

NEASC STANDARD ELEVEN INTEGRITY

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

DESCRIPTION

The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, originally named the Franklin Union, was established in 1905 by the Massachusetts Legislature and welcomed its first students in September 1908. Throughout its 103-year history, the College has followed the high ethical standards espoused by its original benefactor, Benjamin Franklin. The original twelve-member governing body of what is now the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology was the Franklin Foundation, established by law in 1904. Attempting to ensure high ethical standards on the Foundation, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court appointed eight “virtuous and benevolent citizens” for life terms. Also serving were four *ex-officio* members: the Mayor of Boston and the ministers of the three oldest Protestant churches in Boston. Until very recently, new members of the Franklin Foundation continued to be appointed by the Court. (See Standard Three for an explanation of the current Board of Directors’ structure.) Throughout its history, the Board of Directors has continued to uphold high ethical standards for itself and for the College. The Directors’ Handbook contains these standards and specific language about conflict of interest. In spring 2011 the President presented a Conflict of Interest policy to the President’s Administrative Council (PAC) for review. The policy went into effect college-wide and was distributed to all personnel.

Several Special Acts of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorize the existence of the College: (a) Acts of 1905, Chapter 488, authorized the City of Boston to maintain the Franklin Union; (b) Acts of 1908, Chapter 569, incorporated The Franklin Foundation as a board of managers to have sole care, custody, management, and control of the Institute, on behalf of the City, as an independent industrial school; (c) various amendments to the Acts of 1908, Chapter 569, empowered the Corporation, with the approval of the Board of Collegiate Authority (predecessor to the Department of Higher Education) to grant certificates and degrees.

In 2006, at the time of the last NEASC report, enrollment at BFIT was approximately 400 students. Today, enrollment is approximately 500 students. The College has taken measures to serve its increased population and to ensure the academic integrity of its programs. To serve an increased population the College has added new positions such as: a Director of Advising in 2009, a part-time Learning Specialist in 2008 (which became a full-time position July 2011) and a Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct in 2010. The College plans to double the physical size of the Academic Success Center (formerly known as the Academic Support Center) and increase faculty in response to the increase in enrollment.

Measures to ensure the academic integrity of our program include the Academic Program Review process, published program and course outcomes, and input from industrial advisory boards and others outside the community (see Standard Four).

Every member of the BFIT community assists in retention efforts, such as SOS (Support our Student), an internal web-based early-warning system to alert advisors when students falter in a course, and the Academic Recovery Program, for students on academic probation or suspension. Policies and procedures regarding academic honesty have recently been updated by the College to include a formal review board. Notices of copyright laws as they pertain to photocopying of material are posted on or near all copy machines and printers.

Institutional integrity is addressed through accrediting agencies such as NEASC and NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation), although neither is a guarantee of the quality of every course, nor the outcomes of individual graduates, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend BFIT.

The College admits students and hires employees regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, handicap status, or sexual orientation as clearly stated in the Equal Opportunity Policy found in our catalog, website, student and employee handbook. BFIT encourages diversity in hiring and has a diverse student body. Through search committees, College employees are actively involved in selecting and hiring new employees. In addition, there is a clear performance evaluation system and grievance and termination process for faculty and staff as outlined in the Employee Handbook.

In line with transparency of policies and practices, employees receive an Employee Handbook (with a special section, addendum for faculty) when hired and students receive their Student Handbook and Planner during orientation. General College policies and procedures presently appear in print and will be online by 2012. The College complies with Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), as well as Smoke- and Drug-Free Workplace, Whistleblower (Retaliation), and Anti-Discrimination Title VII laws. These employee rights and laws are visibly posted outside the Business Office and student rights in the Student Handbook and on the website. Standing faculty and staff committees, policies for due process, and the procedures of the Office of Academic Affairs all work to guarantee that the policies documented in the publications are in fact implemented fairly and equitably throughout the College. Any information or data in publications or communications to the public, both internal and external, is reviewed to ensure honesty and integrity. This includes information provided to prospective students, employers, industry, and other external partners.

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology remains committed to the well-being and overall development of each student. Thus, the College supports several offices dedicated to student services. The Office of Enrollment Services, along with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Department of Student Affairs assist students in every facet of their lives at the College. This begins with student assessment, academic placement, orientation to campus, early outreach of career services and

continues through graduation with career placement or transferring assistance. Throughout the course of their studies, students' academic, social, and personal development is encouraged through co-curricular activities and support from the Student Affairs staff. All student-related college activities are reviewed to assure appropriateness, and that these events and activities are compatible with the College's purpose.

The College expects honesty in all academic work. The Student Handbook and Planner documents the policy for addressing infractions. The catalog's section on academic policies includes policies on the grading system, attendance, course withdrawal, satisfactory academic progress, academic probation, academic honesty, accommodation, students with learning disabilities, students with medical disabilities, transfer of credit, and graduation requirements. Additionally, ethics and a professional standard of conduct are addressed with all students through a number of courses. First-semester students in all programs take courses incorporating information literacy and professionalism as a result of the college-wide initiatives.

Legal rights of students are outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Course Catalog and include the student code of conduct, sexual harassment policy, Federal Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), computer use policy, and security services and safety.

