

NEASC STANDARD FOUR

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The institution's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program.

DESCRIPTION

Mission and Oversight

As BFIT's mission statement declares, the College "educates students who aspire to advance themselves in a technical field" through our current offering of nine two-year associate's programs, three certificate programs, and one bachelor of science two-plus-two program in the Automotive Technology Department. The mission of BFIT is to "create a foundation for success, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning" through its institutional values and College-wide initiatives focusing on professionalism, communication, critical thinking, information literacy, global and ethical responsibilities, and civic engagement. Comparable academic programs within the northeast, such as New Hampshire Technical Institute, Springfield Technical Community College, Vermont Technical College, the New England Institute of Technology and Mass Bay Community College offer Associate of Science degrees with design and requirements similar to those at BFIT, attesting to their credibility and viability for this region and providing for articulation agreements with several local colleges and universities, such as Wentworth Institute of Technology, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and the Boston Architectural College.

All associate degree programs have a coherent design requiring 64 to 73 credits for graduation and include a balance of technical and general education courses. Credits for each course are appropriately apportioned based on lecture and lab hours, and the expectation is that students will spend at least two hours per credit hour outside of class completing assignments and preparing for class. Course scheduling and sequencing follow a progression from basic to more advanced, to ensure that students have the necessary prerequisites for advanced courses. Departments have reviewed their course sequencing in recent years and have increased the number of classes that serve as prerequisites in order to ensure proper scaffolding of skills. For example, the Electrical Technology Department, in revising its curriculum, has increased the number and refined the progression of hands-on design and layout courses.

Department chairs lead the improvement and revision of curricula in their areas. All curriculum changes follow a process developed by the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee in 2005, which includes dissemination to the faculty and approval by the Dean of Academic Affairs. With the addition of a Chief Financial Officer in January of 2010, the College implemented a comprehensive budgeting process to give department chairs a greater voice in allocating resources to sustain and improve their academic programs and professional development opportunities. Note that it is the College's policy that program changes become effective with the next entering class. Requirements are not changed midway through the semester, in order for students to graduate within the designated time stated in the catalog.

Admissions requirements are defined and outlined in the catalog and on the BFIT website. ACCUPLACER is used to determine the appropriate entry-level mathematics course and the College conducts an in-

house assessment of students' writing skills. Students who are non-native speakers of English are also required to complete an ACCUPLACER reading assessment and a SOLOM oral assessment. Any additional requirements for specific degree or certificate pathways are specifically noted in a program's catalog entry. The College has a vision of graduating every student who is admitted, and has formulated this vision with a goal in its 2011-2016 Strategic Plan. Retention is of paramount importance and is the shared responsibility of the BFIT community. A community-wide retention committee formed by the Dean of Admissions, the Dean of Students, and the Dean of Academic Affairs, includes staff from across the BFIT community. The committee meets monthly, and sub-committees research areas of retention data, early intervention, and curriculum delivery. (Please see Standard Six.)

The Dean of Academic Affairs and the department chairs administer the academic program. Together with the faculty they provide academic oversight and conduct student learning outcome assessment as well as academic program review to ensure high-quality programs that "provide our students with the technical and professional skills that will create a foundation for success." All academic departments at the College have published outcomes that coordinate with the College mission and can be found in the course catalog and on the BFIT website. All courses have outcomes that are published in course syllabi. These course outcomes make clear what each program expects its students to learn, the skills they will need in order to do it, and how students will accomplish the learning to support program outcomes. Many program outcomes include specific career preparation goals. The departmental outcomes are determined with input from a number of sources that include industrial advisory boards, graduates, employers, and the BFIT community.

Overall coherence of program outcomes is a result of their alignment with the mission statement. Every degree program is structured around a core of courses in the technical area of study that includes both theory and application. A general education component consisting of a minimum of twenty credits distributed among the humanities, social sciences, math, and physics complements the technical courses. Through a comprehensive writing program and through a College-wide communication-across-the-curriculum initiative students are provided with the appropriate sequencing of courses in order to develop college level communication skills.

In conjunction with the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee, the Office of Academic Affairs initiates and oversees periodic reviews of all its programs. The Academic Program Review (APR) provides an opportunity for multiple constituencies to review all aspects of academic programs, including course offerings, student learning outcome assessment, student demographics, career placement, marketing, faculty, resources, and overall program viability. As part of the process, external evaluators meet with all stakeholders and provide a written evaluation report of the program and offer recommendations for improvement. The administration responds to the APR in a forum to address strengths and concerns.

