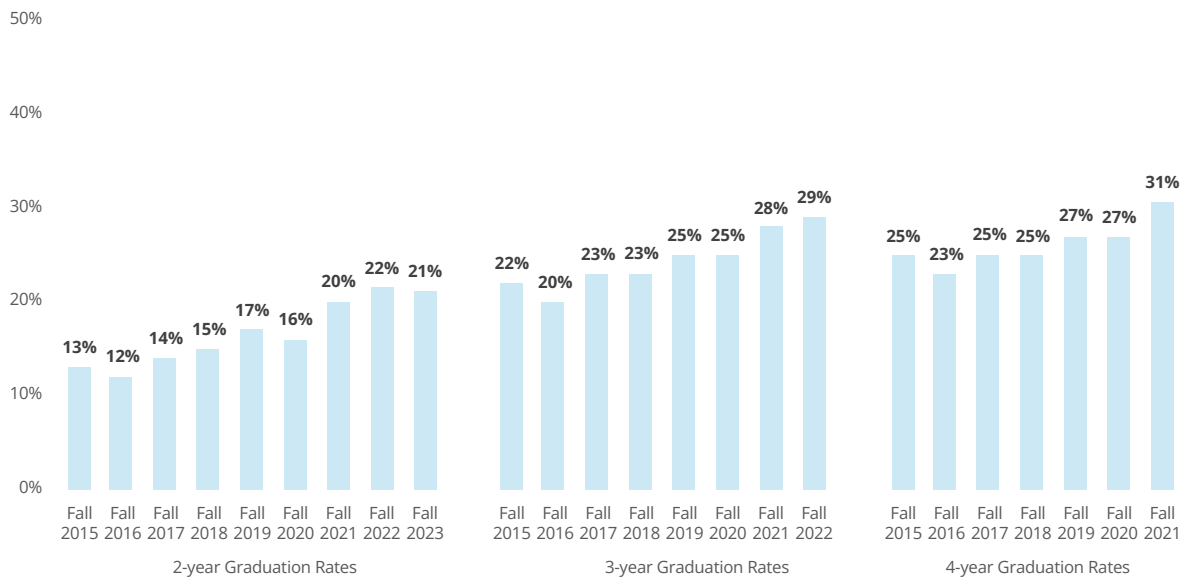
Navigators use targeted text messages and emails to meet the needs of specific student demographics and groups. Regular outreach campaigns include text nudges with information about important deadlines, engagement during academic breaks, contacting students enrolled in courses outside of their program, and providing re-advisement after deregistration periods, such as when students are removed from courses due to unmet prerequisites ([E368\\_SchoolsOutreachPlan](#)). Messaging strategies have been refined for relevancy, prioritizing students' interests, academic goals, and career aspirations. Each School gathers student feedback through surveys and its Student Advisory Board ([E369\\_LiberalArtsSABNotes](#); [E370\\_LiberalArtsSABPoster](#)). See Standard II for a discussion of the audit of student-facing department communications.

A key member of the Schools' Team is the Career and Transfer Specialist (CTS) who assists current students and alumni with career preparation and transfer. Formerly separate, CTS staff joined the Schools in Fall 2023. CTS staff host career showcases, resumé and cover letter workshops, and transfer fairs, focusing on the needs of students within their specific Schools. They also work with offices outside the Schools, including the Office of Veterans and Military Services, Office of Accessibility Resources, Honors, and the Opportunity Programs. CTS staff collaborate with Navigators to guide students through various aspects of the transfer process, like sending transcripts and understanding articulation agreements. Articulation agreements include program-to-program plans, which specify transferable courses, and dual admission (2+2) agreements allowing for transfer as full Juniors to four-year institutions ([E371\\_MOUSUNYESFBridgeProg](#); [E372\\_TransferServicesWeb](#)). School teams showcase OCC's most popular transfer institutions on campus and arrange bus trips to those campuses, clarifying transfer requirements, connecting students to staff and faculty at prospective schools, and reducing transition concerns. Including transfer fairs, workshops, individual appointments and other events, approximately 1,450 matriculated students participate each year. The biggest challenges for CTS is raising awareness of services, coordinating event times to fit with student schedules, and limited funding for travel.

Students are surveyed every semester about their experience with Navigators and consistently indicate they make students feel supported. In the Spring 2025 survey, 197 of 238 respondents agreed with the statement *"The Navigator effectively assisted me with my topics of concern,"* 27 disagreed, and 14 were neutral. Students met with Navigators for a range of topics, including academic and advising issues but also personal and professional goals, integrating into campus life, and career exploration ([E329\\_NavigatorSurveyResults](#)). Because the Navigator position is entry level with commensurate pay, turnover is, and has been, a concern. Certifying people in the coaching methodology takes time/resources, and coaching skills improve with experience. New Navigators need time to reach the same level of effectiveness as their more experienced peers. It has been challenging, especially with staff turnover, to keep caseloads close to the ideal 150 students per Navigator. Balancing time and resources across advising, outreach, and follow-up remains an ongoing challenge, but the College is committing the necessary resources to address it. Three new, Navigator positions were added in Fall 2025. One of these roles focuses on the non-matriculated student population and is cross-trained to support all four Schools, ensuring continuity when a Navigator departs and provides coverage during the onboarding of new Navigators.

While hard to quantify the impact of each one, all the innovations discussed in this Standard have contributed to increasing student success. Fall-to-Fall retention rates for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students have increased since the Schools' implementation in 2021, from 48% in 2020 to ~55% in 2024 and graduation rates have steadily improved over time ([E373\\_IPEDSRetentionRates](#); [E286\\_IPEDSGradRates](#); [E375\\_IPEDSGradRatesGraph](#)).

IPEDS GRADUATION RATES



Student enrollment and achievement data is routinely disaggregated, analyzed, shared at School’s teammeetings, Achieving the Dream coaching sessions, and faculty and staff meetings. Staff and faculty can access interactive dashboards for macro or micro level analysis. Staff and faculty can access interactive dashboards for macro or micro level analysis ([E376\\_FtoFRetnRaceEthnicityNov2025](#)). See Standard V for additional details on dashboards. Disaggregated analysis has shown a record of unequal outcomes for demographic groups, and planning takes this into account. For example, the 2021-2026 Strategic Enrollment Plan contains strategies and tactics to “Prioritize enrollment and success rates of under-represented minority and first-generation students” ([E40, p. 24-25](#)).

Enrollment trends in specific programs as well as retention and completion data reveal strengths and areas for improvement, including the need to supplement OCC’s structural reforms (i.e. Schools and Navigators) with program specific enhancements to advising, degree planning, and support services. For example, programs such as Nursing A.A.S., Surgical Technology A.A.S., and Physical Therapist Assistant A.A.S. demonstrate strong performance, with 1-year retention rates above 84%. The Nursing licensure examination pass rate is consistently above 88% (47/52 students in 2023 and 57/64 students in 2025) ([E377\\_NYSRN-NCLEXResults](#); [E378\\_PTASateBoardPassRates](#)). These competitive programs have admission requirements, likely contributing to their success by ensuring students are well-prepared. In contrast, a program like Engineering Science A.S. has moderate retention but extremely low enrollment and graduation rates. To address this, some programs are considering admission requirements where appropriate, such as the requirements for Engineering Science A.S., in effect Fall 2025, ensuring students have the necessary math and science prerequisites. Liberal Arts programs overall show declining enrollment, stable retention, but lower graduation rates.

Supporting Underprepared Students

Numerous OCC students, many of whom have been systemically underserved in area school districts, come with knowledge and skill gaps and are underprepared for the academic rigors of college. OCC has been innovative in finding ways to reduce barriers for these students, exemplifying how the College is becoming more “student ready.”



In Fall 2020, OCC English and Integrated Learning Strategies (formerly Reading) faculty removed all non-credit reading and writing courses from the schedule. All students go directly into college-level, credit-bearing, first-year composition (FYC) courses. The English department redesigned FYC, incorporating key elements of the former developmental and co-requisite programs, such as holistic student supports. The course now features an integrated reading and writing framework, designed to better support student learning and success ([E12\\_TETYCMar23](#); [E13\\_TETYCDec24](#)). Since then, student success rates matched and then surpassed those of the previous models ([E13, p. 217-219](#)). In 2024, OCC received the Diana Hacker Two-Year College Association Outstanding Program Award given by the National Council of Teachers of English for this successful reform ([E379\\_DevelopWritingReform](#)). See Standard V for an in-depth discussion of assessment's role in this change.

The developmental mathematics curriculum has seen profound change as well. Following years of discussion, experimentation, and investment in classroom infrastructure, student outcomes in mathematics remained a source of concern. In 2021-22, the College administration removed non-credit mathematics courses from the schedule, citing data that showed students placed in these classes did not make required progress in their majors, even after multiple attempts. An internal study showed that of 586 STEM students who placed one level below credit bearing in 2019-2020, only 56 were successful in the first college-level, math pathway course, and only 3 were ultimately successful in Calculus 1, the required course for most pathways. Success rates for students placed two levels below collegiate were worse ([E380\\_IPARMathSuccessData](#)). This decision proved controversial among parts of the faculty, with some seeing it as curricular overreach. Several members of the STEM faculty were skeptical about the ability of under-prepared students (some with 8th grade math proficiency) to catch up in a semester, regardless of the innovative pedagogy or curriculum. This decision to remove the non-credit courses created an impasse of sorts, with little change in the mathematics curriculum immediately following.

Recently, however, mathematics faculty have been developing new approaches to support students, expanding contextualized mathematics courses to support student success in career and technical degrees (MAT 103, 108, 119 and 120), nursing (MAT 110), and business (MAT 115 and 116) ([E381\\_CourseOutlinesContextMath](#)). They also developed a two-credit equivalent, co-requisite course for MAT 143 (pre-Calculus) that started running in Fall 2022 and narrowed the success gap between underprepared students and their more prepared counterparts in STEM programs ([E382\\_MAT143SuccessRates](#)). While promising, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the efficacy of the co-requisite course because only two sections per term are offered and students self-select the course. Currently, faculty are developing a pilot program for students who nearly passed a mathematics course in the prior semester and may be able to 'recover' that lost credit with additional support. They are also identifying effective diagnostic tools to help properly place students into STEM pathway mathematics courses. See Standard V for more detail on this work. The College supports mathematics redesign efforts via faculty stipends and, when available, external grant funding.

In summer of 2022, OCC's Learning Center (LC) began offering optional, pre-term academic support workshops, focusing on study and basic math skills designed to complement curricular supports. The Math Xcelerator program is a pre-semester workshop offered both online and in person to all students enrolled in STEM pathway courses: MAT-103 Technical Math Fundamentals; MAT-114 Intermediate Algebra With Applications; MAT-119 Mathematics for Technical Disciplines I; and MAT-143 Pre-Calculus w/ Trigonometry. 85 students used the program to prepare for Fall 2024 classes. Promising student satisfaction data was collected, and the programs' impact on course success rates will be assessed at the end of Spring 2026 ([E383\\_SSCMathXcelerator](#); [E384\\_SSCMathXceleratorReport](#)). Students enrolled in the College's Career and Technical Education programs also have access to McGraw Hill's ALEKS adaptive learning software to enhance math skills prior to the start of their first semester.

The LC provides students with three options for tutoring: traditional one-on-one scheduled appointments; drop-in hours for courses with low pass rates; and online tutoring, offered through a collaboration between OCC and the SUNY STAR-NY consortium of tutors, an online tutoring service providing academic support into



late-night hours ([E385\\_StarNY](#)). A third-party provider, STAR-NY's work is assessed annually, as per OCC's third-party provider policy ([E386\\_3rdPartyPolicy](#); [E387\\_3rdPartyAssessForm](#)). Starting in Fall 2024, all tutoring appointments are scheduled and tracked through LS (see above). The previous scheduling software could not be integrated in the single sign-on, and decreasing any barrier, however small, increases access for all students. In Fall 2024, 6,007 tutoring appointments were made at the LC. 1,026 unique students used the service, and 29% of those students attended 5 or more tutoring sessions ([E328\\_LCUtilization](#)). The optional nature of pre-semester programing and tutoring, however effective, underscores the necessity of sustained, curricular innovation if the College wants to see large-scale change.

### Students Supports Outside of the Schools

OCC has an infrastructure designed to maximize student success by supporting the whole student. The Counseling team, for example, provides short-term, individual counseling and support groups for a range of issues, including academic struggles, self-identity, domestic violence, and crisis intervention. They can also help students arrange telepsychiatry for medication management. Counseling will connect students to community resources if more than a short-term intervention is needed. Complimenting this, the Community Care Hub (CCH) offers guidance and referrals on accessing support for housing, food, transportation, public benefits, child and family care, legal and financial matters, and physical and mental health ([E388\\_CounselingCCHWeb](#)). In Fall 2024, there were 159 referrals from various campus offices to services that are part of the CCH (62 coming through LazerSuccess) and 1,289 attended appointments for mental health services (includes support groups). The CCH also houses a food pantry, which had 1,831 visits from 5/20/21 to 5/21/25. Expanding options for food and personal care items is a long-term goal for staff ([E389\\_CCHAppts](#)).

In addition to tracking utilization, Counseling and CCH annually assess success rates of students utilizing their services. Success rates are compared to the campus norm and prior year statistics to determine impact. Because of confidentiality, assessment results are kept internal to the relevant office. In Fall 2024, however, these offices modified their consent forms to include a limited release to OCC's Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research (IPAR) office for improved data collection and assessment ([E390\\_CCHInformedConsent](#)). Initial reporting through IPAR is anticipated to begin in Spring 2026.

Along these lines, the Office of Veterans and Military Services (OVMS) exists to support military-affiliated students and their dependents. In Spring 2024, the OVMS was selected as one of 23 SUNY institutions to host a paid internship for a student veteran in the admissions process. The intern partnered with the Assistant Director of OVMS to attend college fairs and share their experiences as an OCC student, aiming to support military-connected families and encourage more veterans to pursue a college education. OVMS currently serves 188 individual students, including veterans and their dependents, using GI Bill benefits, and was named a Military Friendly School by U.S. Veterans Magazine in 2025 ([E391\\_OVMSData](#); [E392\\_OVMSWeb](#)).

The Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) reflects the institution's commitment to holistic student support through its approach to student academic and personal success, helping *"students with disabilities have an equal opportunity in all aspects of our educational environment."* It provides access and training in the use of accessibility software and tools for students as well as support for faculty in providing accommodations ([E338\\_OARFacultyGuideWeb](#); [E393\\_AccommPolicyA10](#)). The office also trains Navigators to advocate for students and students to advocate for themselves. Students who suspect they have a disability can be screened by staff before they are referred to off-campus resources for testing ([E394\\_OARWeb](#)). During the 2024-2025 academic year, approximately 873 unique students received services through OAR, an increase of 741 students from 2023-2024, with 120 graduates ([E331\\_OAREOYReport](#)). Historically, OAR's biggest challenge is when students do not self-identify as qualifying for services prior to the start of their first semester. OCC's application now has a question about having received services in the past, triggering proactive outreach (see Standard I for detail). New software is also being used to improve scheduling and record keeping.

The Financial Aid Service Center (FASC) was established in 2016 as part of Student Central and became part of the department of *Financial Aid* in 2018. Initially created to help students complete their FAFSA applications, FASC has grown into a fully staffed service center addressing all financial aid-related inquiries and functions. FASC plays a vital role for the approximately 85% of full-time, first-time students at OCC who receive financial aid, offering personalized, one-on-one support to both current and prospective students and families through walk-in and phone or in-person appointments. Since 2022, the FASC has held over 12,000 appointments ([E395\\_FASCYOYData](#)). See Standard II for a detailed analysis of the impact of FASC.

To further improve communication and transparency, the Financial Aid office, working in collaboration with FASC, redesigned the financial aid offer letter to make it easier for students and their supporters to understand. The updated letter includes an estimated financial aid package with a breakdown of tuition and fees, scholarships and grants, loans (subsidized versus unsubsidized), work-study, and a glossary of key terms. For students planning to live on campus, estimated residence hall costs are also included. ([E396\\_FinAidOfferLetters](#); [E397\\_FinAidBrochPublic](#); [E171\\_TuitionFAWeb](#); [E163\\_NetPriceCalc](#)).

The *Financial Aid* module in MyOCC, powered by Ellucian, gives students access to real-time updates about their financial aid status. Students can view their financial aid checklist, track required documents, review award offers, and notices of anything impacting eligibility. The number of Pell recipients dropped significantly between 2016 and 2021 but has started to rebound, rising from 1,832 in 2021 to 2,049 in 2023. This increase may indicate a growing financial need among students or improved outreach and support in helping students access financial aid goals ([E398\\_IPEDSStuFinAidSurvey](#); [E399\\_CCHEOYReport](#), p. 6).

The average student debt for all graduates increased from \$6,264 in 2010-2011 to a peak of \$7,3531 in 2017-2018, dropped to a low of \$5,469 in 2020-2021, and has recently risen to \$6,655 in 2023-2024 ([E177\\_AvgLoanIndebtedness](#)). The expiration of federal emergency aid has likely contributed to the recent uptick in student borrowing. Additionally, broader inflationary pressures have increased the cost of living, requiring some students to rely more heavily on loans to meet both educational and personal expenses ([E179\\_3yrDefaultRates](#)). Only 1% of students utilized private or non-federal loans, a testament to OCC's effective guidance in promoting safer, more manageable borrowing options ([E178\\_PercentStudentsLoans](#)).

Whether it is financial aid or other types of information, OCC is committed to protecting the privacy and security of all students. The College complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and has a policy for records retention ([E400\\_RecordsRetPolicyB9](#)). New employees receive FERPA training during orientation. Each year, enrolled students receive an email outlining their FERPA rights and can complete a FERPA waiver through their MyOCC account or by visiting Student Central ([E208\\_FERPAPolicyC1](#); [E400](#); [E401\\_ReleaseOfRecordsPolicyC11](#); [E195\\_OCCTechPolicyJ1](#); [E190\\_InternetPrivacyPolicyJ2](#); [E197\\_ComputingInfoWeb](#); [E402\\_AccessRecordsWeb](#)).