The college complies with MA Laws, CMR-17 to protect the privacy of personnel records. All records are in a locked file cabinet in a locked closet which is the Business Office that is kept locked at all times. Student records are also housed in a locked closet. Additional faculty personnel files are kept in locked file cabinets in the Dean of Academic Affairs office. Student records are also kept in secure locations. (See Standard Six)

BFIT establishes and maintains good relationships with its neighbors in the South End of Boston. BFIT provides community service to the residents and excellent community service learning opportunities for its students. Civic engagement and community involvement is an initiative that the College continues to improve.

The College maintains ethical standards and support campus-wide. The BFIT community is mindful of its mission and incorporates the College's values through college-wide initiatives. High standards of conduct are expected throughout the community.

APPRAISAL

Strengths

- The College develops, implements, and changes policies in response to campus needs flexibly and quickly. BFIT has continued to improve updating existing policies and implementing new policies in an effort to provide the highest ethical standard for students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies, and organizations.

- Communication between faculty, staff, and students is strong because a small campus naturally leads to frequent informal encounters. In addition to the First Year Experience, annual activities with faculty and staff involvement such as the Franklin Technology Challenge and the Spring Carnival, and ongoing workshops and seminars, encourage healthy dialogue between the faculty and students, promote ethical conduct, and help students with goal setting, support networks, and other skills previously cited in the Description section.
- The academic advising and support efforts have increased with the addition of the positions of the Director of Advising (full-time, 2009) and a Learning Specialist (part-time, currently unfilled). These enhanced services ensure fairness and integrity for the diverse student population of the College. The Director of Residence Life has created a student conduct board, and the College has put increased effort into educating students about academic honesty.
- The Student Handbook and Planner clearly identifies the student "Responsibilities, Rights, and Procedures" and "Sexual Harassment Policy" and provisions of the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA), along with other topics cited in the Description section of this report regarding student integrity and ethics.
- Fall 2009 BFIT contracted with an independent HR specialist, now our part-time HR Director, who assisted in implementing new HR policies and advised on proper procedures in recording and filing employee information. This specialist helped create a new hire checklist and package as well as a termination check list used to guide exit interviews. The College now offers mandatory "sexual harassment training" for all staff and faculty. BFIT has implemented a policy requiring all new hires to have a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) completed. The termination checklist was created to ensure fairness and compliance when an employee is terminated, including the outlining COBRA and unemployment benefits. The staff and faculty handbook have been revised to a new Employee Handbook for all with an addendum for faculty.
- In December 2010 a professional consultant was hired to present "Sexual Harassment Training" to all staff and faculty and will be ongoing as needed for new staff and as required by law.
- In 2009, BFIT contracted with an outside agency for security coverage during all hours that the school is open. All campus crime incidents are being recorded and are posted on the College's website by the Department of Student Affairs to comply with the "Student-Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act (CLERY Act of 1965)."
- Community relationship development, e.g. Musicfest in September 2010 and the Civic Engagement Fair in October 2010, continues to improve. A new hire in the development office is responsible for developing and maintaining these relationships for social responsibility in the community. An Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership, funded by AmeriCorps* VISTA is also developing more civic engagement and volunteer opportunities for students, including student certification programs for leadership development and civic engagement.

- The Department of Student Affairs has expanded services to meet the needs of the growing student population. In 2010, a Director of Residence Life and Housing was hired to oversee the two Assistant Resident Directors and students living in the residence halls. The Director of Residence Life also oversees the Student Conduct system through administrative hearings, coordinating the Student Conduct Board.
- The Course Management System (CAMS) with student and faculty portals, employee handbook, faculty committees, and faculty resources have all been greatly improved since the last NEASC report.
- Faculty committees that consider issues of fairness, honesty, and integrity in faculty decisions include the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee (FAAC), which is conducting an academic honesty survey and drafting academic honesty contracts to be available for use with syllabi, tests, or papers; the Faculty Personnel Advisory Committee (FPAC), which reviews the faculty handbook for updating information, including clarifying class coverage and class size policies, and also researches statements of academic freedom; the Faculty Development Committee (FDC), which hosts professional development and best practices forums campus-wide; and the Faculty Promotion Committee (FPC), which creates informational packets and holds meetings for those faculty entering the promotion process. (See Standard Five)

Concerns

- While renovations were completed in Summer 2011, the Academic Success Center space and services may need to be expanded to reflect increased enrollment and demand for services. This space will be re-evaluated in Academic Year 2011/2012.
- The current lack of on-campus professional counseling services significantly limits BFIT in serving students' mental health needs.
- Although the College has hired a part-time HR Consultant, who is reviewing all policies and procedures relating to human resources for compliance and consistent practice, there is still no grievance policy for staff members.
- Although the staff evaluation and review process is in motion, there is a need for consistency across departments.

Projection

- The Academic Success Center space will be re-evaluated in 2012 and increased space identified as funding allows.
- During the 2011/12 academic year, the Dean of Students will investigate professional counseling options for students.

- The President and the Human Resources Director will review and implement the staff evaluation process in the fall 2011 semester.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The College fosters an atmosphere where issues of integrity can be openly determined. An excerpt from our Value statement is as follows: *Our academic programs and co-curricular efforts reflect our commitment to the fundamental principles of an educated person. We actively promote their development through College-wide initiatives that include being globally and ethically responsible and civically engaged.* With standing and ad-hoc committees, surveys and data collection, the College continually reviews and assesses our commitment to honesty and integrity. With the many changes and transitions occurring at the College, including the addition of more resources, both physical and human, processes and procedures are more likely to be followed and enforced, thus creating trust among students and employees.