At the end of each academic period, students complete evaluations for each of their courses and instructors. The evaluation, administered by the Office of Academic Affairs, elicits feedback on teaching, course design, and content. The College utilizes the Course Management System (CAMS) to conduct the evaluation process online. The Office of Academic Affairs distributes results to each department chair for review. Faculty members are encouraged to discuss evaluation results with their department chairs. In the event that the student evaluations indicate a need for curriculum change, the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee oversees the process for curriculum change and is responsible for conducting faculty forums to review program changes and their effect on the academic community, when warranted.

The College has long recognized the importance of information literacy and in spring 2008 implemented a college-wide initiative to provide students with the necessary and lifelong skills to locate, retrieve, evaluate, and use information effectively. To address this initiative the Director of Library Services and library staff have created an online module for use by the entire BFIT community that provides training and tools for information literacy and basic research strategies. The Department of Library Services remains active in classroom instruction, academic support, and faculty training in this area. Department Chairs are also required to report on student acquisition of information literacy skills within their own academic program reviews and annual reports. (Further information is available in Standard Seven.)

BFIT has continued to invest in technology to enhance learning. First and foremost has been the implementation of the Course Management System (CAMS). In the past two years the College has held training sessions so that faculty and staff can utilize the full range of features of this system. Implementing this system has improved communication, especially in regard to delivering course materials and monitoring student progress. The College remains committed to periodically upgrading all its technology and computer labs and utilizing software applications to improve work processes and enhance student engagement and learning. The recent renovation of the Electrical Technology labs is an example of the College's commitment to providing students with up-to-date and relevant equipment. Faculty is actively engaged in seeking out new ways to have technology play a more prominent role in achieving course outcomes.

In limited cases, the College depends on resources outside its direct control. First, the College has outsourced direct control of Information Technology to CMIT Solutions to provide a reliable infrastructure for all academic purposes. CMIT maintains an onsite presence throughout the academic week to ensure meeting faculty and student needs in a timely manner. Representatives from CMIT sit on the College's Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) to work in conjunction with BFIT's administration, faculty, and staff in order to address technology needs and concerns. Second, the Medical Electronics Engineering Technology program holds Medical Instrumentation classes at both Massachusetts General Hospital and the Boston Medical Center in order to prepare students for a clinical internship in their final semester at the College. Similarly, some courses for the Ophthalmic Assisting certificate are held at Tufts Medical Center. These offsite courses are held to the same standards as all other courses at the College.

The Department Of Academic Development

Students enter the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology with varying levels of academic preparation. The Department of Academic Development offers a range of courses for students needing additional preparation for the rigorous study required in the pursuit of a College degree at BFIT. Depending on academic placement, a student may need one or more additional semesters of course work in order to complete the requirements for an associate degree. Academic development courses are designed to build the skills necessary for more advanced study in mathematics, technology, the humanities and social sciences. Since the assimilation of basic math skills is central to success in technology studies, students needing to develop their math skills will begin their technical studies upon successful completion of Fundamental Mathematics. Several courses are offered for students needing work on their language skills, and a course in professional communication is designed to prepare students to employ effective communication skills in the workplace.

The outcomes for the Department of Academic Development are aligned with the College-wide initiatives and the mission in that they create a foundation for student success. Outcomes include proficiency in the basic concepts of algebra; knowledge of reading and writing conventions; effective

communication skills in academic and professional settings; and use of efficient time management, organization, critical thinking, and study skills. These outcomes are put into effect through carefully designed curricula, extended in-class time and access to instructors outside of class. The outcomes are measured each semester and all instructors meet throughout the semester to discuss student progress. Students must earn a grade of C or higher to move from these courses to college-level offerings.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: General Education and the Majors

BFIT offers technical programs that provide students with thorough knowledge and skills required to pursue successful careers. Students spend up to fifty percent of their time in hands-on laboratories that work in concert with structured lecture to provide the balance of theory and application. In addition, general education courses support and complement the student's technical education.