OCC also prioritizes the physical safety of its students through Campus Safety, educational programming, and student discipline procedures. Operating 24/7, Campus Safety provides comprehensive security services across campus via peace officers (state certified law enforcement), campus security officers, emergency alerts, and safety protocols. Campus Safety and Residence Life staff work together to ensure a safe and supportive living environment for the approximately 750 students who reside on campus, and safety/security is a mandatory topic of discussion at each resident assistant's first floor meeting. Within the residence halls, however, there has been an uptick in drug abuse violations, correlating to the 2021 legalization of marijuana in New York State and the increase in local availability, with the first cannabis dispensary in the area opening in 2023. Programming focused on the effects of cannabis is offered to residents during the first weeks of each semester. Throughout the semester, programming focuses on increasing knowledge about the dangers of substance misuse as well as campus policies regarding alcohol and other drugs; this includes: one large scale program, four RA facilitated programs (one per Residence Hall), passive programming (e.g., bulletin boards, mailbox stuffers, door knocking, etc.), mandatory alcohol and other drugs programming, and Title IX and hazing education

for student athletes ([E403\\_BiennialReview](#), p. 6). If students have a pattern of alcohol or other drug violations, or a serious violation such as transport, they are required to complete two sessions with the Assistant Director of Student Health, Wellness and Case Management, focused on motivational interviewing, harm reduction, and the student's current and future educational goals ([E403](#), p. 10). From Spring 2023 to Fall 2024, there were 385 total alcohol or other drugs cases. When compared to other, regional community colleges, OCC has a slightly higher number of disciplinary cases ([E138\\_SecurityReport](#), p. 34-37; [E404\\_USDEdCrimeStatistics](#), p. 5). A Biennial review assesses strengths, challenges, and strategies for moving forward in this area. For example, the most recent review noted an *"Organization-wide, top-down message of zero tolerance,"* but a concern that *"Due to the conclusion of the [...] grant, there is not currently a budget for a lot of prevention activities."* In response, no or low-cost programming will continue while the Grant's Office works to identify potential funding ([E403](#), p. 20-21; [E405\\_DrugFreeWkplHR2025](#)).

Consistent with OCC's emphasis on student safety and well-being, all incoming students receive essential information about Title IX during online and on-campus orientation. These sessions educate students about their rights and responsibilities under Title IX, how to recognize and report incidents of sexual harassment, assault, discrimination, and how to access on-campus and community support resources ([E156\\_TitleIXWeb](#)). Specific populations, such as student-athletes and members of the Student Government Association, participate in enhanced training focused on Title IX policies, bystander intervention strategies, and the importance of fostering a culture of accountability and respect in their roles as student leaders. Having previously been housed in HR, Title IX has been overseen by a Student Affairs professional since 2021. The intake process for all individuals reporting Title IX incidents includes providing a full set of institutional and community resources, whether the person elects to meet with the Title IX coordinator or not ([E406\\_TitleIXIntakeResourceGuide](#)). At the individual's request, the coordinator will connect them with the appropriate on or off-campus resource. All perspective and current students have access to these materials through the website and the Centralized Policy Manual ([E93\\_PolicyManual](#)).

### Engaging with Campus Life

Student Orientation, Leadership and Engagement (SOLE) serves as the hub for fostering vibrant campus life, promoting student leadership, and facilitating the transition into the OCC community. ([E182\\_SOLEWeb](#); [E407\\_SOLEEventCal](#)). Their leadership development initiatives offer training, mentorship, and experiential learning opportunities to cultivate skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making. According to the SOLE 2024-2025 end-of-year report, at least 11,098 non-unique students attended 94 SOLE events, ranging from study breaks, crafts, community involvement, and meet ups with Navigators and Schools personnel ([E408\\_SOLEProgramming](#); [E409\\_SOLEEOYReport](#)). An area of improvement for SOLE is increasing the consistency of student groups tracking attendance and distributing satisfaction surveys at events. The biggest challenge, however, is students not being aware of events, despite emails, signage, the engagement platform, etc. As a response, SOLE staff started locating events in high traffic areas.

As is made clear through its Philosophy, Mission, and Vision, OCC Athletics complement a student's classroom education by providing growth and leadership opportunities ([E410\\_AthleticsMissStateGuidPrin](#)). Athletics adheres to OCC policies and the guidelines outlined in the NJCAA Handbook, governing eligibility, conduct, and academic standards for all participating student-athletes ([E411\\_NJCAAHandbookEthics](#); [E412\\_AthleteScholarships](#)). OCC has 20 intercollegiate NJCAA teams and approximately 400 student-athletes in addition to numerous club and recreational sports activities ([E413\\_AthleticHeadcountBySport](#); [E414\\_EADAResport](#); [E415\\_AthleteExpectRespon](#)). OCC's teams have earned 17 NJCAA team national championships and 22 NJCAA Division III individual, national championships. Student athletes also outperform non-athletes in terms of GPA, Fall-to-Fall retention, and three-year graduation rates (2.606 vs 2.195 mean GPA Fall 2023; 69.03% vs. to 51.53% Fall-to-Fall retention [last 3 cohorts]; and 41.35% vs 24.5% three-year graduation rate [last 2 cohorts] ([E416\\_AverageGPABySport](#); [E417\\_AthleticsAcadStand](#), p. 10-21).

The Student Affairs division is committed to using assessment to drive continuous improvement and determine budgetary priorities ([E399, p.5](#)). For example, while full-time student enrollment dropped from 5,686 in 2020 to 4,266 in 2024, spending on student services rose from 10.83% to 14.59% of the total budget. This increase points to a greater investment in services that directly support students, such as hiring additional Navigators in 2023 to reduce caseloads and increase individual attention ([E292](#)). OCC has seen increased persistence, retention, and graduation (see Standard III for details), but also increased student satisfaction. The 2025 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) had a response rate of 17.2 % (743 completers out of 4312 invited students). The 13 categories associated with student services average 93.02% of respondents indicating they are “*somewhat or very satisfied*.” Eight categories improved over the 2022 survey, one stayed the same, and, of the four categories decreasing, three were 3 points or less. The “*job placement assistance*” category fell by 10.5, although “*Career counseling*” increased dramatically from 57.8% responding “*somewhat or very satisfied*” in 2022 to 95.7% in 2025, which makes sense given the staff increases in that time period. The 2024 Post-Graduate Survey shows increases across the board in its assessment of student services, including “*Career/job-related services*,” increasing from 43.4% reporting “*satisfied or very satisfied*” in 2022 to 60.2% in 2023 to 71.7% in 2024. The 10.5% drop in the CCSSE survey may be the result of students not fully understanding the role of career services at OCC, as it focuses on education and preparation and does not offer “*job placement assistance*.” Career staff will continue to clarify expectations with students and review communication strategies ([E146\\_CCSSEReport, p.5](#); [E147\\_GradSurveyReport, p. 18](#)).

### Student Success Beyond OCC

Associate degree awards have declined over the past five years, corresponding to the decline in enrollment, dropping from 1,175 in 2017-18 to 887 in 2021-22. Conversely, the percentage of graduates has increased over this same period. Inequities, however, do persist. White students remain the largest percentage of associate degree recipients, followed by Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino students. Certificate completions, while smaller in number, have fluctuated but show an increase in female recipients, especially in recent years ([E418\\_IPEDSDegreesAwarded](#)). See Standard III for an in-depth discussion of graduation and transfer rates.

While it is challenging to get students to respond to post-graduation surveys, according to the Class of 2024 Post-Graduate Survey, 75.4% of A.A. and 75.8% of A.S. respondents are pursuing transfer degrees, and 60% of respondents with A.A.S. degrees reported entering the workforce (307 total respondents out of the 807 graduates the survey was sent to) ([E419\\_GradSurveyPres](#)). Analysis of Post-Graduate Surveys shows that between 2018 and 2024 (excluding 2021 because of a data error), 73% of A.A. holders and 75.5% of AS holders pursued transfer while 66.5% of A.A.S. students entered the workforce. OCC is investigating why 33.4% of A.A.S. holders pursue transfer and not the career they trained for.

In 2024, the five most frequently mentioned transfer destinations were SUNY Oswego, Syracuse University, SUNY Cortland, SUNY Upstate, and Le Moyne. The top five employers of OCC alumni are SUNY Upstate Medical University, Wegmans Food Markets, National Grid, the Syracuse City School District, and Syracuse University ([E356, p. 94](#)). These employers reflect the wide range of industries that OCC graduates enter, including healthcare, retail, utilities, education, and higher education. Many of these organizations are also among the largest and most stable employers in Central New York, offering a variety of career pathways for graduates with associate degrees or those who transfer to complete a bachelor's degree. The data suggests that many OCC alumni are staying in the region after graduation and entering the workforce in roles aligned with local labor market needs.

Earnings data for graduates demonstrate positive, long-term economic outcomes and strong workforce alignment. One year after graduation, 85.2% of 1,347 completers were employed in New York State, with a median wage of \$33,234. Wage progression over time is clear, with median earnings increasing to \$36,966 at two years, \$42,430 at five years, and reaching \$48,893 ten years after graduation (in 2021 dollars). These outcomes suggest that the College equips students with skills that translate into sustained earning potential and employability within the state. ([E420\\_SUNYGradWages](#)).

OCC values strong relationships with community partners and alumni. The College hosts employer showcases, alumni panels, and employer site visits, among other initiatives. For example, Electrical Technology students recently met with the Lead Shift Supervisor at National Grid's Power Distribution Control Center, a 2012 alum. Career & Transfer Services works with alumni to host events such as Women in Media, the Future Entrepreneurs Series, artist panels, and transfer panels. Both current and previous students (regardless of graduation status) have access to Career & Transfer Services, which include job search assistance, career exploration, resume building, and practice interviews. The OCC Foundation also connects with students after they leave OCC through events like Alumni Faces, which honors alumni for professional achievements, and OCC's Day of Giving, which encourages donations to support current students.

### Conclusion

OCC is committed to supporting the student experience through a range of programs, services, and initiatives that promote academic success, personal development, and timely degree completion. Evidence shows that students have access to comprehensive advising, support services, and co-curricular opportunities designed to meet their diverse needs. While the College continues to refine its approaches based on student feedback and data, the existing framework reflects a coordinated, student-centered effort that upholds the mission and supports student learning and achievement.

<b>Current Strengths</b>	<b>1.</b> Innovative, award winning work in developmental education.	<b>Criteria 1.b</b>
	<b>2.</b> Schools and Navigators provide personalized student support.	<b>Criteria 1.d</b>
	<b>3.</b> Financial Aid Service Center.	<b>Criteria 1.a</b>
<b>Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration</b>	<b>1.</b> Minimize the impact of turnover of student support personnel (e.g. Navigators).	<b>Criteria 1.d</b>



# STANDARD V

## Educational Effectiveness Assessment





### Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

*Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College's (OCC) culture of assessment has matured over time from simple compliance, to integration into institutional culture, to using assessment to drive needed change, to the current state of continuous quality improvement. Assessment (and assessing that assessment) is central to the way OCC improves its practice.

**Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria**

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment				

**Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria**

1. How and in what ways is OCC assessing student success after OCC (jobs, pay, graduation from transfer institution)? In what ways would qualitative assessment supplement the College's quantitative assessment of students post-OCC? **Criteria 3, Criteria 5**
2. How does the current Institutional Effectiveness Plan and administrative review meet the College's needs? **Criteria 5**
3. How does OCC assess Institutional Learning Outcomes? **Criteria 2**
4. What is the process for analyzing general education assessment data, and is it used to improve student learning? **Criteria 1, Criteria 5**
5. How are course-level success rates and related assessment issues communicated to stakeholders, and how do they respond to them? **Criteria 2**

**Analysis**

All OCC students, regardless of program, share the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The ILOs, found on the website and catalog, are the basis for a student's educational experience at OCC, connecting to OCC's Mission + Vision, Values, and mapping to and integrating with LOs on the degree, program, and course level ([E24\\_AboutOCCWeb](#)). Program level outcomes are available in the catalog and student learning outcomes are present in official Course Outlines as well as student facing syllabi ([E421\\_MSR.ASCatalog](#); [E422\\_MUS166Outline](#); [E423\\_MUS166Syllabus](#)). Curriculum maps show how all outcome levels integrate ([E424\\_MSR.ASCurMap](#)).

ILOs debuted at OCC in 2009 and were segmented into Aesthetic and Ethical Growth, Analytical Reasoning and Critical Thinking, Global Awareness and Inclusion, Effective Communication, Technological Literacy, and Personal Growth and Wellness. Designed primarily around the needs of transfer programs, workforce-oriented programs struggled to meet them. In 2017, then President Crabill charged the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC), a standing committee of Faculty Senate, to revise them with a goal of creating ILO's that *"are the common thread of expectations around which faculty build their curriculum"* ([E425\\_ILOMemoLOAC](#)). The ILOS were clarified, and it was made clear that extra- and co-curricular areas, like Residence Life, would play a role in students meeting them. This was a move away from 'box-checking' to an intentional practice designed to address institutional goals and needs.

## Institutional Learning Outcomes

<b>Learn</b>	Skills and acquire knowledge that will benefit them in their academic, professional, and personal lives Responsible ways to gather information and use technology Effective ways to exchange ideas with others
<b>Think</b>	Critically about problems and creatively about solutions Carefully about their own ideas and the ideas of others Earnestly about how they relate to other people and the world around them
<b>Act</b>	In ways that demonstrate and promote good citizenship Ethically in their academic, professional, and personal lives

OCC also experimented with First Year Learning Outcomes (FYLOs), a strategy modeled on Achieving the Dream best practices and implemented with support from the Title III grant (discussed throughout the narrative). The FYLOs (Skills for College and Career Success; Academic Inquiry; Community Connections; and Living Well) were intended to support students' transition into college and provide a foundation for success. Developed before SUNY updated its General Education competencies (see below) and full implementation of the Schools (see Standard IV) and Guided Pathways (see Standard III), it was later determined that these outcomes were better delivered in areas directly supporting the student experience ([E426\\_LOACRemoveFYLOs](#); [E427\\_FacSenMinNov24](#)).

## Academic Assessment

As OCC's culture of assessment grew, more formal assessments were layered on top of existing assessments because of new mandates and a lack of comprehensive understanding of how these assessments were interconnected. By Spring 2021, LOAC determined the methods faculty used to complete and track assessments were not consistently leading to meaningful change. The provost supported a faculty ad hoc committee, led by the Chair of LOAC, to redesign the academic assessment process. In Spring 2022, the Assessment Redesign Committee issued a White Paper with recommended changes, which the Senate endorsed in its entirety ([E428\\_AssessmentRedesign, p.4](#)). Per the White Paper,

*Our “just do something” mentality has helped us satisfy [accreditors], but not all programs are optimizing assessment procedures and activities to enhance their students' learning. Curriculum maps will ensure that students are meeting the learning outcomes and reveal any gaps that need to be addressed. A streamlined six-year review process will engage a program in productive conversation about methods and opportunities for improving student learning.*

Curriculum maps illustrate how individual course LOs combine to give students the opportunity to meet all Gen Eds, PLOs and ILOs. OCC could then use program assessment to measure the overall educational effectiveness of the institution ([E429\\_AssessmentSLO24-30](#)). To enable this, the office of Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research (IPAR) has developed a method of linking course to program to institutional learning outcomes using custom, in-house developed software and database systems. Faculty input data on individual sections and the software aggregates it and creates comprehensive reports ([E430\\_IPARWeb](#); [E431\\_SLOAssessDash](#)). A working model of the software debuted in Spring 2024 ([E432\\_SLOAssessTool](#)).

MUS-166: Music of the African Diaspora provides an example of the how this process works. Students are required to take MUS-166 in the final semester of the Sound Recording program (MSR AS). The course's first Student Learning Outcome (SLO 1) reads “*Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the distinctive features of at least one non-Western culture,*” assessed through a required project. This SLO maps directly to the MSR PLO 3, “*Understand various styles of music and the unique attributes of recording those styles.*” This

PLO, in turn, directly maps to the ILO category “Think,” subsections 2 and 3 (see above). It also maps to SUNY Gen Eds in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice and World History/Global. (Please note, a course SLO could map directly to an ILO without necessarily mapping to a PLO.) Once course level data is entered, the software aggregates all data along with data from other courses that meet a particular PLO, ILO, or SUNY Gen Ed. Using the interactive dashboards, the user can see immediately what percentage of program students are meeting the various-leveled LOs ([E432](#); [E424](#); [E431](#)).

This type of multi-leveled assessment, along with assessments of community need, student enrollment, and regional economic forecasts, may lead to curricular changes. For example, in the Fall of 2020, OCC administration identified nine programs and one certificate in need of revitalization because of shrinking enrollment, dwindling job opportunities, or curricular concerns. Faculty recommended discontinuing four of the nine programs (Alcohol and Substance Counseling A.A.S., Computer Forensics A.S., Nuclear Technology A.A.S., and Photography A.S.) and one certificate (Law Enforcement). The remaining programs, American Sign Language A.S., Architecture A.A.S., Environmental Technology A.A.S., Health Information Technology A.A.S., and Interior Design A.A.S., were recommended for revitalization ([E433\\_BOTProgramRevitalization](#)).

Computer Forensics provides an illustrative case study. Over five years, it saw a 19% enrollment decline, whereas the other programs experienced declines over 40%. Burning Glass (now Lightcast/EMSI) software indicated there were few local jobs in those other areas, but the outlook for Computer Forensics was significantly better. Faculty noted the program was too focused on forensics and criminal investigation while the field had shifted to the larger scope of cybersecurity, recommending Computer Forensics AS be discontinued and a Cybersecurity AS degree be added. Cybersecurity had an enrollment of 96 students in Spring 2025, more than double the 34 students Computer Forensics had in Spring 2020 ([E434\\_CFSProgramRevitalMemo](#)).

