

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) is Benjamin Franklin's living legacy in Boston, MA. Unlike many of our nation's founders who were landed gentry, Dr. Franklin came from the "leather apron" class and was immensely proud of being a master printer. In 1789, he willed 1000 pounds sterling to the "Towne of Boston" to start a revolving loan fund to help young married artisans establish themselves in business. In 1904, the apprentice system having disappeared, the Franklin Fund managers concluded that at the start of the 20th century, a technical college would better serve Dr. Franklin's wishes. The Franklin Fund was insufficient, but steel magnate Andrew Carnegie agreed to match Franklin's money for a building provided that the City of Boston donate the land. What is now BFIT opened in the present Union Building in September 1908 as the Franklin Union, modeled on the Cooper Union in New York. The College property currently comprises a triangle bordered by Tremont, Berkeley, and Appleton Streets, most of it obtained from the Boston Redevelopment Authority in the 1970s. In addition, the College has in the last several years leased rooms for 60 students just across Berkeley Street allowing us to attract students choosing to engage in a college residential life experience. The City of Boston still holds title to the land beneath the Union Building, and a house on Appleton Street adjoining the BFIT property remains privately owned. BFIT's small, enclosed campus contributes to its strong sense of community.

The Franklin Union eventually became the Franklin Technical Institute and later, the Franklin Institute of Boston. In 2000, the college's name was changed to Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT). Throughout the name changes, the college has remained true to its roots by training students in technical education and promoting the value of a strong work ethic, professionalism, and a sense of social, global, and civic responsibility. BFIT is a private, non-profit technical college and as Benjamin Franklin having been an apprentice would appreciate, our programs are very "hands on."

Currently the college offers three certificate programs, nine associate's degrees and one 2+2 bachelor's degree in Automotive Management. Four academic programs have articulation agreements allowing graduates to enter Wentworth Institute of Technology, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, or the Boston Architectural College. Roughly 30% continue to pursue their academic careers after graduating from BFIT. The College had 564 students enrolled in September 2010. The college is a regionally accredited institution attracting students primarily from the Massachusetts area. The College educates a population largely underserved by other private post-secondary institutions in the Boston area. The student body is made up of a population that is 89% male and 11% female, is highly diverse with a majority of students being from minority ethnic/racial groups, and more than 90% of students receiving financial aid. The Federal Department of Education lists the College as one of five minority institutions in Massachusetts. Our Early Access to College (EAC) program brings approximately 150 high school students from the greater Boston area to BFIT during their 11th and 12th grade years to study alongside BFIT's matriculated students. This program gives many EAC students sufficient confidence to apply to college and enter their post-secondary career with college credits that are applicable toward their degree.

The College community shares a passionate, unwavering dedication to the mission and goals of the college's strategic plan. We are student-centered and focused on excellent teaching and student support. Our average graduation rate for the last three years is 50%, and we work hard through our intensive advising program and close student contact to increase this number. We have recently added

college-wide committees that focus exclusively on student retention, graduation and students of concern. Our strategic plan goal is to reach graduation rates of 70% by 2016.

The College has undergone numerous administrative and staff changes since the last NEASC Accreditation visit in 2006. Since that time we have hired a new senior staff including President, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Students, Dean of Enrollment Management, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Operations, and Director of Development. We have hired a new Registrar and Director of Financial Aid and have also created several new staff positions including Student Accounts Manager, Financial Aid Officer, Director of Admissions, Human Resources, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Development Associate, Director of Advising, Assistant Director of Advising, Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct, Graduate Residence Coordinators, Director of Student Involvement and Leadership, Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership, Director of Career Services, Assistant Director of Career Services, Director of Library Instructional Technology, and expanded the business office staff. As the college had been extremely light in personnel, the numerous changes and additions to the administration and staff have provided a beneficial effect on the college's ability to conduct business and serve the needs of the students.

In addition to increasing personnel the College has been addressing issues of deferred maintenance, infrastructure and technology. Within the last two years many lab spaces have been updated both physically and with new equipment, most notably the 2011 major renovation of the Automotive Technology Center that expands the program to include an alternative fuels lab (i.e. hybrid technology). New offices have been created throughout the college including renovations to the departments of student affairs and enrollment management. Purchase of a course management system, content management system, and contracting of a new IT department has led to increased efficiency of data management and communication.

The College has undergone many changes in the last decade including the accreditation process itself. To secure initial Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) accreditation in our move from the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, the College conducted a self-study beginning in the spring of 2005 that culminated in a six-member visiting committee coming to campus from 29 October to 1 November 2006. In March 2007 CIHE voted to recommend that the College be granted initial accreditation.

At that time, CIHE requested that a report be submitted in the spring of 2009 emphasizing our success in five areas:

- Implementing a systematic, integral approach to planning
- Ensuring the effectiveness of the College's governance structures
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to assessment of student learning
- Assuring financial stability by meeting its enrollment and fundraising goals
- Ensuring accurate public disclosure of information about the College

In February 2009 the College submitted a Focused Visit Report addressing these issues. The visiting team highlighted strengths and continued concerns. Since the 2009 visit the college has continued on a path of transition and growth. To implement more systematic planning the 2011 Strategic Plan was created with the intent to serve as a five-year guide to achieve student success, academic excellence, and financial stability. The strategic plan forms the basis for all the colleges' departmental tactical plans.

At the time of the 2006 NEASC visit, the College was governed by two separate Boards. The Franklin Foundation Board was charged with managing the monetary bequest from Benjamin Franklin, and a second board, The Franklin Institute, Inc., was established in the late 1980s as a 501 (c) (3) organization to provide a flexible means to fundraise and to increase and refresh board membership and engagement. In recent years a process for unifying the governance into one flexible and engaged Board was undertaken and resulted in the consolidation of governance into one board, maintaining the separate 501 (c) (3) entity as a “supporting organization,” and amending the by-laws to make them clearer and more modern in structure. This new structure is less cumbersome and more responsive to the College’s growing needs.

Academic assessment has become a key component of all academic programs and is undertaken through annual student learning outcomes assessment and periodic academic program review. During spring 2007, the College began implementing a comprehensive Academic Program Review Process. At the core of the review process is an inquiry into the stated goals and student learning outcomes of the program. The process includes a study of student resources as well as student enrollment, retention, and graduation data. The expected result of this process is a self-study document that provides a critical analysis of the effectiveness of the program as well as creates a blueprint for improvement to the program.

The College has made progress in managing its financial resources during the past five years and is now more financially stable than it was at the time of its 2006 Self-Study. While remaining a heavily tuition-dependent institution, it has benefited from a significant increase in enrollment revenue during this period. Student tuition and fees have increased from \$4.3 million in 2005 to \$6.66 million in 2010, an increase of 55%. During the past five years, the College has also supplemented this revenue stream with substantial increases in grants and gifts. During this period, grants and gifts income increased from \$634,000 in 2005 to \$1,255,000 in 2010, an increase of 99%. Substantially all of the income generated at the College is directed to the overall support of its student body in their pursuit of a college education.

The College has made many improvements since the 2006 Self Study and has undergone transitions that have allowed the college to change and grow in multiple ways. While many of the challenges highlighted in the previous Self Study have been addressed, there continues to be concerns particularly those of institutional research, infrastructure, enrollment management, and institutional advancement.

Although BFIT faces many challenges that will be covered in our report, we nonetheless remain wholeheartedly committed to our mission and to keeping Benjamin Franklin’s living legacy alive.