BFIT strives to prepare students for rewarding technical careers and lifelong learning. Program outcomes are therefore categorized according to the theoretical knowledge of a technical field, the skills necessary for entry-level positions in the career domain, and self-knowledge for students to advance themselves professionally and personally. Students are introduced to basic technical concepts and technical application in their first year of study. In addition, throughout the first year of study, students are provided with the verbal and written communication skills, together with mathematical skills, that form the foundation for further academic work. Subsequent years of study build on the acquired skills and awareness, while containing a greater focus on the further development of technology skills. In most cases this involves an increase in the hands-on application of knowledge. Math and science courses are sequenced and designed around the particular needs of the industrial and engineering technology fields. Students in their second year of study are presented with increasingly complex technical and communication assignments and through their social science electives explore relevant contemporary issues.

Building upon work completed in 2006 the College has developed Institutional Values, which encompass our definition of an educated person. As noted in Standard One, the values statement highlights the importance of students' "lifelong learning in an increasingly interdependent world." Through college-wide initiatives the College promotes the key characteristics of an educated person, someone who is: *Possessing technical skills; demonstrating professionalism; communicating effectively; utilizing critical thinking skills; possessing information literacy skills; understanding the impact of sustainable development; and exhibiting the inclination to be ethically and civically engaged.*

Each department of the College creates opportunities for students to acquire these attributes and records their progress in promoting these initiatives in their courses. These efforts are published in annual reports submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs. The Faculty Development Committee (FDC) hosts forums on these initiatives so that all faculty can share strategies and create effective means for exploration. Institutional Values are published online, in the Course Catalog, and in the Student Handbook and Planner. They are also displayed in BFIT's main lobby for students and visitors alike to view. Students are first introduced to these initiatives in the First Year Experience. While all academic departments incorporate these values in their offerings, the outcomes of the General Education departments are closely aligned with the Institutional Values and are integrated into the daily lives of our students. For example, a first year student recently remarked that because the College places a strong emphasis on professionalism and he has taken this into consideration in his academic work and personal life.

General education content of the degree programs ranges from 21 to 34 credit hours. These credit hours include a minimum of two courses to develop writing and communication skills, two courses in mathematics, and for most programs at least one course offering in physics or other science offerings. In addition, five programs require Technical Communications to build the requisite professional skills for employment. All degree programs require one to two social science electives. In all cases, the general education courses serve to complement the acquisition of technical skills and together they form the basis for a well-rounded student to enter the workforce, go on to further education, and be a lifelong learner. Since the introduction of communication-across-the-curriculum at the College in the mid 1990's, writing and presentations have been an integral part of all courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences Department and the Department of Academic Development, and are heavily promoted in the technical and math offerings.

Although BFIT is by name a technology institution, the general education component of all degrees is of great importance to the academic work of the College and is housed in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Department of Mathematics and Physics. Reflecting the College's mission statement and institutional values, the outcomes of the general education departments require that students learn skills on which their education and their technical careers depend. The students develop proficiency in written and oral communication; critical reading comprehension; information literacy; critical thinking and problem solving; and understanding and applying the basic concepts and principles of physics and math. In addition to these foundational skills, courses in the General Education departments create opportunities for awareness of and practice in professionalism, civic engagement, sustainable development, and ethics.

Mathematics is the foundation for any technical discipline. Being successful in technology requires not only a grasp of mathematical theory and but also the ability to apply its concepts to solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar situations. The Department of Mathematics and Physics makes every effort to align its course content with the application of math skills in the technology courses while also providing students with more generalized problem solving procedures. The level of mathematics required varies by program to reflect the needs of each field. Different entry points into the math sequence are available depending on the student's skill level and degree sought. Studying math and physics promotes critical reasoning, creative thinking, and logical analysis, skills paramount not only in the classroom but also in everyday life. The Department of Mathematics and Physics emphasizes the understanding of problems, identification of appropriate solution techniques, and logical application of these techniques. Practical everyday problems related to the student's life and to the industrial and engineering technologies are used in every course to illustrate these methods.

The College actively seeks to create meaningful pathways for students who want to continue their education. Through articulation agreements with Boston Architectural College, Wentworth Institute of Technology, and University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, BFIT has clearly defined paths of further education for students in Architectural Technology, Computer Technology, Computer Engineering Technology, and Mechanical Engineering Technology. Through the College's two-plus-two program in Automotive Management, students can pursue a bachelor's degree to expand on their previous study of Automotive Technology. In addition to following the written articulation pathways, students pursue further education at other local universities and colleges, including University of Massachusetts Boston, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and Northeastern University.