Similarly, to better meet employer needs, faculty created a Construction Management A.A.S., and Architecture A.A.S. and Interior Design A.A.S. (discontinued Fall 2022) were replaced with the Architectural Design Studies A.A.S. American Sign Language A.S. and Health Information Technology A.A.S. are currently undergoing revision to attract new students and better serve current students. See Standard I for a list of new or revised programs.

OCC has no third-party providers offering assessment services. Some academic programs partner with third parties to provide clinical training, e.g. placement at Crouse Hospital in Syracuse ([E435\\_Phlebotomy3rdPartyProviders](#)). All academic assessments are completed by OCC faculty, not the third-party. ([E436\\_APTAStudentEval](#); [E437\\_ClinicalSiteEval](#); [E438\\_NursingFacultyEval](#); [E439\\_NursingStudentEval](#); [E440\\_PTAInstructorEval](#)). For other third-party providers (e.g. food and vending), the College has adopted a universal assessment form to verify providers are meeting expectations and a Third-Party Provider policy ([E387\\_3rdPartyAssessForm](#); [E386\\_3rdPartyPolicy](#)). This policy outlines what basic requirements are in every third-party agreement and when the Third-Party Assessment Form is to be completed and reviewed. OCC has one, non-credit program delivered by a third-party, the Cleveland School of Cannabis (CSC). The CSC offers non-credit, self-paced, online cannabis education and training certificates. As of this writing, the partnership has concluded ([E441\\_CannabisWeb](#)).

As evidenced above, OCC is committed to creating meaningful academic assessments and using the results to spur change. In 2021-2022, SUNY revised the categories and criteria for each of their General Education courses (Gen Eds) and Knowledge Areas, charging each SUNY college with recertifying its courses. LOAC decided the best way to ensure a meaningful outcome was for all programs to resubmit each course for SUNY Gen Ed status, essentially providing the entire College with an assessment reboot. LOAC’s goal was to ensure assessment plans and tools authentically measured LOs, were organic to the curriculum, and moved beyond indirect measures of LOs (e.g. overall course grades). Curriculum maps show how and where each LO is met and measured in the program and course, making it easy to identify gaps. Assessment methods are listed, and each map is reviewed by LOAC, ensuring accuracy and rigor in mapping and assessment ([E442\\_CRW.AACurMap](#); [E443\\_NUR.AASCurMap](#); [E444\\_HIT.AASCurMap](#); [E424](#)).

OCC has a robust structure in place to assess learning outcomes, but faculty leadership are aware that assessment response rates need improvement. The most recent SUNY Gen Ed Assessment, Spring 2025, confirms that, across disciplines, faculty need to do a better job at reporting, maintaining, and reviewing assessment of learning outcomes, including Gen Eds. See sample assessment reports and analysis ([E445\\_GenEdAssessment](#)). While some individual areas have high compliance, it is not consistent across all academic areas of the College. For example, there is a persistent gap in reporting assessment data from the Mathematics & Natural Sciences department. The sample assessment reports (see immediately above) provide data for 12 different courses, ranging in total enrollment from 14 to 1682. Of these 12 courses, the percentage of students assessed ranges from a low of 76% (COM 100 with 1682 registered students) to a high of 100% (CRW 206 and 208, with 14 registered students each). The higher the total enrollment in a given course, the more difficult it is to ensure compliance in terms reporting assessment data. The goal of OCC's Gen Ed reboot and the creation of the integrated assessment reporting system (discussed above) was to make these tasks easier and more intuitive for faculty, but consistent reporting remains an ongoing issue. LOAC is actively monitoring compliance rates and collaborating with the Faculty Senate and College leadership to improve compliance and accountability. Faculty leaders have challenged colleagues over the last year and half to take ownership of assessment and given them a new tool to learn and interact with, but, while many have accepted the challenge, the work is ongoing.

### **Institutional Effectiveness Redesign**

In the recent past, administrative area assessments were modeled after academic program assessments, with data collected annually and a formal assessment every five years. The assessment practice, however, was paused during the pandemic and inconsistently resumed after the return to campus. As new directors and supervisors joined the organization, the necessity of annual data collection was not always communicated, was often without context, and easily deferred. In Fall 2024, IPAR and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IE) brought in Dr. Nasrin Fatima, Associate Provost for Assessment and Analytics and the Accreditation Liaison Officer at Binghamton University, who provided two days of training and consultation for IPAR staff, members of IE, and those administrative units scheduled for assessment. Dr. Fatima recommended shifting to an annual assessment cycle for all administrative units. The IE Committee proposed the change to the College Leadership Council (CLC), and the change was approved in 2024 ([E86\\_IEPlan25](#)). Administrative units assess through annual operational plans, which are used to help track Strategic Plan KPIs as well as internal, area KPIs (requiring that trends of up to 5 years be discussed if data exists). The assessments are integrated and mutually support one another ([E446\\_Assessment101Training](#); [E86](#)). This structure ensures all administrative units are setting goals tied to the Strategic Plan and engaging in annual assessments.

In addition to annual operational plans, some offices also routinely perform internal assessments. For example, the Community Care Hub's (CCH) end-of-year report gives an overview of the office's accomplishments, strengths, barriers, and recommendations. Identifying housing insecurity as a barrier for students, OCC responded by partnering with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to allow eligible students to use emergency housing funds (when financial aid is not available) to remain in residence halls over breaks. This partnership addressed a significant problem wherein housing insecure students were accruing larger bills to remain in the residence halls ([E399\\_CCHEOYReport](#)).

Other, internal assessment examples include Student Affairs' 2021-2022 assessment of the Schools model, which indicated that Schools are effective in fostering coaching interactions with students (1,165 during 2021-2022). The assessment also suggested decreasing the number of Schools and developing School-specific gathering places for students to increase a sense of community and belonging ([E447\\_SchoolAssessment](#)). (See Standard IV for an in-depth discussion of Schools.) Likewise, the Learning Center regularly assesses usage data to inform scheduling and recruitment. In Spring 2024, this type of analysis prompted expanding and restructuring drop-in tutoring, which increased student use of the service (see example, [E328\\_LCUtilization](#)).

The College also uses external consultants to help with assessment or other projects, like expanding an office's



capacity to serve students, when that work requires specialized or comprehensive knowledge that is outside the scope of current employees. For example, in 2019, OCC enlisted the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers to review its Registration and Records office because they could bring evidenced-backed understanding of national best practices that current staff did not have ready access to and could support OCC staff in implementing the reforms from the Title III grant. As a result, Registration and Records increased staff from three at the time of the review to six in 2025; updated and documented all procedures (e.g. transfer equivalency tables maintained by a full-time staffer); created an operational calendar for the office; established better oversight of articulation agreements; and implemented curriculum management software ([E448\\_AACRAOReport](#)). OCC enlisted the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) to assess Student Affairs in Fall 2024. The NISS report's recommendations are split into four categories: systematic introductions to the College; improvements to advising; strategies to leverage data; and strengthening student, financial support. Student Affairs prioritized all suggested action steps and identified those that were the most achievable, given OCC's current resources and structures. Of these 14, 11 were already in progress in some form or have been implemented as of this writing ([E356\\_NISSReport](#); [E449\\_ResponseToNISSReport](#)). For example, see Standard IV for details on OCC's new orientation model.

### Case Study of Assessment in Action

One of the best examples of assessment's ability to enact change at OCC is the revision of its developmental reading and writing curriculum. By Spring 2017, OCC was offering 100% of its developmental education (dev ed) in English/writing as a co-requisite with first-year composition (FYC). Organizations like the California Acceleration Project and the Community College Research Council considered this best practice. OCC saw significant gains in student completion of FYC in their first year and an increase in success rates in FYC overall. In response to this success, OCC was named the lead college in a 2018 SUNY, multi-year, system-wide community of practice based on the co-requisite (co-req) model ([E450\\_FCMSpring19](#)).

More nuanced assessment of the program, however, raised concerns despite course level successes. Three-year graduation rates of co-req students, while greater than those in stand-alone sections, still significantly lagged behind those who did not take developmental composition. ([E12\\_TETYCMar23, Figure 2, p. 204](#)). Moreover, disaggregated data on placement showed that OCC had decreased the numbers of students placing into dev ed, but the percentage of Black/African American students in non-credit, co-req composition increased from 23% in Fall 2011 to 37% in Fall 2019, despite the fact that Black/African American students account for around 10% of total enrollment in any given year ([E12](#)). Disaggregating the data revealed an equity gap: OCC disproportionately placed Black students into a course costing time and money but not helping significantly increase graduation rates. OCC's dev-ed was not working as intended.

To better meet the needs of all incoming students, FYC was revised to make it an integrated reading and writing (IRW) course, and faculty were given extensive pedagogical training to incorporate the best practices of college-level composition (IRW, active learning, just-in-time remediation, explicit scaffolding of writing assignments, and support for non-cognitive barriers). Through the revision, 10 equivalent credits of developmental English/composition and reading were removed from the curriculum. As of Fall 2020, every entering student enters directly into FYC, and there is no non-credit reading coursework. This work, outlined in Choseed et al's *Developmental Writing Reform at Onondaga Community College: From Corequisite to IRW, Eliminating Dev Ed while Supporting All Students*, has been a resounding success ([E12](#)). Enrollee success rates rose from 61% in 2019 to 66% in 2023. Underrepresented minority student enrollee success in FYC rose from 47% to 55% over that same period. The enrollee success rate, which tracks the success of all students on the roster from day one rather than just completers, accounts for drops and withdrawals and provides a more complete picture of student performance.

Similar reforms in developmental math are also underway. Assessment revealed placement into developmental math (as with placement in developmental reading and writing) was not helping students progress through their

programs. Still, STEM students needed certain skills early in their degree paths. Drawing from evidence-backed reforms, OCC now splits math students into STEM and non-STEM majors. Students in non-STEM majors go directly into credit-bearing math courses, and STEM students enter an algebra, pre-calculus, calculus pathway. Math faculty have tried many different approaches (e.g. Emporium and co-req models) with varying levels of success. Currently, the discipline is investigating screening tests for STEM majors that target individual topics students can remediate without requiring a pre-requisite math course disrupting degree progress. The College continues to support research and revision in math to boost overall student success ([E383\\_SSCMathXcelerator](#)). See Standard IV for more details.

OCC's history of developmental reform builds toward a culture of continuous improvement rooted in assessment. Moreover, these changes show the value of disaggregated assessment data to recognize curricular spaces in need of revision. At OCC, curricular reform and revision have become an iterative process, steeped in a data-driven culture of continuous improvement.

### Tools for Communication and Effective Use of Data

To routinize the use of data in its assessment processes and develop data literacy on its campus, OCC developed a range of tools: assessment fellowships, Assessment Day, and data dashboards.

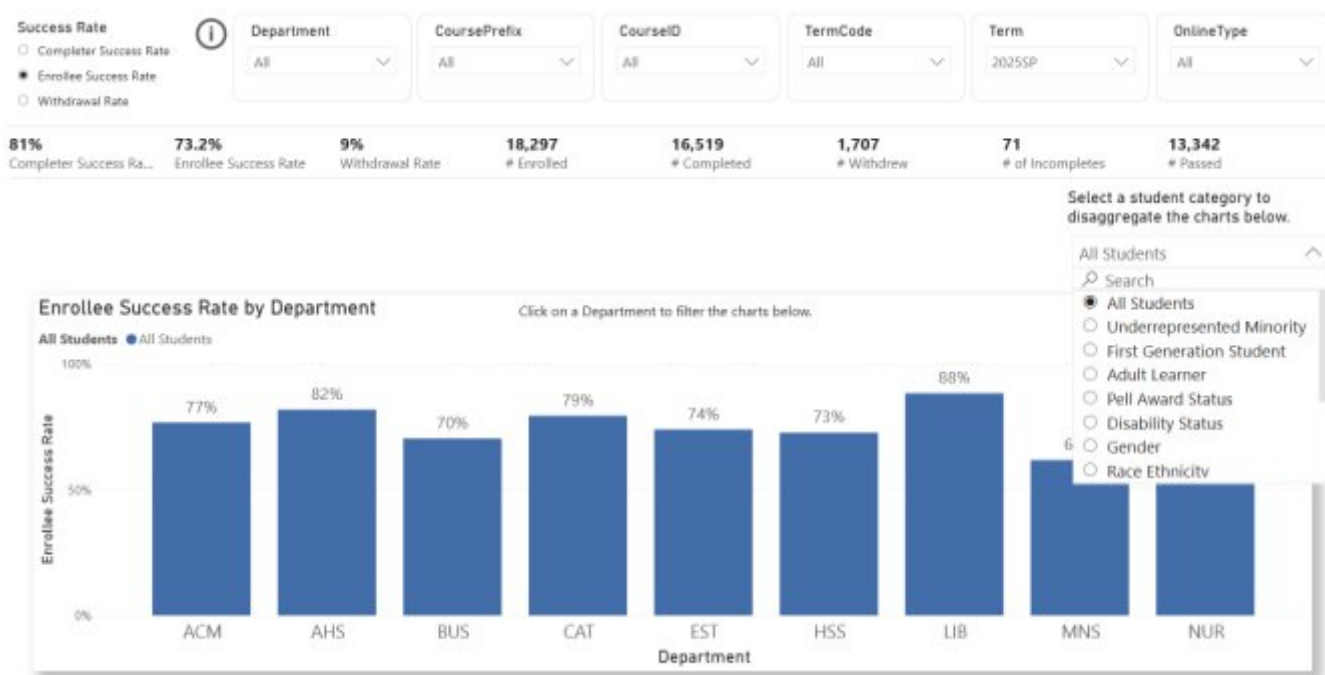
Assessment fellowships, mentioned in Standard III and highlighted in OCC's 2017 MSCHE report, has changed significantly. In 2017, the fellowships incentivized assessment, but now staff and faculty are accustomed to working with outcomes assessment at all levels, prompting the College to refine the program. Adopting a best practice from the Aspen Institute, Assessment Fellowships became the Student Success Challenge (SSC), focused on increasing the success of first-generation and underrepresented minority students. SSC grants require proposals to be rooted in data and work toward specific KPIs aligned with the Strategic Plan. The 2024—2025 Student Success Challenge fund was set at \$200,000 and charged projects to *"increase retention and graduation of first-generation students by 5% and URM students by 7.5% by fall 2026"* ([E451\\_StudentSuccessChallenge](#)). The SSC process also supports work formerly associated with Achieving the Dream (ATD). OCC's ATD liaison meets twice yearly with all SSC project leads to consult on progress and assessment, providing the President with reports on project progress ([E452\\_ATDLetters](#)). Each project lead also presents to EC on how deliverables were met.

SSC grants require a sophisticated, well-articulated understanding of assessment the original Assessment Fellowships helped foster. Twelve SSC grants were awarded in areas ranging from the Math Xcelerator Program, providing support to struggling students in college algebra and pre-calculus, to the Financial Aid Initiative project, increasing financial aid literacy among the student body ([E383](#); [E453\\_ChallengeGPS](#)). In Spring of 2024, the Provost charged the Senate and LOAC to re-visit the original model of Faculty Assessment Fellows to assess the feasibility of reinstating them to focus on projects addressing curricular issues coming to light through three- and six-year reviews ([E309\\_LOACWeb](#)).

The evolution of Assessment Day is evidence that a greater swath of the college community is knowledgeable about and engaged in assessment. Assessment Day began in 2012 as a gathering of faculty and staff to discuss large- and small-scale assessment projects on campus. Assessment Fellows presented their projects, and a key-note speaker addressed campus-wide assessment initiatives. Assessment Day was paused during Covid, and the Assessment Redesign Committee used this time to revise it, debuting it in its new form in Spring 2024; it is now primarily a working meeting where department chairs and curriculum coordinators actively plan and work on assessment projects. Assessment Day 2025, for example, invited academic departments and programs to review assessment data and explore ways to 'close the loop' with the help of curriculum maps and recently redesigned, authentic assessment tools.

Disaggregated student success metrics are readily available through interactive data dashboards, developed by the Director of Data Insights and Visualization ([E454\\_DynamicDataDashboards](#)). These user-friendly tools are rooted in another significant shift in OCC's assessment process: increased and democratized access to assessment

data. Requests for information and analysis can still be made to IPAR, but this tool allows authorized users immediate access to various assessment data, making use of assessment data much more sustainable.



Drop-down menus allow users to filter data according to different variables and are powerful tools for disaggregating data. For example, when using the *Course Success* dashboard (above), a user can filter data along demographic lines such as race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as Pell grant eligibility, first-generation status, adult learner, and disability status ([E455\\_CourseSuccessDash](#)). By using the filter to focus on students in a single program, users can find specific courses that are barriers to student success in a program. Additional filters allow users to disaggregate by full or part-time status, course modality, course length, year offered, and instructor details. Users are granted different levels of access depending on their role. For example, chairs and program coordinators can see section-level course outcomes, but general users only see aggregate outcomes. This protects the privacy of individual faculty members, allows chairs and coordinators to better do their jobs, and provides the general, College community the ability to explore big picture data. Immediate access to this data, coupled with the increasing expectation of its use, has meant that faculty leaders can use data as a regular part of their daily work. Dashboards can be used to drive and assess the efficacy of reform and help the College focus on equity in outcomes.

The IPAR website contains information germane to all members of the campus community, such as retention and graduation rates ([E286\\_IPEDSGradRates](#)). This data is available as an aggregate as well as disaggregated by program, year of entry, and student demographics such as race and gender, disability status, Pell Grant eligibility, age, and first-generation status, including multiple years of trend data. Members of the College community have access to data dashboards for enrollment numbers and early momentum metrics like credits attempted vs earned, first year math and English pass rates, etc.