All programs provide a balance between general education and acquiring technical skills through course content and hands-on application. Furthermore, students gain the critical skill of identifying principal information resources relevant to their field in labs and lectures. Medical Electronics Technology,

Automotive Technology, Ophthalmic Assisting, and the Opticianry program all provide students an opportunity to gain experience of their professional fields in a real-world work setting.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

BFIT programs are appropriately named and offer curricula that match, meet, or exceed comparable programs at other local and national post-secondary institutions. The number of credits required for degrees and certificates is also similar to those programs offered by other previously mentioned Colleges.

Certificate programs require from 17 to 29 credits. The requirements for these certificate programs are published along with the degree programs in the Course Catalog and contain the same sequencing of skills as required in the degree programs. Certificate programs are held to the same standards as all academic degree programs.

The BFIT catalog and website list required and elective courses for each program. Students who follow the program outline and successfully complete courses in each semester graduate at the end of four semesters since programs are designed to flow sequentially from semester to semester. In some cases, retaking courses might necessitate an additional semester or year of study.

Credit is awarded for work completed at other accredited Colleges that is equivalent in content and credit hours to BFIT courses. No grade of less than C is transferable. Fifty-one percent of the total credits required for graduation must be taken at BFIT. In limited cases the College has awarded credit for experiential learning as evidenced by military training or professional licensure, at the discretion of the Dean of Academic Affairs and in coordination with the Registrar. As noted above, the College maintains and actively seeks articulation agreements with local Colleges that have similar programs.

BFIT publishes program requirements in the Course Catalog and on the BFIT website. In addition, the Course Catalog contains information on graduation requirements, termination from and readmission to its academic programs, satisfactory academic progress, and other related academic policies, e.g. grading system, attendance, incomplete grades, course withdrawal, probation, and the academic honesty policy and procedure. The Student Handbook and Planner includes many of these same policies, including a detailed description of the Academic Honesty policy and procedure. Pertinent policies, such as academic honesty and GPA thresholds are also reviewed with students during First Year Experience.

The College has a well-defined policy and procedure for addressing academic honesty violations. While detailed information about these policies is contained in the Student Handbook and Planner and the Course Catalog, each syllabus also contains information stressing the College's academic honesty policy. The College's Director of Advising heads a Student Conduct Hearing Board to address issues of academic honesty. The Board includes representatives from staff, faculty, and students.

The Office of Academic Affairs of the College and all who report directly to that office are responsible for every element of the academic program. To guarantee academic credibility, the College conducts, under the direction of the Office of Academic Affairs, an ongoing outcome assessment program as well as a scheduled review of each of its degree and certificate programs, and the library. The result is that all programs, courses, outcomes, graduation requirements, and student achievement are under review on a regular basis. The Office of Academic Affairs, department chairs, and the faculty ensure that credit is awarded in accordance with the appropriate course content. Inherent in the delivery of each course is the ongoing evaluation of student progress.

BFIT faculty is entrusted with the design and delivery of course content and materials for each of its academic programs. As noted in the Hiring Policy, contained in the Faculty Addendum to the Employee Handbook, faculty members are hired based on their academic credentials, professional licensure, and industry and teaching experience. The Dean of Academic Affairs evaluates department chairs. Department chairs evaluate all full-time faculty members annually. In addition, students complete course and instructor evaluations each semester. On occasion, and especially as part of the promotion process, faculty are observed and evaluated by their colleagues. Faculty members are considered for promotion based on their accomplishments in teaching, contributions to the College, and professional development. The faculty promotion process was created by the Faculty Personnel Advisory Committee (FPAC) in 2005 and has been further enhanced by the since-formed Faculty Promotion Committee (FPC). Since its inception in fall 2005, over 50% of full-time faculty have gone through the promotion process. (See Standard Five.)

In 2005, the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee (FAAC) designed the format and requirements for the BFIT Course Syllabus used throughout the College. In addition to relevant information about the instructor, the syllabus notes the criteria that substantiate credit awarded and course outcomes. The syllabus must also include evaluation criteria, class policies, and language from the BFIT Student Handbook and Planner regarding academic honesty. The syllabus is a contract between the College, the instructor, and the student, and clearly documents sufficient academic content to warrant awarding of credit.