IPAR has set a goal of increasing data literacy on campus as part of its annual operational plan, and increased access and understanding has resulted in increased communication of assessment results to our stakeholders across the campus and beyond (e.g. external accreditors). For example, the dashboards are used to prepare internal and external program reviews, with chairs and coordinators easily accessing student success metrics,

such as enrollment and admissions trends, retention and graduation rates, early momentum metrics, and course success rates. The development of these dashboards demonstrates OCC's commitment to sustaining assessment and communicating the results, as well as using disaggregated assessment to improve student learning outcomes ([E454](#)). For external audiences, the College's website has a Consumer Information page that provides links to the National Center for Education Statistics College Navigator page for detailed breakdown of enrollment, retention, graduation rates, and other key factors, as well as disaggregated data in a section labeled *Student Outcomes Information* ([E191\\_ConsumerInfoWeb](#)). Links to placement rates for flagship health science programs are also available.

OCC has also been increasing its ability to track and communicate employment outcomes for students, such as employment in field of study and wage rate. These are used by programs for assessment, planning, and meeting federal Gainful Employment Reporting requirements, as well as reporting requirements of select grants. The College's graduate survey served as the primary method of collecting data on employment outcomes from students, but, despite great effort, outcomes from many students are not captured each year. OCC uses commercial software for workforce analysis and SUNY's graduate wage dashboard, which shows New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) unemployment insurance data which can be filtered by campus and disaggregated by program ([E420\\_SUNYGradWages](#)). Together, these tools give a comprehensive picture of employment outcomes for students. Because OCC does not have raw data, however, it is limited in its ability to disaggregate using all the descriptors it may want or need (e.g. first generation).

Starting in February 2025, OCC now has access to NYSDOL employment data for graduates within specified periods of time. This access will allow OCC to create dashboards that use its own, specific degree program names and degree types, as well as the ability to disaggregate in whatever ways are desired. Campus leaders, chairs, and coordinators will be able to construct dashboards for their specific programs and not have to 'translate' from SUNY's generic naming conventions. This is another example of OCC working to make data accessible and understandable to campus stakeholders, allowing faculty to revise curricula to align with community need and student goals.

Dashboards, accessible via the employee website portal, allow access to retention and graduation data for every program on campus. Retention data can be tracked back to 2017, and 3-year graduation rates go back to the 2016 cohort. When disaggregating student data demographically, it is apparent that, for most programs, characteristics most likely to change success rates are race/ethnicity and first-generation status. School teams can be purposeful in hosting events aimed at the needs of these populations, such as the Growth, Progress, & Skills for College weekly workshop series focused on building academic, personal, and practical skills while fostering a sense of belonging (see Standard IV).

Likewise, programs have used dashboards to spur curricular changes. For example, the recognition that retention and graduation rates in Humanities and Social Science were lagging for first-generation (first-gen) college students and underrepresented minority (URM) students led to the addition of a first-year, seminar-style course rooted in an "*enduring questions*" methodology, designed to help students more quickly develop the skills needed, and excitement for, a Liberal Arts curriculum. As reported in the Teagle Implementation Grant final report, LBL-101 began in Fall 2021, and has had an impact on retention. For example, in Fall 2022, 204 students enrolled in an LBL 101 section who planned on taking classes the following Spring. 156 (76.5%) registered for Spring 2023 courses, significantly higher than the College wide Fall-to-Spring retention rate of ~69.5 % ([E456\\_TeagleGrantReport, p.11](#)).

Dashboards also allow faculty to track course level success going back to Fall 2017, filtering by modality, semester, School, and academic program. This helps faculty identify where students in each program are struggling. For example, Music and Art programs discovered that their students tended to be successful in SCI-100 (Meteorology) and BIO-131 (Ecology) with an 81% success rate in both, but BIO-105 (Exploring Biology) and SCI-103 (Introductory Astronomy), had success rates of 42% and 61% respectively. In response, the Music

and Art coordinators worked with OCC’s Physics faculty to create PHY-102, The Physics of Light and Sound—a course designed to explore Physics as it relates to the arts. Since its inception in Fall of 2023, PHY-103 has had a success rate of 72%. Music and Art students now have more Natural Science options with a greater chance of success, and Navigators can make informed recommendations.

Another extremely exciting advance for assessment at OCC is the in-house development of software by the Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research office that will help with qualitative analysis ([E457\\_OCCLocalAIforNLP](#)). The time and expertise needed in analyzing large amounts of qualitative data has been a barrier to this type of research (e.g. student opinion surveys), even though there has long been a desire to do it. The advent of commercial generative AI offers a possible resource, but privacy concerns require the data be ‘scrubbed,’ requiring human time and effort. This program has the potential to give the College an efficient and secure way to assess this rich data resource.

Conclusion

One of OCC’s greatest strengths is the care and diligence it takes in assessing student learning and using that assessment to drive innovation in curriculum and the assessment process. OCC has a system that ensures continuous and iterative process of curricular revision rooted in assessment, tracking how well it meets student’s learning needs and intervening in places where there is need for improvement.

Current Strengths	1. Strong culture of assessment that continues to develop and innovate, e.g. software that integrates course, program, Gen Ed, institutional LOs.	Criteria 1
	2. Data dashboards allow for wide use and understanding of data.	Criteria 2C, Criteria 3
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	1. Work toward 100% compliance in terms of faculty reporting assessment data.	Criteria 2C



# STANDARD VI

## Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement





### Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

*The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College (OCC) uses strategic planning, transparent budgeting, and ongoing assessment to manage resources effectively. By aligning financial decisions with its Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan in an evidenced-based, transparent manner, OCC has been able to navigate limited funding, improve program quality, and meet the diverse needs of students and communities.

**Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria**

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
VI. Planning, Re-sources, and Institutional Improvement				

**Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria**

1. How well-defined and inclusive are decision-making processes? How are responsibility and accountability clearly assigned to achieve institutional and unit effectiveness? **Criteria 2, Criteria 9**
  - a. How are new initiatives determined and launched, and how are initiatives assessed for their effectiveness? **Criteria 3, Criteria 5, Criteria 12**
2. How does OCC assess the effectiveness of planning and resource allocation, and subsequently, how is OCC utilizing assessment results in planning and resource allocation? **Criteria 12, Criteria 13**
3. How does OCC effectively and sustainably steward its resources (financial, capital, and human)? **Criteria 6, Criteria 7, Criteria 8**
  - a. How does the institution utilize its resources to promote and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion? **Criteria 4**

**Analysis**

OCC's Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan drive planning and resource allocation ([E25\\_StrategicPlanWeb](#); [E34\\_StrategicPlan23-28](#); [E312\\_PolicyB21](#)). All academic programs and some administrative divisions, where appropriate, have mission statements that link their program or division to the College's mission and goals. (See S1 for a detailed discussion of the interconnection between the Strategic Plan, Mission + Vision, and Annual Operational Plans. See S5 for a discussion of KPIs and data dashboards.) Each unit/division supports the Strategic Plan through its own objectives and allocates personnel to this end ([E458\\_OrgCharts](#)). OCC has multiple standing committees, ad hoc committees, and workgroups contributing to institutional goals and objectives. Governance bodies, such as Faculty Senate, OCC Administrator's Council, and College Leadership Council review assessment results and make recommendations related to mission and goal achievement ([E44\\_GovOrgNov2025](#)). OCC's Planning, Assessment and Resource Allocation Timeline displays the connectedness of, and annual process related to, operational plans, capital project development, academic assessment plans, academic program review, and budget development ([E459\\_PlanAssessBudgetTimeline](#)).

Using a template that aligns the division/department's work to the College's strategic goals, each department completes an annual operational plan, approved by the relevant vice president and the President ([E53\\_EmailOpPlansKPIs](#)). The plan indicates actions/tactics, responsible parties, needed resources, timelines, and the connections to the 4DX goal if any (see Standard I), all of which contribute to meeting Strategic Plan goals via KPIs. (See Standard V for a discussion of operational plan outcomes reporting.) KPI updates are shared with the Board of Trustees (BoT), posted online, and discussed at faculty and staff meetings and events like the annual, campus-wide Data Summit ([E460\\_DataSummit23](#); [E461\\_DataSummit24](#); [E462\\_DataSummit25](#); [E84\\_StrategicPlanUpdate](#); [E463\\_StrategicPlanReport](#); [E85\\_IWeb](#)).

For example, the Academic and Student Affairs Strategic Operational Plan lists three goals, detailing its approach to meeting each goal. Goal 2, *"Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed"* is linked to Strategic Priority 2.3: *"Foster student belonging, engagement, and wellbeing,"* and this is linked to KPI 2.3.1, the percentage of students who feel a great sense of belonging at OCC. The desired outcome is to increase the number of at-risk students attending the GPS series, with a target of 30 at-risk students attending at least 1 during Spring semester (see Standard IV). The action/strategy identified to make progress on this outcome is *"Each week, School staff will engage with at least fifteen at-risk students and encourage their attendance at upcoming GPS events."* Milestones, responsible parties, timelines, needed resources, etc. are all described ([E89\\_OpPlanASA](#)). All functional areas have Strategic Operational plans, and this structure gives individual offices and departments a process to document connections to Mission + Vision and the Strategic Plan, assess outcomes, and act on results.

The increase in Navigators exemplifies how the Strategic Plan's primary focus of Persistence and Goal 1: Academic Success drive spending. Hiring more personnel was a significant expense, but it enabled Navigators to reduce loads and get to the evidenced-backed ratio of 1:150, allowing for more individual attention to students. Increasing the number of Navigators has been associated with an increase in student persistence and retention ([E15\\_IJS2021](#)).

OCC documents and communicates planning processes in multiple ways. The President's office distributed the 2023-28 Operational Plan Template and Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators 2023-28 to the campus community via email in October 2024 ([E53](#)). Annually, the Chief Financial Officer sends a budget memo to divisions that includes a high-level overview of the budget process ([E464\\_DeptMemo](#)). The BoT Finance and Education Committee meetings include reports by division heads on progress toward strategic and operational goals, assessment results, and proposed adjustments ([E465\\_FinMinutes](#); [E466\\_EduMinutes](#)). By integrating strategic planning with performance tracking, OCC ensures that institutional goals remain at the forefront of decision-making and resource allocation.

### Resources to Support Operations

Over the past five fiscal years (2020–2024), instruction has remained the College's largest spending category ([E292\\_HistoricalExpense](#)). While the percentage of total spending on instruction decreased—from 44.71% in FY2020 to 35.84% in FY2024—spending per full-time student increased, rising from \$4,893 to \$5,059, with a high of \$6,006 in FY2023. This reflects OCC's commitment to quality instruction, even as enrollment dropped from 5,686 to 4,266 full-time equivalent students and the budget shrank. The College supports small class sizes, access to faculty, and strong academic programs, aligning budgetary decisions with its Mission + Vision (specifically points 1, 2, and 3).

Given that personnel costs make up approximately 82% of the College's operating budget, effective staffing management is a key component of institutional sustainability ([E57\\_OCCBudgetBooks21-25](#)). College employees decreased from 1,355 in Fall 2018 to 1,014 in Fall 2024, which corresponds to a similar decline in student enrollment ([E55\\_HRData](#); [E112\\_IPEDSEnroll](#)). The reduction in employees was deliberate, achieved through cost-saving measures over the past several years, including:

- **Position Review Process:** Executive Council reviews vacancies and new position requests. Decisions are guided by factors such as the potential to redistribute or automate tasks, the department's anticipated future needs, and the overall budget impact.
- **Voluntary Early Retirement Incentives:** The most recent program led to 28 faculty retirements, resulting in significant cost savings. Most positions were left unfilled or replaced by adjuncts or assistant professors (see Standard VII for details).
- **Staff Reductions (2014–2024):**
  - Instructional Staff: Decreased from 177 to 136 (down 41 positions, a 23.2% reduction).

- CSEA Staff: Decreased from 222 to 163 (down 59 positions, a 26.58% reduction).
- Management Confidential: Decreased from 48 to 40 (down 8 positions, a 16.67% reduction).
- Professional Administrators: Slight increase from 127 to 129 (up 2 positions, a 1.57% increase), due to the addition of Navigators (See Standard IV).

Collectively, these measures streamline operations and reduce personnel costs, while preserving student support services (represented in the charts below). The College remains committed to student and academic support, dedicating 62% of its human resource allocation to instructional and student services, linking directly to Mission + Vision points 1 and 2 and Strategic Plan goal 1 ([E467\\_OCCBudgetBook25-26, p. 29](#)). Detailed documentation of OCC's financial resources (tuition and fees, state aid, county support, other sources, and applied fund balance) is available in the 2025-26 Annual Budget Book ([E467, p. 20 - 23](#)).

Prior to the budgeting process, the Executive Council establishes expected part-time credit hour and full-time headcount levels by analyzing historic, annual enrollment trends. Fees assessed to students include, but are not limited to, a technology fee for each student, lab fees for applicable courses, third-party credentials, and course-related materials and supplies. Revenue is forecast by analyzing historic annual enrollment trends, and the BoT sets tuition rates for the fiscal year ([E468\\_BOTFAMinutes5-25](#)).

The Financial Aid Service Center (FASC) helps students understand and comply with all aspects of Financial Aid ([E171\\_TuitionFAWeb](#)). The FASC also educates Navigators about financial aid rules impacting course registration and future, financial aid qualifications. Through the FASC, OCC maintains its eligibility and approval to participate in various programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, including Title IV ([E236\\_ECAR24](#); [E469\\_PPAgreement](#); [E470\\_EDReview](#)). OCC was rated Financially Responsible by the US Department of Education's Key Financial Ratios and Indicators during the years evaluated ([E471\\_CompositeScore](#)). In compliance with federal regulations, the College designates a qualified individual, the Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services, to be responsible for administering all Title IV programs and coordinating those programs with OCC's other federal and non-federal student, financial assistance programs. OCC's accreditation status is listed online ([E231\\_AuthorizationAccreditation](#)).

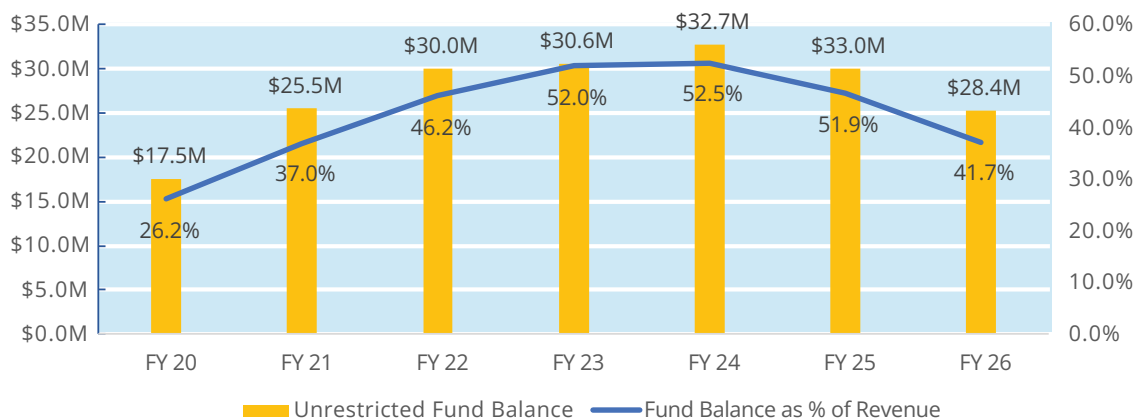
OCC's budget is prepared in accordance with New York State Education Law and the Code of Standards and Procedures for the Administration and Operation of Community Colleges under the direction of the State University of New York (SUNY). The College's budgetary and accounting systems are organized and operated on a fund basis and conform to basic fiscal and accounting reporting practices used in higher education. All financial statements and reports are prepared on an accrual basis in accordance with the principles of fund accounting and as prescribed by the Uniform System of Accounts for Community Colleges issued by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer of the State of New York. Accounts that relate to specific activities or objectives are segregated into fund groups. The cost of land and certain buildings and improvements used by the College are borne by Onondaga County (who also holds title to the asset) and SUNY. All fixed assets are included in the College's financial statements, per the Chief Financial Officer's rules and regulations. Previously, debt obligations were also included in the College's financial statements until SUNY requested they be removed in cases where they are also recorded in the State's financial statements.

New York State provides capital support and operating support to all its community colleges. Historically, this was based on Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment (30 credit hours = 1 FTE) with an annual, base aid rate established. In 2021-2022, the State changed the funding model to provide base aid at either what each community college received from the prior year (referred to as the "*funding floor*") or the calculated base aid based on the FTE model, whichever was greater. All 30 SUNY community colleges have been funded with the funding floor since 2022-2023. The funding floor is not part of state legislation so may change in the future. OCC received \$17,317,671 in base, state aid in FY2022-2023. This funding floor remains intact with modest increases each year, representing approximately 27% of its operating budget for the last four available, budget years ([E467, p. 20, 23](#)).

As the College's local sponsor, Onondaga County is obligated to assume responsibility for three major costs related to operations: operating support, debt service, and tuition chargebacks. Each year during the budget process, OCC requests funding from the County to help with annual operating costs. Costs for the College's capital projects (debt service) are shared equally between Onondaga County and New York State. In addition, the County incurs all bonding costs associated with its share of capital projects. "*Tuition chargebacks*" refers to NY counties paying tuition chargebacks for county residents attending community colleges in counties outside their own ([E467, p. 16-17](#)).

Adequate fund balances (i.e. the difference between assets and liabilities) are maintained to mitigate risk due to unforeseen events, including loss of revenue or unanticipated expenditures, and to maintain a strong financial position to support daily operations. The fund balance may be utilized in response to unforeseen events or emergencies that significantly disrupt normal operations or pose risks to students, staff, and institutional assets. Examples of such events or emergencies include: 1) natural disasters and weather events that damage campus facilities or infrastructure; 2) public health emergencies like a resurgence of COVID-19 or flu pandemic; 3) utility or infrastructure failure;; 4) cybersecurity breaches involving a data breach or ransomware attack; 5) enrollment and revenue shortfalls; 6) legislative or regulatory compliance such as unexpected mandates or legal settlements; and 7) emergency equipment or facility needs that cannot be deferred to the next budget cycle.

### Unrestricted Fund Balance (\$) and Reserves as a % of Revenue



Source: 2025-26 Annual Budget Book, Adjusted for FY 25 Projected

*Note: HEERF stimulus funds received from the federal government totaled \$21.32 million from the period 2020 through 2023. This resulted in a net increase in fund balance of \$15.71 million for that same period.*

Funding from tuition, state aid, and Onondaga County primarily support delivery of programs and services. Funding for program development, innovation, major lab equipment upgrades outside of the capital budget process, and resources to develop, enhance, or expand services and partnerships from these sources is limited. To support initiatives that advance its Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan, OCC pursues external grant funding. Initiatives are identified through the College's strategic planning process, master plans, shared governance committees and work groups, divisional operational planning, and program reviews and other assessments. Over the past five years, annual grant expenditures have ranged from \$5M to \$5.5M ([E472\\_GrantExpenditures](#)). OCC's grant awards fall within the following broad categories: 1) Capacity-building projects that support program, pathway development, and partnership development; 2) Service development and delivery, including supplemental support for students; and 3) partnership programs ([E473\\_GrantList24-25](#)).



In 2018, OCC received a five-year, U.S. Department of Education TIII Strengthening Institutions Program grant (\$2.98M) supporting OCC's *Guided Pathways to Success* (GPS) initiative with the overarching goal of increasing program completion rates, linking to Strategic Plan goal 1 and Mission + Vision point 1 and 2. This initiative was informed by the previous strategic planning process, Middle States self-study (2017), and shared governance committee reports. The grant funded faculty and staff across the College in a multi-year process to develop, pilot, assess, and refine project components. Faculty mapped over 50 programs and restructured or eliminated remedial coursework (see Standards 4 and 5) and integrated advising, career services, and student success coaching/navigation into Schools, implemented an evidence-based, coaching method (Bettinger and Baker 2011) and an early alert student success platform (see Standard IV) ([E474\\_LazerSuccessData](#); [E475\\_TIIIOutcomesStudy](#)).

OCC received federal and state grants to develop and expand programs that meet regional needs in Health, Wellness, and Human Services pathways (HWHS), linking to Mission + Vision point 4 and Strategic Plan goal 1. In 2022, OCC received a \$5M U.S. Department of Labor grant as part of the SUNY Community College Health CARES Consortium, a coalition of 11 SUNY community colleges working to build credentials leading to healthcare employment, effect sustainable systems change through activities such as agreements to accelerate healthcare pathways, and increase the number of people entering and completing healthcare pathway programs ([E64\\_HealthCARESWeb](#)). OCC School of Health, Wellness and Human Services also received a \$2M Health Resources & Services Administration grant to purchase equipment needed to complete OCC's hospital simulation lab and training center.

Similarly, OCC has received grants to expand program development, delivery, and innovation in applied technology, engineering, computing pathways, and related fields. For example, a NYSDOL grant (\$469K) supported faculty design of portable training stations, increasing the number of industry-aligned, applied learning activities in courses, the amount of time students spend in hands-on learning, and the flexible use of classroom and lab space. A National Science Foundation grant, Pathways Leading to Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing Across New York (\$649K), supports the development of industry-validated, semiconductor-focused content that can be integrated as a "stackable" credential within OCC's existing programs, leading to careers in the semiconductor manufacturing industry. All grants in this area link to Strategic Plan goal 1 and Mission + Vision points 3 and 4.

Moreover, students in Liberal Arts programs benefited from a Teagle Foundation planning and implementation grant (\$300K), linking to Mission + Vision points 1 and 2 and Strategic Plan goal 1. Faculty developed and implemented Liberal Arts 101 and Enduring Questions course sections that use common curricular and co-curricular experiences across core, General Education courses in multiple degree programs, introducing students to classic texts that transcend academic disciplines and address enduring questions about the human experience ([E37\\_LBLWeb](#)). Additionally, a SUNY High Needs Teaching Pathways grant (\$75K) supported the development of a Teaching Assistant pre-apprenticeship (non-credit) program and credit-bearing micro-credentials supporting the Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship Pathway. This collaboration with the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) links directly to Strategic Plan goal 1 and Mission + Vision point 4, supporting Teaching Assistants in their current work and providing a pathway toward teaching positions at SCSD and throughout the region.

Grants have also helped OCC remove barriers to enrollment and completion for students, in particular student parents and students with economic barriers to enrollment and completion, supporting Mission + Vision point 1. External grant funding helped OCC establish its Counseling and Community Care Hub, delivering counseling and wellness programs and services to students, coordinating the food pantry and other, supplemental, basic needs support, and facilitating referrals to community partners on and off-campus. Child Care Access Means Parents in School grants of \$511K (2019-2022) and \$824K (2022-26) provided childcare subsidies to enable student parents to enroll their children in OCC's Children's Learning Center, facilitating these student parents' subsequent enrollment at OCC.

OCC offers several Opportunity Programs and experiential learning programs supported in part by federal and state funding. The Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (\$219K/year 2025-2030), Student Support

Services (\$262K/year), and SUNY Educational Opportunity Program (\$225K) provide cohort-based services to eligible students. These services include orientation, navigation/ coaching, academic support, workshops, supplemental career exploration, experiential learning opportunities, and transfer and career entry support. Grant funding has also been used to expand experiential learning and undergraduate research experiences for students. For example, the NSF-supported  $\mu$ SURE program (micro-STEM Undergraduate Research Experiences) (\$189K) was developed by School teams to create new, short-term, authentic, research experiences in collaboration with four-year institutions. These grant-supported initiatives advance OCC's strategic goals of helping students achieve their education and career goals and fostering a student-centered and equitable campus experience, directly supporting Mission + Vision points 1, 2, and 3 and Strategic Plan goal 2.

OCC receives significant support from its three affiliated corporations, the OCC Housing Development Corporation (OCCHDC), the OCC Association, Inc. (OCCA), and OCC Foundation (OCCF) (See Standard VII for a detailed discussion of these entities.) In terms of finances, OCCF budgeted \$513,750 in scholarships and \$137,500 in other student aid in the 2024-2025 academic year. It also contributes annually to the CCCH's food pantry, emergency aid, and other initiatives to help meet students' basic needs ([E476\\_OCCF25-26Budget](#)). OCCF also supports campus events, student leadership, enrichment, and experiential learning programs. Donors and foundation partners contribute to scholarships and sponsored programs, such as the Meg O'Connell Social Justice Scholars Program established through a \$1M gift ([E123\\_SJScholars](#)). Corporate partners such as Micron, Inficon, and Lockheed Martin have sponsored scholarships and lab equipment, including the new Micron Cleanroom Simulation lab, supported in part through a \$5M commitment from Micron ([E477\\_BigReveal](#)). OCCF is launching a \$7 million, 5-year fundraising campaign to support future student scholarships, basic needs, and community partnerships.

Overall, OCC is in good shape financially. The US Department of Education uses the Composite Score Rating to gauge the financial strength of an institution ([E471](#)). It is a composite of three ratios derived from an institution's audited financial statements ([E74\\_FinancialAudits](#)). An institution is considered financially responsible when the composite score is between 1.5 and 3.0. OCC's Composite Scores are:

2020 – 2.53  
2021 – 2.59  
2022 – 2.55  
2023 – 2.51  
2024 – 2.53

### Long Term Planning

The 2018-2026 Facilities Master Plan (FMP) aims to revitalize areas on campus, implement additional academic programs, and explore opportunities to help OCC meet the needs of the surrounding community (linking to Strategic Plan goals 1 and 2 and Mission + Vision points 2, 3, and 4). In addition to improving the student experience, ensuring responsible stewardship of resources, and strengthening community engagement, the FMP seeks to

- Foster a student-centered campus community that emphasizes academic excellence and spaces for student use
- Embrace the diverse student body, creating environments that respond to and integrate multi-cultural aesthetics into campus space and life
- Create educational facilities that are inviting and accessible to underserved populations ([E42\\_FacilitiesPlan, p.12](#))

The FMP, developed with the help of an architectural firm and faculty/staff input, forecasts large scale needs for physical assets, such as buildings and property, as well as future physical resource allocations ([E42](#)). The plan outlines multi-year expenditures, including anticipated budgets and potential impact to existing buildings,

campus roads, parking lots and open spaces as detailed in the Capital Projects section of the 2025-26 Annual Budget Book-Final ([E467, p.33](#)). FMP are normally produced on a 5-year cycle, but the most recent one was delayed due to the pandemic and the hiring of a new president.

Once the Board of Trustees approves the FMP, the Administration, in conjunction with Facilities, prioritizes projects to submit for County and State approval. From the current FMP, the College has been approved for \$112,750,000 of projects that are funded equally between Onondaga County and New York State (NYS), which means capital projects are done without the use of College operating funds or borrowing. Typically, County approval is obtained first and then NYS approval in the following, annual budget process. Of the \$112,750,000 that has been approved, the College has awarded contracts for approximately \$50,000,000 worth of design and construction costs. These services are procured through Requests for Proposals to design firms, and the construction is publicly bid through the Onondaga County Purchasing Department. Quarterly reports and forecasts are coordinated with both Onondaga County and NYS. In essence, the FMP documents how OCC will actualize the entire Mission + Vision, but especially point 5, Responsible stewardship of resources, and the physical aspects of the Strategic Plan.

OCC leases additional space to support satellite instruction, with agreements managed by the CFO and Management Services. Leases are regularly assessed to ensure they align with enrollment trends, academic program needs, and strategic priorities, while also being cost efficient and low risk ([E478\\_LeaseAgreements](#)). Similarly, insurance coverage for property, liability, and business interruption is reviewed annually by the CFO and Management Services to ensure alignment with current property values, facility usage, and institutional risk exposure ([E479\\_Auto](#); [E480\\_UInsurance](#); [E481\\_CommInsurance](#)).

The 2021-2026 Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEM) was developed to be in alignment with the College's Strategic Plan and institutional master plans, such as the Facilities Master Plan ([E40\\_SEMPlan](#)). The creation of the plan, beginning and ending with a review of Mission + Vision and Values to ensure alignment, was guided by process endorsed by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the Educational Policy Institute. It also borrowed heavily from the SUNY *Stay Near, Go Far* campaign, focusing on adult learners, workforce development, and micro-credentialing. The writers investigated and analyzed policies, processes, and procedures, as well as reviewing current and historical institutional and community data. In support of SEM, programs were re-designed or, in the case of Welding, Sound Recording, and Physical Therapist Assistants, developed to best fit community needs (see Standard V). OCC also invested significantly in facilities such as constructing a Clean Room for training technicians and the remodeling of the School of Health, Wellness, and Human Services lab spaces for Nursing and other Health Science degrees, supporting Mission + Vision point 4.

OCC's 2023-2028 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Master Plan focuses on closing equity gaps and improving retention and graduation for OCC's diverse student population as well as increase the diversity of its workforce, supporting Strategic Plan goal 2 and Mission + Vision point 3 (see Standard II) ([E54\\_DEIPlan23-28](#)). OCC has an outcomes equity gap along both gender and race. IPEDS data shows that as overall enrollment shrinks, the percentage of underrepresented minority students increases, and there are slightly more female students than male students (although certain programs skew more heavily in one direction, e.g. technology for males and education for females) ([E112](#)). The College monitors this data, looking to reduce outcome disparities through projects such as the Student Success Challenge Grants (see Standard V for details), intentional hiring practices, and assessment practices that routinely disaggregate data (see Standards 2 and 5).

The 2025-2027 Information Technology Services Master Plan (ITSMP) establishes a comprehensive, phased approach to modernizing the College's technology infrastructure, aligning with strategic goals by prioritizing student success, operational efficiency, and equitable access. Among other things, it addresses server upgrades and evaluating the feasibility of transitioning from Colleague to Banner as a campus-wide administrative software system ([E482\\_ITMasterPlan](#)). By year three, the College will have a fully modernized IT environment that supports responsive teaching, seamless operations, and an inclusive and secure campus experience

([E483\\_ITContracts](#)). Related to the ITSMP is the 2023-2028 ITS Expenditure and Replacement Cycle Plan ([E484\\_ITExpensePlan](#)). The plan outlines how the organization will upgrade and replace IT assets over time, including hardware, software, and infrastructure. ITS, in collaboration with Financial Services, is responsible for developing and maintaining the plan, which undergoes an annual review to propose necessary updates and address emerging issues. Should significant changes occur outside the review cycle (such as critical technology updates or regulatory changes), ITS expedites the review process. The 2025-26 Budget requests County and State funding for information technology upgrades based on this process.

To enhance Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act compliance and strengthen its cybersecurity posture, ITS has partnered with DeepSeas to implement a structured, multi-year security enhancement initiative ([E485\\_DeepSeas](#)). This program is designed to address immediate security risks and strengthen internal cybersecurity. A virtual Chief Information Security Officer supports OCC as it develops stronger internal capabilities over time, ensuring cybersecurity resilience, regulatory compliance, and proactive risk management. More importantly, it is designed to empower OCC's internal teams to sustain and evolve its security posture independently in the future. The Information Technology Services Master Plan and the ITS Expenditure and Replacement Cycle Plan combine to support goals 1,2, and 3 of the Strategic Plan, as well as points 2 and 5 of the Mission + Vision.

The BoT receives assessment reports in January and June to systematically review progress on the Diversity Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, and College's Strategic plan, including KPIs ([E486\\_BOTAssessmentRecs](#); [E487\\_BOTMinutes2-25](#)).

## The Budget

The annual budget development process determines how resources can best be allocated to fulfill OCC's mission and strategic priorities ([E488\\_BudgetCalendar](#)). Beginning in Fall, the Executive Council meets to agree on preliminary revenue and enrollment assumptions needed to prepare the upcoming budget. The Budget Template, Budget Reference Manual, and Budget Instructions are then provided to each department ([E489\\_BudgetManual](#); [E490\\_BudgetInstr](#); [E491\\_BudgetTemplateFY26](#)).

For academic departments, deans review budget requests in meetings with department heads, ensuring requests align with strategic priorities. Requests are compared to previous years' actual expenditures, and particular attention is paid to recurring costs, such as classroom supplies, software subscriptions, and membership dues. After making necessary adjustments, deans submit the requests to the provost, who, along with their team and Financial Services, meets with deans to review them. Meetings consider alignment with strategic goals, grant-funded projects, and departmental performance assessments. Further adjustments may be made or additional information requested. Once all concerns are resolved, budget proposals move forward for review by Financial Services and the CFO.

For example, the 2025-2026 budget request from Culinary Management A.A.S. asks for \$3,800 in classroom supplies for Advanced Culinary Skills and Advanced Bakery Skills courses. The justification states:

*The Culinary curriculum has developed 2 new 2 credit advanced Culinary & Bakery skills courses to replace the 7 old 1 credit skills courses that were expensive to run. FSA-203C Advanced Culinary Skills course is 7 weeks long taught once in the fall 2024 semester and FSA-203B Advanced Bakery Skills course is 7 weeks long taught once in the spring 2025 semester. This way a student enrolls in the 2 credit skills course instead of picking 2 separate 1 credit skills courses. This will also increase enrollment in these 2 courses by not letting a student choose from 7 (1 cr.) courses. ([E492\\_BudgetCUL25-26](#))*

For non-academic departments, department heads submit budget requests to their respective vice presidents (VPs), who conduct a comparable review to the deans. The VP-reviewed requests then move on to Financial Services and the CFO, where they undergo the same scrutiny as academic budgets, including further adjustments or further inquiry. For example, the office of Student Engagement's 2025-2026 budget requests \$1,000 for:

*“Training for Coordinator, Deputy Coordinator, and Investigators. SCI (paid for by conduct budget) provides the minimum required training under TIX regs [...] but it does not address more advanced topics: investigative technique, parents/pregnancy accommodations, athletes, advisers, students w/disabilities, etc.” (E493\_BudgetSE25-26).*

In both examples, the requests were approved because they support not only the necessary work of the College but also the Mission + Vision and Values (points 1 and 4 of the Mission and Values 1, 3, and 6).

Funds are also set aside within the President’s budget for campus-wide initiatives that support the current Strategic Plan and Mission + Vision. Examples include the Student Success Challenge grants (see Standard V and below) and administration of the PACE survey (see Standard II).

Once the budgets have gone through the full review process, each person involved in the process has a chance to review them, so any concerns or questions can be addressed and any additional changes made. The creation and review process ensure transparency and that the experts in their respective areas have the resources and support needed to continue their work supporting the Mission + Vision and the Strategic Plan. After all revisions and clarifications are completed, Financial Services and the CFO compare the finalized expenses with projected revenues to determine whether additional actions are needed to guarantee a balanced budget or appropriate use of OCC’s fund balance. This information is then presented to the Executive Council as well as the BoT at their annual budget retreat for input. The BoT approves the budget at the May meeting (E494\_PolicyG2; E468).