Assessment

The Office of Academic Affairs seeks to promote a culture of continuous improvement in which each department, and the faculty as a whole, uses various methods to improve teaching and learning, including systematic assessment processes as well as ongoing dialogue.

All students receive regular and consistent feedback from their instructors through a variety of instructor-generated assessment methods, including written and oral comments, rubrics, portfolio review, teacher-student conferences, as well as traditional examination grades. Since 2005, BFIT has been actively engaged in a formalized and systematic student outcome assessment program. Appropriate outcome assessment training through workshops and forums has been held periodically over the past five years. Currently, the College has an integrated, ongoing student learning outcome assessment process. Under the direction of the Office of Academic Affairs, each department chair is responsible for conducting a review of departmental outcomes annually. A variety of approaches is employed with the ultimate goal for each department to collect pertinent assessment data through direct and indirect methods. All members of the department then analyze the results and the assessment determines the need for appropriate change at the course or program level. As in any broad-based assessment plan, the College seeks to depict accurately the skills that students will attain through their academic careers at BFIT. Since the fall of 2008, department chairs have been asked to provide a mid-academic year progress report to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Annual reports from each academic chair place significant emphasis on the outcome assessment activities of each department. In addition to the written reports, each chair meets with the Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss assessment plans for the current year and to identify areas for improvement from the previous year's effort. The BFIT administration has placed a high priority on continued improvement and support for the assessment process and the subsequent changes it initiates for enhancing teaching and learning.

Statements of learning outcomes are clear and reflect the goals for what students will be able to learn, know, and demonstrate through their education at the College. The Institutional Values encompass our definition of an educated person. College-wide initiatives play a role in helping to determine students' achievement of these institutional values. In addition to outcomes, College-wide initiatives create a basis for a holistic, global process of assessment. As with the student learning outcome assessment, department chairs submit mid-academic year and annual reports, as well as meeting with the Dean of Academic Affairs on their departments' success with integrating the College-wide initiatives into their programs to produce "students with the technical and professional skills that will create a foundation for success, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning."

Academic Program Review

During spring 2007, the College began implementing a comprehensive Academic Program Review Process. The Faculty Academic Advisory Committee studied guidelines used by peer institutions and through a series of faculty forums and presentations established the guidelines contained in this report. 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. Curriculum is reviewed and analyzed and program facilities are examined to identify both physical and technological needs. The expected result of the academic program review process is a self-study document that provides a critical analysis of the effectiveness of the program as well as creating a blueprint for improvement to the program. In Academic Year 2007/08 two departments piloted the review process: the Computer Technology program and the Department of Academic Development. Each program review was made available to the College community in May 2008. In August 2008, each department presented their findings to the faculty. Fall 2008, a comprehensive five-year plan was established to ensure that each program regularly undergoes systematic review.

In Academic Year 2008/09 four programs participated in the review process: Computer Engineering Technology, Electrical Technology, Pharmacy Technology, and Architectural Technology. Of the four programs to undergo review that year, two successfully completed the review process. Electrical Technology was not completed to the satisfaction of the Dean of Academic Affairs, and will undergo the self-study process in 2013 under the direction of that program's new department chair. While Pharmacy Technology had undergone a program revision as a result of initial research done for its APR, reducing the program time from two to one semester, the program has since been discontinued based upon declining enrollment numbers and applicant interest, the diminishing need for academic credentials to enter the field, and insufficient earning potential for graduates. (Note: Coursework for the program was continued as needed until all students who wished to complete the certificate had done so.)

In Academic Year 2009/10 the APR timeline was adjusted so that departments began their review in January. The shift in timeline was implemented to facilitate the collection of end of academic year data and to give departments and the administration time to put into effect changes for the new academic year. In January 2010 the following departments began their Academic Program Review: Mathematics and Physics, Humanities and Social Sciences, Electronic Engineering Technology, Medical Electronic Engineering Technology, and Mechanical Engineering Technology. After three years, sixty percent of our academic programs have completed the APR process and within five years all fifteen academic programs will have been reviewed.

Each program under review elicits an external perspective as part of the process, either from industry or from another academic institution. The reviews are also supported by a Course Management System

(CAMS) that was implemented College-wide in fall 2008 and has greatly improved the collection of data. Data is collected from Career Services, Admissions, the Registrar, and Student Affairs.

The Academic Program Review reports are submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs in the fall semester. The Dean of Academic Affairs conducts a formal administrative response to the APRs that includes the President, the Dean of Students, the Dean of Admissions, the Director of Career Services, and the Registrar, as well as the departments under review. All administrative parties submit a written response containing specific observations, recommendations, and responses to the departments' own action plans. The completed reviews have resulted in changes at the program and course level.

Program Development

As noted in the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan, in a world where technology changes rapidly, the College must respond rapidly to industry and market needs by developing new and relevant programs and retiring less relevant programs. To this end, one of the key performance indicators of the plan is to evaluate existing programs and curricula, and consider adopting new programs relevant to technology industry needs. In spring 2011, the College submitted a new program proposal to the Board of Higher Education for a Bachelor of Science in Health Information Technology, which could also serve as a two-plus-two platform for graduates of the Computer Technology programs. This proposal drew on a successful two-plus-two model used for the Bachelor of Science in Automotive Management. The development of this program began with an evaluation of industry needs as aligned with the existing computer technology programs offered at the College. BFIT approached the Boston Healthcare Careers Consortium to evaluate local need within a field where a federal need has been identified in growing careers. Feedback from the Consortium was positive regarding a program in health information technology. The Boston PIC (Private Industry Council) organized this consortium in which BFIT has participated since its inception. According to the PIC's research, the health care industry is the largest employer in Boston. The College will continue to research and evaluate opportunities for program assessment, development, and growth. These initiatives will take place with the collaboration of the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Career Services, academic department chairs and faculty, as well as industry partners.

APPRAISAL

Strengths

- Technology programs continue to create a solid foundation so that students are given an introduction to their field and at the same time provided with the skills that enable them to assimilate higher-level technology concepts and applications. To that end, each department regularly reviews its initial course offerings to provide the best foundation possible. For example, the Automotive Technology Department has implemented an Automotive Information and Safety course for its first-year students. The Electronics Engineering Technology and Medical Electronic Engineering Technology programs have created Introduction to Electro-Mechanical Systems that serves as an introduction to those fields. In addition, each degree program also provides students with the critical general education courses that create a foundation for the work in their programs as well as in further higher education and their future work.
- The academic programs are mission-driven in that all course and program development is in keeping with the advancement of technical skills and career readiness. BFIT Faculty has a singular focus in that the primary goal of their work is "to provide our students with the technical and professional skills that will create a foundation for success." To this end faculty participate in continuing dialogue about teaching and learning informally and through regularly scheduled faculty forums on topics

such as service learning, professionalism, project-based learning, and student engagement and motivation. In addition, a majority of faculty, full-time and adjunct, participate in professional development activities.

- Spring 2008 the College adopted college-wide initiatives to advance the mission and values statement. Together the initiatives embody our collective effort and serve as a blueprint for faculty, staff, and students for the work that they do. Furthermore they address the important skills that industry demands of our graduates. These initiatives have led to much growth in teaching and learning, including three service-learning projects that provide opportunities for students to link course work with civic engagement and contributions to the community.
- The College collaborates with other institutions to create higher education opportunities for students. Through the Early Access to College program BFIT provides College courses to approximately 130 Boston Public High School students each year. In the past two years this access has resulted in thirty high school students enrolling in programs at BFIT. National Science Foundation grants have created multiple learning experiences for our students. Through an NSF-ATE grant, over the past three years, almost 100 students in the Department of Academic Development participated in cross-curriculum project-based learning that introduced them to the skills necessary for academics and the workplace. Each of these students presented project findings and reflected upon the teamwork process to audiences consisting of classmates, professors, members of administration, including the Academic Dean and the President, and members of industry and of NSF. A 2010 NSF grant provides scholarships and intensive advising for academically gifted and financially disadvantaged students in the engineering technologies in the hope of raising retention and enhancing student learning. An additional recent NSF-ATE grant will create an alternative fuels track in the Automotive Technology program, educating students in the importance of sustainability and green technology trends in the field, and creating a pathway for careers in hybrid automotive technology.