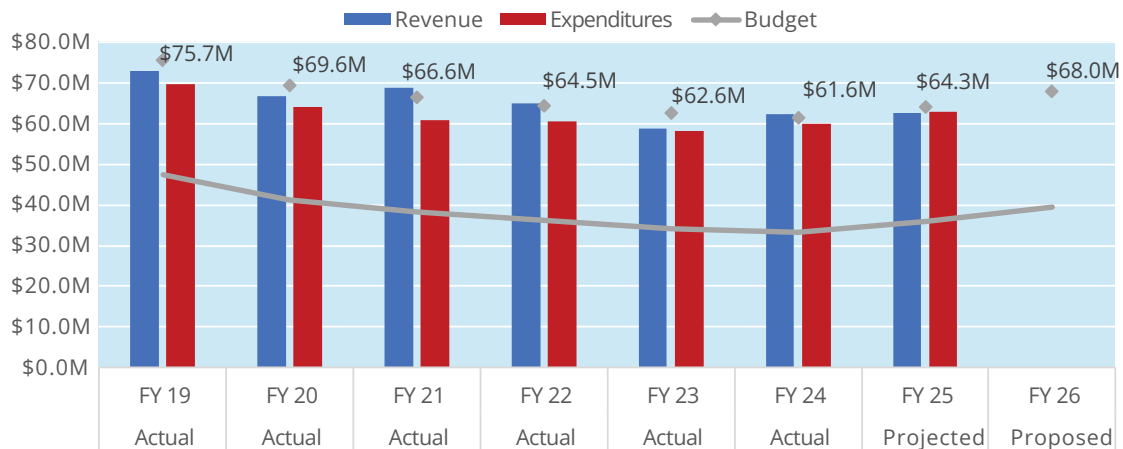
OCC then submits its operating budget and capital plan to the County Legislature’s Joint Facility and Ways & Means committee for review and a public hearing (E57). The budget is approved by the full County Legislature in June via a resolution (E495\_CountyResolutions). The approved budget is then reviewed and approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees during its September meeting. The final budget is loaded into the College’s student information and enterprise resource planning system (Ellucian Colleague) before the start of the new fiscal year on September 1. Revenue and expense projections are done throughout the fiscal year to see where they are trending compared to the approved budget (E496\_BudgetPlenary1-25; E497\_RevExpTrend; E498\_ReforecastExpRev).

Each department manages its budget expenditures and can propose re-allocations as necessary through the budget transfer process. Budgets are monitored in real time through the MyOCC portion of the website (E499\_BudgetMonitoring). Funds representing their specific department needs are broken down into detailed categories, including duplicating and laboratory supplies (E500\_BudgetExamples).

OCC’s annual operating budget for FY25 is just over \$64 million. This represents a 15.1% decrease from FY19, when the budget was \$75.7 million, a decline that aligns with a drop in enrollment over the same period. Between 2020 and 2023, OCC received a total of \$21.3 million in HEERF funds, resulting in a net fund balance increase of \$15.7 million. At the end of FY24, the College’s fund balance stood at \$32.7 million. Strong fiscal management has enabled OCC to establish financial safeguards during a time of declining enrollment and rising costs. To support the FY25 and projected FY26 budgets, OCC anticipates using approximately \$4.35M from its fund balance. To date, OCC has maintained operation without ever utilizing fund balance.



### Operating Revenue and Expenditure Compared to Budget



OCC's long-term financial goals rely on a few, important assumptions. The following summary ([E501\\_LTFinancialAssumptions](#)) outlines the key financial assumptions under two planning scenarios—Baseline and Aspirational—to support long-range forecasting and strategic decision-making.

Under the Baseline Scenario, enrollment is projected to increase at a rate of 2% annually through 2026–27, after which it stabilizes. Tuition rates remained flat in 2024–25, followed by modest increases in subsequent years (1%, 2%, 1%, and 2%). State aid is assumed to remain at the funding floor, with a reduction in rental aid due to a lease expiration in mid-2026. Sponsor contributions are expected to remain level. Revenue from chargebacks will grow based on an established formula linked to fund balance, while interest income is projected to decline by 50 basis points annually. Operating cost increases are expected at 3% across most categories, including salaries, food, IT, marketing, and communications. Operating costs for utilities are expected to increase by 6%. Additional expense categories such as fees, retirement contributions, workers' compensation, and health insurance premiums also reflect annual growth in line with inflation and wage increases.

In contrast, the Aspirational Scenario retains all baseline expenditure assumptions but anticipates more favorable revenue conditions: enrollment is projected to grow at 5% annually through 2026–27; state aid includes a \$3 million annual increase above the funding floor; and sponsor contributions grow by 3% in 2024–25, then 2% annually thereafter.

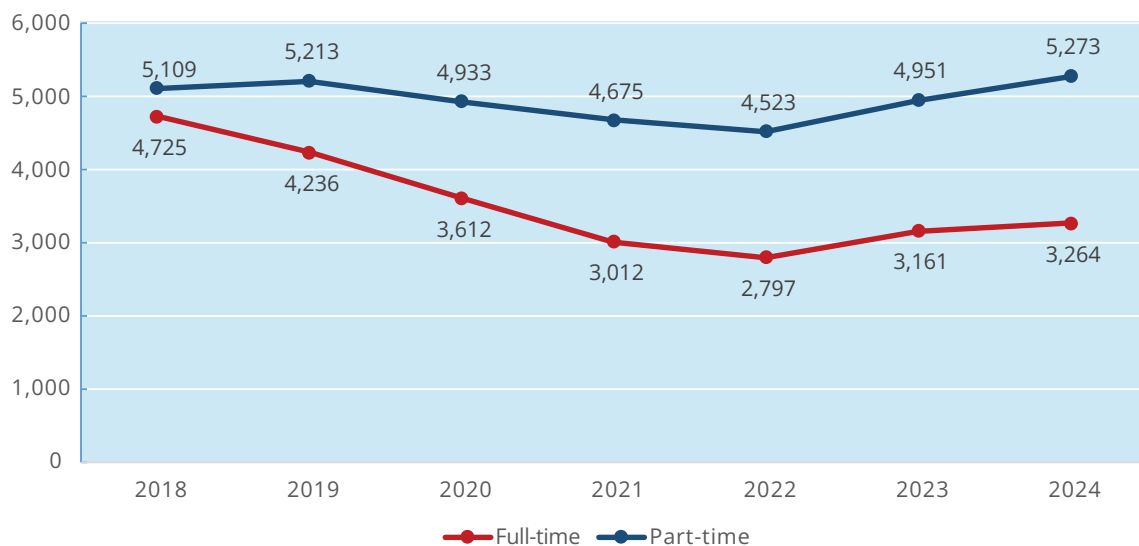
Overall, the aspirational model reflects a more optimistic outlook, emphasizing proactive investment in enrollment growth and expanded public funding support, while maintaining fiscal discipline across operating and personnel costs. Under the Baseline scenario, without making any changes to staffing levels or looking at areas to reduce expenses, a significant use of fund balance is projected (\$4.8 million in 2025–26 growing to \$9.7 million by 2028–29). A lower amount of fund balance is projected to be used under the Aspirational scenario (\$1 million in 2025–26 growing to \$4.9 million by 2028–29).

OCC takes a very conservative approach to its budget with the goal of having actual revenues come in higher and expenses come in lower than budget. Over the last decade or so, the College has always ended its fiscal year with actual results coming in more favorable than budget. For 2024–2025, OCC budgeted the use of fund balance in the amount of \$2,762,584, and, based on preliminary audit results, is projecting adding \$268,745 to its fund balance ([E502\\_SUNYAnnualReport](#)). For 2023–2024, OCC budgeted the use of fund balance in the amount of \$4,562,940 and added \$2,137,495 to the fund balance due to significantly higher than anticipated enrollment, as well as savings attained with the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive. For 2022–2023, the use of fund balance was budgeted in the amount of \$4,720,586, but OCC added \$562,074 to its fund balance, a portion of which was attributable to \$1,906,600 of HEERF stimulus funds. For 2021–2022, OCC budgeted for a

balanced budget without the use of fund balance and added \$4,507,292 to its fund balance. This was primarily driven by receipt of \$8,305,473 of HEERF stimulus funds.

Fall trends show OCC has experienced some recovery following significant enrollment declines during the pandemic, with most of the growth in STEM and direct-to-career programs while there was a decline in liberal arts, transfer programs. Data also shows the greatest enrollment gains are among non-matriculated students, as outlined in the chart below. The non-matriculated population reflects growth in early college high school programs as well as part-time learners, especially working adults ([E62\\_OCCbythe#s](#)).

**Fall Enrollment Trend by Full-time Part-time Status**



Achieving baseline projections depends on increased retention of all populations and increased recruitment and retention of non-traditional learners. Aspirational projections are supported by the baseline plan, plus the additional, albeit modest, growth in population projected in the area because of Micron's chip manufacturing plant. High school graduate numbers are decreasing in OCC's service area and across New York State, and the overall population is projected to decline over the next 25 years as well. OCC's increase in student retention has kept overall student enrollment stable, allowing the College to meet its budgetary requirements. Fewer new students, however, means there are fewer students to retain. Even if OCC maintains or increases its retention rates, enrollment will decrease over time. While the full picture will be composed of many variables, the College anticipates it will face budgetary challenges in the future, and the types of strategies used in the past (e.g. reorganizations and the VERI), as well as novel strategies, will be considered to address them. OCC continues to closely monitor its economic situation and consistently communicate with stakeholders.

### Responsible Fiscal Management and Assessment

Approximately 82% of the budget is allocated for salary and benefits, and there are other, non-discretionary expenses such as utilities, insurance, facilities maintenance and fees for services that are required to operate the College, leaving a modest amount for expenses such as classroom supplies and equipment. OCC measures and assesses the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support its Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan, effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources. Examples of institutional resources allocated to support the Mission + Vision and ongoing assessment of that allocation include increasing budget for Navigators based on the Mission as well as ongoing assessment results (see Standard IV), and the Student Success Challenge (SSC) grant process (see Standard V). Projects with proven success, like the School's Growth, Progress, & Skills for College workshops

(see Standard IV) are added to the annual budget request for that office ([E503\\_GPSFlyer](#); [E453\\_ChallengeGPS](#)). Additionally, administration of the original PACE Survey (\$5,100 from the President's budget) will be budgeted for by Human Resources going forward. Finally, as stated above, vacant or new position requests must be justified and approved by EC.

Renovations also supports OCC's Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan. For example, Ferrante Hall's renovation will result in a cutting-edge training facility that meets the evolving needs of the School of Health, Wellness & Human Services, as well as the broader community ([E504\\_AlumniArticle](#)). Along these lines, Whitney has seen several renovations supporting OCC's growing technical and career programs (see Standard III), including the Micron Cleanroom Simulation Lab, an HVAC lab, a welding lab, an expanded CNC lab, a Heavy Equipment Mechanic lab/addition, and existing classrooms remodeled into lecture/lab spaces to support the ELM curriculum. These include classrooms for a tools and mechanisms lab, a robotics/computer lab, and a fluid lab ([E42, p. 69, 80](#)). Even though the direct cost of projects like these is underwritten by Onondaga County and the State of New York and/or grant funding, OCC must budget and account for maintenance, upkeep, and the specialized staff needed to support and teach in these programs.

The Board of Trustees (BoT) contracts with an independent firm to audit the College's financial statements every two years, with an extension available for two additional years. Auditors examine the financial statements and supporting documentation to determine if statements comply with generally accepted accounting principles and relevant federal/state regulations, then submit their report to the BoT. For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2024, no management letters were issued, and the College was determined to be a low-risk auditee ([E74](#)). Final audit documents from 2019-2024 show no audit management letters were issued for those years.

OCC has well-defined and inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate financial data into institutional planning and a clearly defined reporting structure, with organizational charts available on the College website ([E458](#)). The Planning Assessment & Resource Allocation Timeline summarizes the annual process for resource allocation ([E459](#)). Academic assessment and program reviews can have a financial impact on future budgets, so continuous assessment of every area allows for the best resource allocation. Continuous assessment results in low enrollment degree programs being deactivated and discontinued, such as the Nuclear Technology (NET) Program in 2021, but also in the redesign of programs, such as Architecture Design Studies (ADS) in 2022, to meet local needs ([E505\\_NETDeactivation](#); [E506\\_ADSCreation](#)). A comprehensive expense analysis is conducted annually, with data separated by functional categories such as instruction, student services, and institutional support ([E292](#)).

As stated above, every department has an annual operational plan connecting its work with the Strategic Plan and outlining budget and resource requirements, as well as ongoing assessment. The Financial Management and Services 2024-25 Operational Plan Summary shows all the various projects undertaken by offices in this area and connections to strategic goals, specific KPIs, etc. It also has a timeline for project implementation, the percent completed at time of publication, and a review of outcomes ([E507\\_OpsPlanFinance](#)). Human Resources' annual operational plan also illustrates the assessment process. Using Strategic Plan Goal 2, Strategic Priority 2.2, and KPI 2.2.1 as touchstones, HR wants to "Increase the number of diverse applicants for job openings from an average of 2 applicants per position to an average of 5 per position." To do this, they will "Increase outreach with minority organizations, educational institutions, job fairs, targeted advertising" by "Increas[ing] advertising budget for posting vacancies on diversity job boards and additional websites." Under "Assessment results," the plan states:

*To date, HR has added 29 [as of May 2025] new recruitment sources, including partnerships with organizations such as militaryjob.com, diversityinhighereducation.com, HispanicsinSTEM.com. These additions have enhanced our outreach to underrepresented groups and broadened the applicant pipeline.*

*Progress has been behind, with 29 total sources added vs. a cumulative target of 40 at this point in the year. Efforts to track source effectiveness including applicant diversity, interview conversion, and hiring outcomes are underway and will be critical to evaluating ROI and refining future outreach strategy. (E216\_OpPlanHR24-25)*

(Note, as of Fall 2025, HR added an additional three recruitment sources, for a total of 32.)

The Institutional Effectiveness (IE) committee, a standing committee of the College Leadership Council (CLC), co-chaired by one faculty member and one staff member, helps OCC improve student success outcomes through assessment of past, current, and future efforts (E85). Recently, the committee recommended the College adopt a more focused approach to administrative reviews through incorporating departmental operational plans, streamlining the operational planning process by submitting reports directly to IPAR, and proposing OCC utilize the MSCHE Evidence Inventory as a tool for institutional assessment, improvement, and preparation for future accreditation (E86\_IEPlan25; E508\_CLCMtg3-25). The CLC serves as an advisory body to the President and has four standing committees (Programs and Academic Support, Student Success Council, Data Governance, and Institutional Effectiveness) as well as Ad Hoc Committees. Meetings are open to the public, and a CLC newsletter is distributed to the campus after each meeting (E509\_CLCSchedule23-24).

Resource allocation is also assessed through: grant work and special projects; monitoring student enrollment in degree programs; the ongoing investigation of class sizes through the Designated Limit (DL) conversations; Degree Program Reviews; student success initiatives like Lazer Success; tracking classroom usage; and planning in alignment with external accreditation standards like NACEP for concurrent enrollment (E510\_FacultyTimeStipends24-25; E295\_DLMemo12-24; E474; E511\_CampusRooms; E202\_NACEPAnnual; E203\_NACEPCert).

Conclusion

OCC maintains clear processes for allocating resources and has been successful in establishing reserves sufficient to withstand short-term fluctuations in enrollment and other funding streams. The College has well-established processes and consistent practices for assessing and revising academic programs and services to achieve its Mission and, thereby, contribute to the institution's fiscal health and stability.

Current Strengths	1. Transparent and clear planning and resource allocation that directly ties to Mission + Vision and Strategic Plan, i.e. annual operational plans.	Criteria 1, Criteria 3, Criteria 5
	2. Strong commitment to student success supported by external funding and partnerships.	Criteria 10
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	1. Continue to adapt to demographic and funding shifts while enhancing student success, maintaining financial stability, and modernizing infrastructure.	Criteria 7

# STANDARD VII

## Governance, Leadership, and Administration



### Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration


*The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with a related entity, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.*

#### Executive Summary

Onondaga Community College (OCC) continually works to strengthen its governance structures, and its successes in a rapidly changing landscape are, in large part, because all parts of the institution are working toward the common goal of student success.



## Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Standard Criteria

Institutional Priorities	1. Help students achieve their educational and career goals through responsive academic experiences, innovative teaching strategies, and exemplary learning support services.	2. Foster a student-centered and equitable campus experience where all students feel welcomed, valued, connected, and empowered to succeed.	3. Ensure communication systems are consistent, transparent, and designed to promote student success.	4. Foster engagement and partnerships with school districts, governmental and community organizations, and businesses.
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration				

## Alignment of Lines of Inquiry with Standard Criteria

1. How does OCC define shared governance and how does the College effectively communicate the role and work of our governance bodies to the College community? **Criteria 1**
2. How does OCC determine what public interests should be served by the governing bodies? **Criteria 1, Criteria 2**
3. How does OCC determine what constitutes integrity and accountability in relation to the governing body, CEO, and administration? **Criteria 2, Criteria 3, Criteria 4, Criteria 5**
4. How does OCC effectively and proactively prepare for future challenges and opportunities? **Criteria 1**
5. How does OCC effectively assess governance, leadership, and the administration and apply results for continuous improvement? **Criteria 5**

## Analysis

OCC's governance enables it to fulfill its stated Mission + Vision and Values while upholding the institution's autonomy. The governance structure is clearly articulated, transparent, outlines stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and is supported by detailed policies and active participation from the governing body, administration, faculty, staff, students, and affiliated entities. OCC has refined its governance practices over time, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, collaboration, and accountability for inclusive decision making, giving the institution strength and resiliency.

## Shared Governance Structure

Shared governance at OCC is collaborative and allows for collective input on decision making ([E44\\_GovOrgNov2025](#)). Weekly updates on the College website, monthly newsletters, and regularly scheduled meetings between governance representatives and the President contribute to transparency ([E79\\_CLCNewsLtJan25](#); [E80\\_CLCNewsLtMar25](#)).

The College Leadership Council (CLC) is the central, cross-campus, governance body responsible for advising the President on strategic issues, projects, and proposals with significant cross-institutional impact ([E512\\_CLCBylaws](#)). CLC has four active committees within its structure: Institutional Effectiveness; Student Success Council; Data Governance; and the Programs and Academic Support Committee ([E513\\_CLCWeb](#)). CLC is comprised of representatives of OCC's recognized associations and division heads. The CLC may conduct deliberations itself or refer the matter to the appropriate governing body or its committees. For example, a purely curricular matter would be referred to the appropriate faculty committee, while a campus-wide initiative would be considered by the CLC itself.