Concerns

- The College needs to allocate resources to ensure that the process of evaluation and assessment continues to improve. Although there has been significant improvement in the ability to collect data, the College lacks sufficient personnel and resources for continued enhancement of our assessment efforts. The College requires an institutional researcher to collect and organize data college-wide. The College lacks a comprehensive, unified plan for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data crucial to developing and enhancing a viable academic program. Although data is collected through the Registrar's Office and other institutional departments, results are not communicated consistently to the community as a whole.
- While the Academic Program Review process is fully in place, it is still in its first years of implementation. With each succeeding group of programs under review, the College needs to ensure that the College allocates the time and resources to improve the process. The College needs to take additional steps to ensure that the APR process becomes an essential component of our planning. To that end the College will continue to examine and refine the process. The APR should create a basis for continuous improvement, and institutional data-driven decisions. In view of the competition in the greater Boston academic environment, the College needs to include a competitive analysis that seeks to identify similar programs, their costs and resources, and their effect on maintaining a viable program.

- Comprehensive data from our employers would benefit all the academic departments in their efforts to assess their programs. Although considerable progress in this regard has been made, obtaining such information is a continual struggle. A true measure of our students' technical skills and of their attainment of the values promoted by our college-wide initiatives is dependent on our capability to reach our students and their employers three to five years after they graduate.
- The College's ability to assess industry trends and needs is crucial to its success. Traditional Industrial Advisory Boards (IAB) exist for each of the technical departments. However, the College needs to establish industry connections beyond the IAB meetings in order to increase industry involvement throughout the academic year. Ultimately, the College will need to gather information from industry partnerships to evaluate the quality of our programs and ensure that they remain current and relevant. This is done collaboratively with the Office of Career Services. (See Standard Six.)
- The College's graduation rate declined from 53.9% to 48.5% between the 2006 and 2007 cohort. Data is not available at the time of this report, but there is concern that the fall 2008 and fall 2009 cohorts may show further decline. Semester one to semester two retention rates have remained high. However, there is a notable decline in the subsequent semester. A comprehensive plan to improve student retention is just being formulated. Additional retention and graduation data are contained in the S.1 forms.

Projection

- In fall 2010 a retention committee was formed to review the current retention and graduation data. The Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Admissions, and the Dean of Students co-chair this committee with broad institutional representation. The committee will employ a variety of strategies and initiatives to improve the retention rate and ultimately the success rate of our students beginning fall 2011.
- The programs that have completed their Academic Program Reviews will meet with the Office of Academic Affairs in fall 2011 to review the process. Recommendations will be delivered to the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee for consideration. All programs undergoing APR in future years will be required to have a second external evaluator to provide additional perspectives and guidance. It is suggested that technology programs undergoing review seek the counsel of both academic and industry partners. A competitive analysis will be added.
- Both to facilitate and to improve the collection and analysis of relevant data, the College will hire additional personnel in the Career Services Department and provide for an institutional research position. The College will allocate funds for institutional research and provide necessary resources for the organization of College-wide data. Both positions deserve consideration for the 2011/12 academic year.
- Working together with our industry partners, the College will prepare proposals to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for new programs over the next five academic years. Proposals will include associate of science degree programs as well as four year programs that can serve as internal transfer destinations for AS recipients to allow more of our graduates to pursue further education at BFIT.

- The College will continue to expand the breadth of their partnerships with industry. The Office of Career Services, with the addition of a new Assistant Director of Career Services in academic year 2011/12, will work with department chairs to create new opportunities for guest lectures, involvement in career fairs, donation of equipment, as well as identifying new employment opportunities for our graduates to align with the College's mission and 2011-16 Strategic Plan.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The College participates in several methods of assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic offerings and improve student learning. Student learning outcome assessment, academic program review, students' course and instructor evaluations, faculty and chair evaluations, and industrial advisory board input all play a role in academic assessment and change. The process of assessment creates an ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning. The process moves from classroom, to department, to administration, and back to the classroom, fostering a recursive cycle of continuous improvement. The College places significant value on institutional effectiveness through its support of faculty development, teaching and learning strategies, student learning outcome assessment, and program review. The College's adoption of a values statement and the implementation of College-wide initiatives have as their ultimate goal the improvement of the teaching and learning experience for all members of the community.