The CLC is an outcome of years-long conversations surrounding shared governance at OCC. In response to the 2008 MSCHE visit, then President Sydow convened a leadership summit in 2010 that led to the formation of a broadly representative Shared Governance Task Force and a 2011 report with recommendations for improving the efficiency of, and participation in, its governance systems. It also contained OCC's first written statement on shared governance. Ultimately, a Faculty-Trustee Ad Hoc Committee recommended replacing the President's Cabinet with the CLC, an entity with broad representation able to review and deliberate cross-institutional issues and make recommendations to the president or forward them to appropriate governance channels. Since its implementation in Fall 2012, the CLC has undergone several changes, including a rebalancing of its membership in 2016, the selection of CLC's faculty committee members through the standard nominations process used to fill all faculty committees in 2017, and the implementation of a formal assessment process on a 2-year assessment cycle starting in 2024 (see *Assessment and Closing the Loop* below).

A cornerstone of OCC's shared governance structure, the Faculty Senate focuses on curriculum development, academic policies, and faculty engagement ([E514\\_FacSenateBylaws2024](#)). To provide transparency and promote participation, the Senate meets on the second, third, and fourth Mondays of the month during each semester, holding divisional town hall meetings on the first Monday of the month. It holds a mid-semester, faculty-wide meeting and schedules plenaries, open to all campus employees, at the beginning of each semester and at the end of Spring ([E515\\_FacSenateWeb](#)). Regular Senate meetings take place during College Hour (no scheduled classes). The Senate is comprised of officers, representation of full-time faculty from each of the four Schools, adjunct faculty, and Ex Officio members. Senators are elected to two-year terms, with approximately half of the seats up for election each year. It also has designated policy formation, service, and contractual committees. Agendas are distributed to all full-time and adjunct faculty prior to each in-person meeting, with an option for virtual attendance. A Senate SharePoint, open to all faculty, contains by-laws, committee documents, agendas, and meeting minutes. In addition to conducting curricular business, Senate also collaborates on policy reviews. For example, it provided feedback on the BoT's Student Success Policy because it concerned academic success. The Senate held discussions and proposed revisions, which were eventually incorporated into the version approved by the BoT in 2024 ([E516\\_FacSenateBoTStuSuccPolicy](#); [E517\\_FacSenateResolBoTStuSuccPolicy](#); [E518\\_CLCMtgApr24](#)).

The Faculty Senate has changed significantly since its inception in 2017 ([E519\\_FacSenateBylaws2017-2024](#)). Several of these changes, such as the Divisional Town Hall meetings and mid-semester, campus-wide, town hall meetings, were in response to faculty feedback ([E520\\_SharedGovAssess, p. 16-17, 22-25](#)). More recently, the bylaws were revised to maintain effective representation given the reduction in full-time faculty. The ratio of senators to permanent faculty members was reduced from one per eight to one per six, ensuring all departments and divisions are now adequately represented. The establishment of an ex officio seat for the Chair of Chairs, the leader of the academic department chairperson group, has improved coordination between academic departments and Senate. Other changes have included the addition of a Senate Executive Committee and refinements to the election process. These structural changes have enhanced the Senate's ability to address challenges and contribute meaningfully to institutional decision making ([E514](#)).

OCC Administrators Council (OCCAC) is comprised of Professional Administrators (unionized employees), college affiliates, and Management Confidential (non-unionized employees). It functions as an open and collegial forum to promote the exchange of information and ideas, enhancing the ability of its members to advance the College's Mission and Strategic Plan ([E521\\_OCCACWeb](#)). Each Spring, members elect an 8-person steering committee serving rotating, two-year terms. Steering committee members present information on current issues and gather feedback ([E522\\_OCCACAgendas](#)). OCCAC is represented on the CLC, and representatives meet with OCC's President at least three times per year. While not primarily a decision-making body, the OCCAC facilitates bidirectional communication and informs the work of its members serving on the CLC.

OCC Staff Association (OCCSA) is an organization comprised of all staff represented by the Civil Service Employees Association and those who are not represented by a bargaining unit. Its mission is to facilitate communication and promote fair treatment and opportunities for staff, and it is represented on the CLC ([E523\\_OCCSABylaws](#)). Like the OCCAC, the Staff Association is not primarily a decision-making body but facilitates bidirectional communication with the CLC and the College President. OCCSA serves as an important case study because, while there was ongoing representation at CLC, following the post-Covid return to campus, the body slowly stopped holding formal meetings and sending out communications, eventually ceasing to function. Members were content with informal communication, such as the College President hosting events where ideas and updates could be shared with campus leadership, and regular communications sent to all employees, e.g. the CLC Newsletter. As of Fall 2025, however, the OCCSA is being revitalized with a new leadership structure ensuring representation for both day and night employees (new bylaws expected Spring 2026).

The Student Government Association (SGA) represents students ([E139\\_SGABylaws](#)). SGA is dedicated to broadening the educational, cultural, and social experiences of all OCC students by offering leadership opportunities and skill development. It serves as the central organization for all student groups on campus, supporting activities organized by it and the Student Orientation, Leadership & Engagement (SOLE) Office. The SGA conducts annual elections each Spring. Officers must hold seven office hours per week and attend trainings and weekly SGA Executive Board Meetings. Officers sit on various campus committees and affiliate organization boards: Board of Trustees, College Leadership Council, Onondaga Community College Association Board, Housing Development Corporation Board, and Campus Safety Committee. SGA representation can also be found on the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Council. SGA oversees the election of the Student Trustee to the Board, cultivating the connection and communication between the BoT and the SGA.

SGA also holds bi-monthly meetings, referred to as Council of Clubs, for the 15+ recognized student clubs. To receive and maintain approved status, student clubs follow a process ensuring broad student interest, accessibility, and participation, as well as being active at events like OCC's Open House ([E139, p.14-15](#)). Council of Clubs is a space where students can solicit and share ideas and give feedback to the SGA officers, who then communicate it to College offices as needed. For example, in one meeting students expressed concern about the lack of cafeteria workers' knowledge regarding cross contamination and allergies. An SGA officer surveyed students about their experiences and presented the results to administration ([E524\\_SGAAllergySurvey](#)). As a result, information about how dining services handle dietary restrictions was collected, and the SGA disseminated it to the student body ([E525\\_SGAAllergyFlyer](#)).

The SGA regularly surveys the student body, seeking feedback on the SGA itself, events, and ideas for programming. In some cases, these surveys substantially influence major policy decisions, such as smoking and tobacco use, which culminated in the campus-wide Smoke and Tobacco-Free policy ([E526\\_TobaccoFreePolicy17](#)). The SGA was similarly decisive in determining the scheduling of College Hour, an hour-long, time block midday on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays when classes are not held to create time for campus events and meetings. The placement of College Hour at midday caused scheduling challenges for some classes (especially labs), and Faculty Senate wanted to know if the mid-day College Hour was helpful to students. In response, SGA conducted a student opinion survey, including several alternative scheduling models; the survey demonstrated overwhelming support for the preservation of the existing structure, providing a clear and definitive answer to the question ([E527\\_SGACollegeHourSurvey](#)).

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Council (DEIB) is a representative forum, established in 2005, comprised of students, faculty, administrators, and staff from across campus. It is charged with organizing workshops and presentations on DEI issues and advising the President on inclusion of diverse perspectives at OCC ([E528\\_DEIBByLaws](#)). The Council is co-chaired by the College's Chief Diversity Officer and a member elected by the Council. As its bylaws state, the Council must be broadly representative of the diversity on campus. Typically, the Council has an average of 40 to 50 members, including five to ten students, each year. The work

of the DEIB Council can impact the entire campus, as when it lead the initiative to establish the College's Equity Statement. A working group of Council members developed a draft statement and presented it to governance bodies for input and eventual endorsement ([E529\\_CounDivInclCharges](#)). The statement was adopted by the BoT in January 2021 ([E530\\_BoTMtgMinJan21](#)).

In addition to the State University of New York (SUNY), OCC has three associated boards; the Onondaga Community College Association Inc. (OCCA) ([E531\\_OCCABylaws](#); [E532\\_OCCAServAgrmt](#)), the Onondaga Community College Housing Development Corporation (OCCHDC) ([E533\\_HDCByLaws](#); [E534\\_HDCOpAgrmt](#)), and the Onondaga Community College Foundation (OCCF) ([E535\\_OCCFOpAgrmt](#); [E536\\_OCCFArticlesIncorp](#)). The boards work with the College to advance its mission. For example, HDC is required to meet a set debt service coverage through its financing agreement. The ability to meet this coverage is directly tied to occupancy in the residence halls, which was significantly lower than needed during the pandemic. By working with OCCA and the College, HDC was able to reduce expenses and provide housing to groups outside of their main market. This allowed them to stay in compliance with their financing agreement ([E537\\_TrusteeDoc](#)). Moreover, OCCF has allocated over \$400,000 in scholarships and academic support for OCC annually. Annual support will grow to over \$600,000 in 2025-2026 as a result of prudent investing, favorable market conditions, conservative spending, and recent fundraising, including a bequest for \$1.8 million for the creation of scholarships supporting students in technology, health, and education programs ([E538\\_OCCFBODMtgRedactExcerpt2024](#)). The Foundation oversees 80 different endowed scholarship funds, in addition to the OCCF Student Emergency Fund, which helps students through short-term emergencies ([E539\\_OCCFScholOpp](#)).

An example of shared decision making having a profound impact on the College occurred in mid-March 2020, when campuses closed statewide. Then-President Crabill expanded the Executive Council to include the presidents of the Senate and the union (OCCFTA) to represent faculty and staff. Meetings shifted from weekly to daily. This open communication and cooperative decision-making facilitated the shifting of the remainder of Spring and Summer 2020 to 100% remote learning and the development of additional modalities for reduced-density, in-person classes beginning Fall 2020. OCC was one of the first SUNY campuses to re-open in-person, enabling it to serve students who preferred in-person options and academic programs requiring hands-on training ([E540\\_OCCCovidTesting](#); [E541\\_OCCFullFallPlan](#), p.7).

OCC's newest challenge for shared governance is addressing demographically driven, declining enrollment. Under the leadership of the then-provost, OCC began a comprehensive review of academic programs in 2018, looking to strengthen existing programs and find opportunities for new program development. Faculty governance systems were integral to this design process, and the BoT provided feedback. These efforts ultimately led to the addition of approximately 25 new programs ([E542\\_BoT2022](#); [E543\\_BoT2023](#); [E251\\_NewPrgrms2022-2026](#)). See Standard III for details.

While new and revised programs helped, by Fall 2022 enrollment had fallen to a point requiring substantial reductions in the number of full-time faculty. Working in conjunction with the OCCFTA union and the BoT, President Hilton shepherded approval of the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive, prompting 28 full-time faculty to retire ([E544\\_FacultyVERI](#)). See Standard II for details. Further action, however, was necessary, and in January 2023, the administration announced a plan for a major reorganization. Academic departments were consolidated from 15 to 9 and the number of Schools from 8 to 4 ([E545\\_AcadReorgJan23](#)). The re-organization proposal, intended to create economies of scale and to better align academic departments with the student support offered through the Schools, was reviewed by both the OCCFTA and the Senate ([E546\\_FedRespAcadReorgProp](#); [E547\\_SenateReorgResp](#)). A Senate poll indicated the vast majority of faculty believed the reasoning for the reorganization was unclear and that it was not the best way to respond to fiscal challenges. 21 of 27 Senators voted no confidence in the original reorganization plan ([E548\\_VoNCMotions](#)). This was not an easy conversation to have, but OCC's strength lies in the fact that it was able to happen in an open and honest manner ([E549\\_SenateMin2023](#)).



Based on feedback from OCCFTA and Senate, the administration revised the reorganization plan. This was a seismic shift for those impacted, as it included redeployment of nine full-time faculty members from departments where enrollment had declined substantially. Depending on their credentials and interests, some faculty moved to different, understaffed, academic departments (such as Library and Applied Engineering Technology), while others moved into administrative roles ([E550\\_AcadReorgApr23](#); [E551\\_AcadReorgMay23](#)). While it was difficult in the moment, all moves were voluntary; in many cases, senior faculty members chose to move to protect more vulnerable colleagues. A total of 40 full-time faculty retired, moved to a non-faculty role, or resigned. No faculty retrenchments occurred in 2023 or since.

Ultimately, it was shared governance that enabled ideas to evolve through discourse, resulting in a stronger outcome than would have been achieved without dialogue. It was not an easy time to work at OCC, and the results of the Fall 2023 PACE Campus Climate Survey show that (with 56% of 360 respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that there is sufficient communication). This led to increased communication as a pillar of OCC's Strategic Plan and a sustained effort by leadership to address the campus climate ([E145\\_PACECustomReport](#)). This has been put into practice through newsletters and updates from across campus, completing PACE every three years, and investment in strategies to increase trust (e.g. the FranklinCovey's Leading at the Speed of Trust workshop) ([E552\\_DrHiltonMonthlyUpdates](#); [E553\\_CLCClimateSurvPres](#); [E554\\_CLCClimateSurvRec](#)). See Standard II for details about PACE.

### Board of Trustees

Pages 34-37 of New York State Education Law, Community College Regulations lay out the roles and responsibilities of the local sponsor (Sec. 604.1), the responsibilities and duties of college trustees (604.2), the responsibilities and duties of the president (604.3), and the role of student members of boards of trustees (604.4) ([E555\\_NYSEdLaw, p. 34-37](#)).

The BoT provides strategic oversight and ensures that OCC's policies and practices align with its Mission + Vision and Values ([E556\\_BoTByLawsRevJan24, p. 6](#)). According to state law, the BoT is comprised of ten-members: five appointed by the Onondaga County Legislature; four appointed by the Governor of New York; and a student elected annually by the student body ([E557\\_BoTAddressList](#); [E558\\_BoTBios](#); [E559\\_BoTApptLetters](#); [E560\\_NYSOpenLeg, p. 2-3](#)). While OCC is a member of SUNY, Onondaga County is its fiscal sponsor, and this accounts for the County having more appointees than the Governor. Trustees serve seven-year terms (except for the student who serves a one-year term) and meet six times per year. This includes two scheduled retreats where Trustees focus on items such as audit, budget, and progress toward goals outlined in the Strategic Plan and other master plans ([E560, p. 2-3](#)). As public officers, BoT members are required to complete an annual Onondaga County ethics Financial Disclosure statement in addition to adhering to OCC's standard Conflict of Interest policy ([E561\\_BoTCOI](#)). Member bios, meeting schedules, minutes, resolutions, and other pertinent information are publicly available via the website ([E562\\_BoTWeb](#)). Committees of the BoT include: Finance, Audit & Compliance; Education; and Nominating committees. Information about current and Emeritus Board members, meeting schedules, minutes, and assessment information is available to the public via the College website ([E562](#)). Agenda items are chosen for relevance and timeliness, but the BoT gets regular updates regarding college-wide initiatives, such as cybersecurity, Guided Pathways, specific grants, and Strategic Plan KPIs ([E563\\_KPISPUupdateBoT](#)). The BoT is heavily involved in the Strategic Planning process and approves all master plans. Importantly, the Faculty Senate president has a standing opportunity to address the BoT at every meeting (not the case at every SUNY college), and faculty are regularly invited to present updates on special projects. The BoT wants to know what the faculty are thinking and working on and has a history of passing resolutions of appreciation for outstanding staff and faculty work, as well as student achievement ([E564\\_BoTFacultyBoardRecog](#); [E565\\_BoTStuRecog](#)).

One of the BoT's responsibilities is to appoint a president and annually review the president's progress toward stated goals; the Board most recently fulfilled this duty in appointing Dr. Warren Hilton in 2022 as OCC's 9th



president through a defined selection process and review of his 2023 self-evaluation ([E566\\_BoTPresAppt](#); [E567\\_DrHiltonSelfEval2023](#)). Another BoT responsibility is policy approval, which happens every June, although policies may be brought to the BoT as needed. For the annual review, all existing policies are reviewed by the relevant department for accuracy. Proposed policies are vetted through the appropriate governance body before going to the Executive Council and the BoT for final approval ([E568\\_BoTApprovalCollegePolicyManual](#)). The Student Success Policy, mentioned above, is an example of the BoT overseeing at the policy level the quality of teaching and learning ([E569\\_StuSuccessPolicy](#)). It states:

**To work toward improvement in student success, OCC will develop:**

- Comprehensive strategic planning that sets success goals and measurements, including implementation measures, for improving student outcomes.
- Organizational structures, policies, and practices that support student success, student equity outcomes, and student personal well-being and mental health.
- Professional development that empowers faculty to adopt instructional practices that incorporate sound principles of teaching/learning theory that enhance learning outcomes.
- Program-level learning outcomes that are aligned with the requirements for success in employment and further education in a given field and that the results of learning outcomes assessment are applied to improve the effectiveness of instruction across programs.

In brief, the BoT approves structural changes (e.g. the Schools model and academic reorganization), policies, sets priorities by reviewing enrollment and retention data (e.g. rightsizing the faculty through the VERI), approves new programs or the discontinuance of programs, and reviews and approves policies ([E570\\_BoTReviewProg](#)). In addition to planning, the BoT is intimately involved in resource allocation. This is evidenced through the annual operating budget process, as well as the review and approval of master plans (see Standard I). The BoT reviews the compiled annual operating budget at its retreat and works with the CFO to review revenue projections, expense projections, and any other factors related to fiscal oversight. Finances are reviewed in detail at the Finance, Audit and Compliance committee meeting which convenes before the start of every full BoT meeting, with the committee chair summarizing the discussion at the start of the full meeting. The external auditors present to the BoT at the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting every September to review the process for the upcoming audit starting in October. The results of the audit are discussed in detail at an annual retreat in January focusing solely on the audit. The February full board meeting is reserved for further discussion of the audit before it is either accepted or rejected by the BoT. The BoT also reviews the affiliate audits ([E571\\_BoTReviewFinanceAuditCompl](#)).

**Office of the President**

OCC's Chief Executive Officer (President) has the appropriate credentials, as outlined in the posted job description, consistent with the mission and priorities of the College ([E572\\_DrHiltonBio](#); [E573\\_DrHiltonCV](#); [E35\\_PresidentSearch](#)). The BoT has oversight of the College, and delegates responsibilities to the President, in accordance with New York State Education Law, SUNY regulations, and the Trustees' bylaws. The selection of the President follows guidelines provided by SUNY and New York State Education Law ([E574\\_SUNYPresSearchGuidelines](#); [E555, p. 34-35](#)). In the event of a presidential vacancy, the BoT appoints an Interim President with approval by SUNY. If an interim is not needed, the process begins with a request for proposals from search firms. A job description is then developed and an OCC search committee is formed. Once finalists are named, the BoT selects the next President pending final approval by SUNY. The BoT also has a succession plan, presented each year in January, that outlines the continuity of leadership should the president become unable to perform their duties ([E556, p.3](#)).

As stated in NYS Education Law, *"The president of the College, as the chief executive officer responsible to the College trustees, is responsible for providing general educational leadership and for promoting the educational effectiveness of the Institution in all its aspects."* OCC's president has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the

responsibilities of the role, with authority extending to their role in developing and implementing the strategic plan, hiring personnel, identifying, and allocating resources, and directing the institution and its employees toward the goals of the strategic plan ([E555, section 604.3](#)). Annual reports from the President to the BoT demonstrate how elements of the strategic plan are being implemented and resources being allocated according to strategic plan priorities ([E575\\_PresPrioritiesJune2025, p. 3](#)). The President completes a self-evaluation in advance of the June annual BoT meeting to be shared with all the Trustees. Meetings take place with the Chair of the Board over the summer to review the self-assessment and to determine goals for the upcoming year. Those goals are shared at the September meeting and updates are given before each meeting on progress towards those goals. The Board also votes on revision or extension of the President's contract at the September meeting ([E576\\_PresExtension, p.3](#)).

The President meets weekly with Executive Council (EC) to get guidance on strategic planning, operational priorities, and tasks such as ensuring policy proposals align with OCC's mission and long-term objectives. EC, consisting of the Senior VPs and VPs, also oversees the day-to-day operation of the institution, and EC members are evaluated annually by the President per the process described in Standard II. EC was formed at the same time as CLC to ensure full divisional representation and collaboration with the President. Members are integrated into various areas of the College's shared governance and are currently active on CLC, DEIB Council, Student Success Council, and the Data Governance Committee. EC members also present to various campus groups when asked. For example, Faculty Senate asks the CFO to present budget information at every faculty plenary. Additionally, EC members participate in professional development opportunities around diverse topics such as psychological safety, creative problem solving, and crisis communications ([E577\\_CommCollegeCrisisComm2024](#); [E578\\_DesignThinkingOutput](#); [E579\\_PsychSafetyReport](#)).

Administrative oversight is further enhanced by a monthly meeting of Expanded Executive Council (EEC), which consists of additional campus leaders, department managers, and deans. EEC serves primarily to share and discuss information, including updates on the MSCHE Self-Study, compliance reports, student success initiatives, and more. Members of EEC also participate in select professional development opportunities. The President also holds regular meetings with faculty, staff, administrators, representatives of the unions, student government leaders, and the CLC. He is also highly engaged in community outreach, from serving on community boards to meeting with groups of community and business leaders ([E552](#)).

Members of the College administration have clearly defined reporting relationships and the expertise, experience, and qualifications needed to perform their jobs ([E44](#); [E573](#); [E580\\_SGaffneyResume](#); [E581\\_MWilcoxResume](#); [E582\\_AAwuahCV](#); [E583\\_JHartResume](#); [E584\\_MManningResume](#); [E585\\_EWilliamsResume](#)). Senior administration regularly engage with faculty and students to advance OCC's goals and objectives through bodies like EEC and CLC, as well as through other venues like informational presentations at Senate meetings, meetings with SGA and Council of Clubs, and participation on various committees ([E586\\_PlenaryAgenda2025](#); [E587\\_ProvostPlenaryUpdate2025](#); [E588\\_SGAPizzaPrezMin](#)). The 2023 PACE survey was the most recent instrument used for evaluating the administrative structure and determining future professional development needed to enhance its operation (see Standard II). Previous survey instruments included the SUNY Student Satisfaction Survey and Sexual Violence Prevalence Campus Climate Survey Report ([E113\\_IPARSurveysWeb](#); [E589\\_SUNYSVPReport](#)).

All levels of OCC leadership have been conscious of improving communication and have made concrete strides in this area (e.g. the President's monthly messages, Faculty Senate arranging its schedule so senators can have dedicated time to meet with constituents, etc.), but the need for better and/or more communication comes up time and time again with employees and students. Part of this issue is related to trust. Do staff and faculty feel communications are truthful and transparent? Does the leadership feel its constituents are truly engaging with the content of the messaging? As trust between different campus groups is maintained and expanded, communication concerns should lessen (see Standard II for a discussion of trust). Select, current strategies addressing communications include: the audit of student facing communications (see Standard II); making

archives of the BoT and Faculty Senate minutes available on the web; and the CLC newsletter. The impact of these and other initiatives will be assessed through the next campus climate survey.

### Assessment and Closing the Loop

Governance, leadership, and administration are assessed periodically, both internally and with the support and guidance of consultants provided through OCC's membership in Achieving the Dream ([E452\\_ATDLetters](#)). The President is formally assessed through a review process ([E590\\_ContractHilton2025-2026](#)). The President starts each academic year with a list of his priorities, which have been discussed and vetted with the BoT Chair. Updates on these priorities are given before each BoT meeting. In June of every year, the President submits a self-evaluation to the BoT. Trustees share their feedback on the self-evaluation with the BoT Chair, who meets with the President over the summer to discuss the feedback. Based on that evaluation, the BoT votes in September on contract changes, if warranted.

Assessment results from across campus are reported to the CLC as they come in, with a final recap at its May meeting. CLC's self-assessments have resulted in changes to practice and policy, as when the governance diagram was updated in March 2025 ([E80](#)). The CLC has completed self-assessments in the past, but, starting in 2024, it is now on a 2-year assessment cycle ([E591\\_CLCSurveyResultsSp2018](#); [E592\\_CLCAssessmentResults2024](#); [E593\\_CLCRec2024-26](#)). An example of changes made because of the 2024 self-assessment is the development of standing committee plans that make explicit the connection between the work of the committees and the Strategic Plan ([E593](#)). The next CLC assessment is scheduled for the end of academic year 2025-2026.

Vice Presidents are evaluated each calendar year in August and September, providing a written self-evaluation based on goals developed the year prior. The President reviews these with the VPs and helps them develop new goals. Progress toward new goals is reported to the President the following January and February. All supervisors and staff undergo yearly performance reviews ([E221\\_PAEvalForm](#)). See Standard II for details.

A comprehensive assessment of the Senate was conducted by the then-Senate President in Spring 2020 to assess OCC's overall shared governance and gauge faculty opinions regarding the representation function of the Senate, the communication mechanisms used by the Senate, and awareness of the Senate's role in curricular functions ([E594\\_FCCCSHaredGovRubric-2019](#); [E520](#)). Based on the findings, several changes were made, including the formation of a Budget Committee, expanding access to Senate information via a faculty SharePoint, and the introduction of mid-semester, all-faculty Town Hall meetings. In Fall 2025, the Senate completed another assessment and voted to assess on a two-year cycle ([E595\\_ResolSenateAssessment](#)).

The BoT also completes a self-assessment every two years ([E596\\_BoTAssessmentRec2024-2026](#)). Meeting agendas are developed with the resulting recommendations in mind, and updates on how it is meeting these recommendations are presented to the Board every January and June ([E562](#); [E597\\_BoTAssessmentResults2024](#); [E596](#)). In recent years, however, the BoT has taken steps to improve transparency and engagement with the larger College community to foster trust and encourage broader participation in governance. Assessment activities, along with minutes and resolutions, are made public via the website. The assessment cycle allows for more transparency with the campus but has also increased engagement and created a sense of ownership for trustees.

The many assessment processes described in this section, along with the numerous feedback channels described earlier in the Standard, are consistently used to improve governance, participation, and transparency for stakeholders. Notable examples of reflection and responsiveness on assessment included in this Standard are the Faculty Senate making changes to allow for more faculty interaction, the extensive work done by various stakeholder groups in response to the PACE survey, and the direct impacts on College practice and policy exerted by the SGA through their numerous surveys.

Conclusion

OCC’s organizational framework reflects a strong commitment to transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability. Its system of shared governance, leadership, and administration are appropriately constituted, actively engaged, and committed to working together to respond to challenges and prepare for the future, all in support of OCC Mission + Values.

Current Strengths	1. Governance structures that allow for active and engaged collaboration.	Criteria 1, Criteria 5
Challenges/Opportunities for Growth and Exploration	1. Assess the holistic operation of governance at OCC, especially as it relates to communication focused bodies (i.e. OCCSA and OCCAC).	Criteria 5

## Self-Study Conclusion

Onondaga Community College (OCC) meets all Middle States Commission on Higher Education's Standards, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable regulatory obligations. OCC's Mission + Vision and Values are relevant and serve as touchstones for the College community in fulfilling a Strategic Plan focusing on highest priorities, ethical decision making, transparent sharing of data, and routine assessment.

Using these touchstones, faculty designed and re-designed academic and workforce programs and delivery modalities to serve documented, local needs. OCC developed new organizational structures focused on individualized student advising, acceleration or elimination of developmental education, and coordination between faculty and staff on retention-focused strategies, including Register NOW, new student orientation, the Box of Books project, and Lazer Success. These research-supported strategies have led to significant gains in student retention and graduation across all groups.

Both academic and administrative areas of the College have well-developed assessment practices resulting in changes to better serve students. Strategic planning and assessment guide resource planning and deployment, including institutional strategies for the maintenance of fund reserves sufficient to withstand the considerable disruption occurring across higher education. The work of the College occurs through well-functioning, shared governance processes that demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a collaborative spirit when confronting novel situations and working through differences.

While well organized and effective, OCC has also identified areas for improvement. Regarding Standard I, OCC is working to enhance or expand transfer pathway opportunities for Liberal Arts programs through ongoing work with SUNY transfer partners via the SUNY Seamless transfer initiative and at local, private colleges ([E598\\_CNYTCInauguralTransferSummit](#)). Participation in programs like SUNY Reconnect (see Standard IV) is helping to create an infrastructure that caters to the needs of post-traditional students. Additionally, OCC is in talks with the Syracuse City School District about expanding the PTECH program into healthcare pathways, allowing high school students to earn a credential in a high demand industry while fulfilling secondary education requirements.

For Standard II, Human Resources is strategically expanding recruitment efforts by increasing targeted advertising and developing partnerships with minority professional organizations designed to strengthen outreach and attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates to OCC. Ongoing updates and maintenance of the website, OCC's primary mechanism for communication with the public and employees, must be a priority. The 2024 creation of the Enrollment Systems and User Experience department and the Website Project Roadmap (see Standard II) will ensure there is ongoing oversight of the web presence ([E246\\_WebProjectRoadmap](#)). Additionally, the College recognizes that it must systematize its assessment of student complaint data to see trends and respond accordingly. The first step in this process is to streamline and simplify the reporting process, e.g. ensure that the same form is named the same thing everywhere it appears, combine forms where possible, etc. This work is starting in Spring 2026.

As mentioned in Standard III, the Register Now form asks students about preferences and needs for days/times and modality and this data is consulted when recommendations are made for adding new classes to the schedule as well as determining course needs by cohort. There is not, however, a consistent process for utilizing this resource yet ([E61\\_RegisterNow](#)). OCC's healthcare pathways model how stacking credentials could work in other areas, and OCC has a similar program in Liberal Arts for Syracuse City School District Teaching Assistants ([E599\\_SCSDTeachingAssistantsWeb](#)) with 9 people enrolled (as of Fall 2025) and a new cohort starting in Spring 2026. As a result of assessment in preparation for the MSCHE visit, faculty decided to standardize the process across departments, to the degree possible given the differences in size and makeup.

As shown in Standard IV, OCC has developed an innovative and robust framework for the support of the student experience, but staff turnover has been a continuous issue. To help address this, four new Navigator



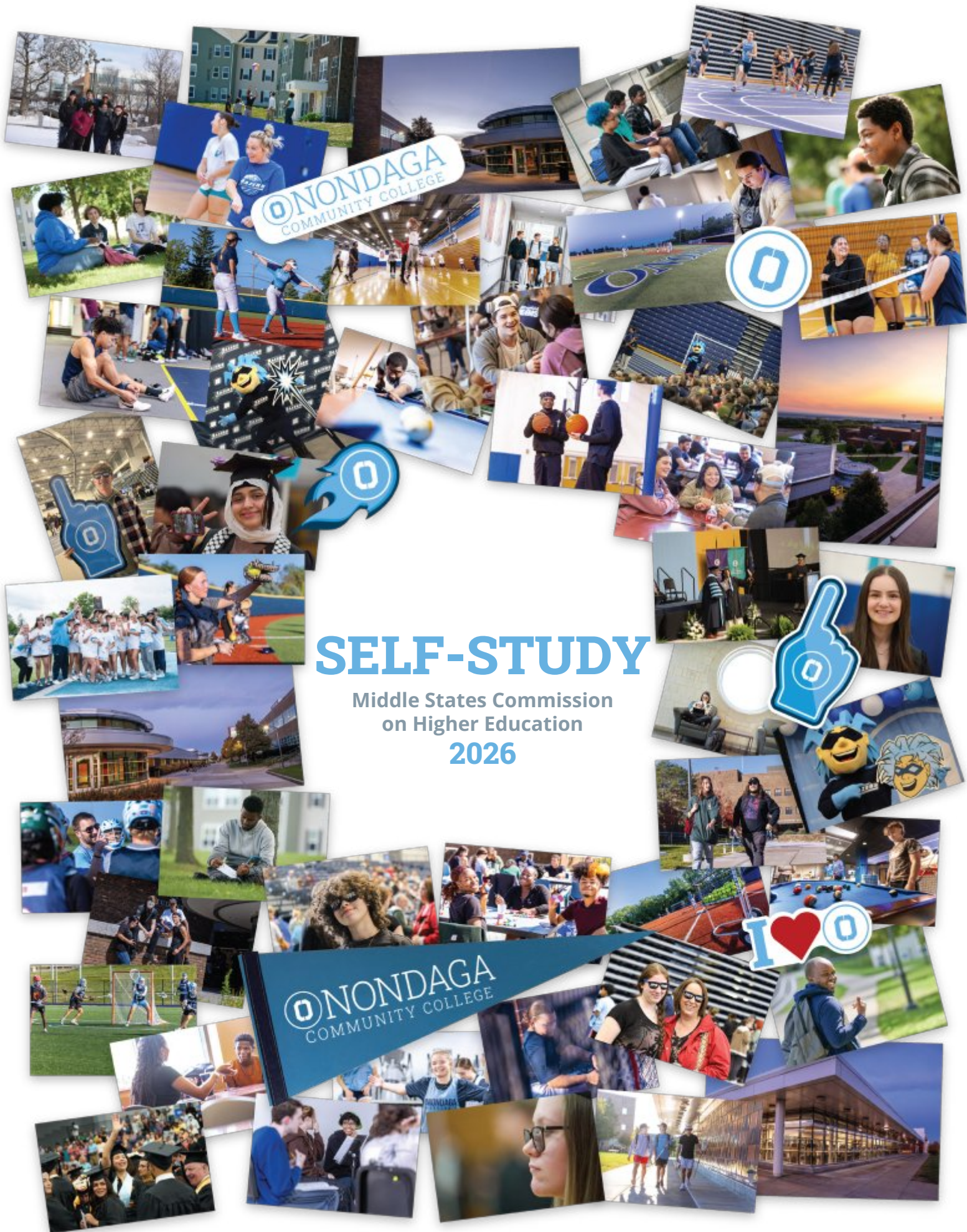
positions were added for the 2025–2026 academic year. One of the new Navigators will focus on non-matriculated students and will also be available to assist other schools if a position becomes vacant. Another position will focus on the SUNY Reconnect student population, ensuring that adult learners receive individualized support and training tailored to their specific needs. The remaining two positions will be placed in Schools that have historically had the highest caseload numbers to provide additional support where it is most needed.

Standard V outlines how staff and faculty have collaborated in the creation of an innovative structure for an integrated and authentic assessment of Learning Outcomes on all levels, but to get the most out of this system, reporting of assessment results must be consistent. LOAC is actively monitoring compliance rates and is collaborating with Faculty Senate and departmental leadership to promote continued improvement and accountability in assessment practices.

Through its reforms, innovations, and sense of common purpose, OCC has found a measure of stability in a highly unstable, economic landscape. The College must, however, continue to adapt to demographic and funding shifts while enhancing student success, maintaining financial stability, and modernizing infrastructure. This is an ongoing challenge, but, as evidenced in Standard VI itself, one OCC can face with a strong foundation and sure footing.

Finally, Standard VII demonstrates OCC's strong governance system with ongoing assessment of the individual units, but the College must do a better job of holistically assessing how the entire governance system operates, including those areas focused primarily on bi-directional communication. As discussed in the Standard, each decision-making body does a thorough job of assessing itself, but OCCAC and OCCSA need to also assess their effectiveness in fostering communication between their constituents and decision-making bodies.

Undoubtedly, the College will continue to be tested, but as this self-study demonstrates, OCC has invested in the capacity-building activities (professional development, policy review and redesign, development of enterprise-wide procedures for data sharing and analysis, external fund-raising) that will support OCC long into the future. OCC is proud of its work and will continue to serve the community by helping create and support new, developing opportunities in Central New York and honor the public's investment.



# SELF-STUDY

Middle States Commission  
on Higher Education  
2026