

NEASC STANDARD SIX STUDENTS

Consistent with its mission, the institution defines the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve and provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity.

DESCRIPTION

The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology's (BFIT) mission is to *"offer education to students pursuing career-based paths. The college strives to develop technical and professional skills as well as individual values that help to create a foundation for success, civic responsibility and life-long learning. The College adheres to the principles put forth by our benefactor Benjamin Franklin in his writings about education and citizenship."*

The student body is highly diverse. During the 2010/11 academic year, the student body was 30% Caucasian; 30% African American, Non-Hispanic; 19% Hispanic/Latino; 8% Asian; .37% Native American; .37% Pacific Islander; 3% Multi- Ethnic; and 10% Other. The student body is 12% female and 88% male.

Admissions

The Admissions Office markets the College and recruits students. Admissions Counselors participate in College fairs, school presentations, visitor programs, and online marketing using tools such as Facebook and other social networking platforms. Various marketing materials, including the College website, view book, and other brochures, give prospective students information about the benefits of attending BFIT.

In addition, the College subscribes to Naviance, a College search product that many secondary school guidance offices and students use to research higher education opportunities.

The Admissions Office coordinates multiple special events throughout the year, including open houses, Accepted Student Day, Women in Technology Day, and a "Student for a Day" tour program that allows prospective students to shadow a current student, attend classes in the major that interests them, and have the chance to immerse themselves in the BFIT culture. In addition, the Admissions staff coordinates high school guidance counselor events to generate awareness of the College.

BFIT is an open enrollment institution. Applicants with a high school diploma, a GED, or the ability-to-benefit from our education (which is assessed using Accuplacer) are offered admission to the College. The College sets institutional goals each year for a specific enrollment number per major. The College does not set specific goals on the diversity of the student population recruited but the diversity of the student body is published in the academic catalog as well as on the fast facts page of the website. The

College's application for admission is available in paper format or electronically on the College website. Applicants must provide an official high school transcript (and college transcripts if applicable), or official GED certificate. It is recommended, but not required, that applicants submit standardized test scores (such as the SAT or ACT), a personal statement, and a letter of recommendation to the Admissions Office to support their candidacy. Once the applicant has submitted the required application and supporting documents, an Admissions Counselor explains the acceptance procedure and starts the financial aid process. The Admissions staff ensures that applicants complete proper immunization paperwork before entering the College.

The Admissions Office is the first line of contact with potential students. In fall 2008 a one-stop-shop was created for Admissions, Financial Aid, the Registrar, and Student Accounts to have all offices in one area. Students can complete all necessary paperwork and ask questions about enrollment without having to visit different areas on campus. The BFIT community continues to foster this environment to allow easy access to the resources available to students during their educational journey.

Official student academic files, for current students, are housed in a locked fire-proof room. It is the College's policy to retain student's academic file permanently. Records over 5 years old are stored off-site at Metropolitan Storage (a professional record storage company). These files can generally be accessed within 24 hours, if needed. Back data storage and on-site locking systems are reviewed and maintained by the current Registrar. Items found in the student's academic file include documents such as their application, acceptance letter, and high school transcripts. AACRAO standards generally govern the maintenance of paper and electronic records. Records that are disposed of are either shredded on site or professionally shredded. Periodically the faculty and staff are trained on FERPA guidelines. The guidelines are also published in the Course Catalogue, the BFIT website, and the Student Handbook and Planner.

Academic Placement

The academic placement exam is comprised of three sections; math, composition and a consultation. The math section is conducted via the Accuplacer online system. Accuplacer is an internet-based assessment software program that is used at more than 1000 colleges and universities nationwide. Our students use Accuplacer for at least two math tests; basic arithmetic and elementary algebra. Both math tests are 18 questions. The scoring scale is out of 100, but adjusted by twenty points, so the range of performance for all tests run from 20, the lowest possible score, to 120, the highest possible score. If a student performs above 100 on the algebra math exam, they will also be prompted to take an additional math test, the College Level exam. Although the College Level exam has no bearing on their placement, it is used to encourage some high scoring students to take the CLEP exam to substitute one of their potential math courses. Non-native speakers also take an Accuplacer reading exam that gauges their reading skills. Once students complete the math sections, they are given a one-page essay to read and are then prompted to write a one-page, type-written response.

Following the math and writing exams students will have a brief one-on-one interview with a placement proctor. The proctor will ask questions designed to get information concerning the student's

background, support networks, and commitment to furthering their education. Prospective students will also have opportunities to gain more information about their majors, student services and answers to further questions about BFIT.

The placement proctor team is made up of both staff and faculty. There is also a placement coordinator position that is responsible for scheduling dates and times for testing. The coordinator staffs the placement sessions, consults with Accuplacer, and oversees several aspects of the academic placement process.

Financial Aid

Close to 80% of our students receive financial assistance. The College combines federal, state, and our own aid programs to create a financial aid package designed to help students afford a BFIT education. To be considered for financial aid, applicants must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). To assist students with filling out the form, the Financial Aid Office offers FAFSA workshops which students and parents are encouraged to attend. Once the FAFSA is complete and the student is accepted, the Financial Aid Office reviews the information. If conflicting information appears on the FAFSA or if a student is selected for verification based on the Federal Student Aid (FSA) regulations, the College may request additional documentation to verify information included on the FAFSA form. The students receive a letter informing them they have been selected for verification and about any missing documents. Current students have the option of reviewing their missing documents on the student portal in addition to the letter that is mailed to them. Once the documents are received, the College continues reviewing their financial aid information.

If a student is not selected for verification and has submitted all required documentation, then financial aid is awarded, using the federal methodology to do so. If a student has a particularly high need they will be awarded institutional grants to reduce the cost of tuition. BFIT also offers merit-based scholarships to those possessing certain characteristics such as leadership, high academic achievement, and academic potential. The Admissions Office identifies these recipients who are then reviewed by a scholarship committee. With the institutional scholarships and grants our goal is to help all students afford an education at BFIT. The grants are typically renewed each academic year as long as the FAFSA information has not changed drastically and recipients maintain satisfactory academic progress as outlined in the Course Catalog. The scholarships have a GPA requirement that students must maintain in order to renew the scholarship for the next academic year. Along with the institutional aid, the College offers federal and state funding consisting of grants and student loans. BFIT seeks federal and state funding before awarding our own grants. This information is explained in more detail in the Course Catalog.

One challenge is ensuring that first-year students understand their financial obligations. The FSA regulations require students to complete entrance loan counseling either online or through the office before a government loan is disbursed. The College also offers money management workshops throughout the year covering such topics as debt, budgets, credit, and responsible borrowing. These workshops are open to the BFIT community. FSA regulations also require students that leave or

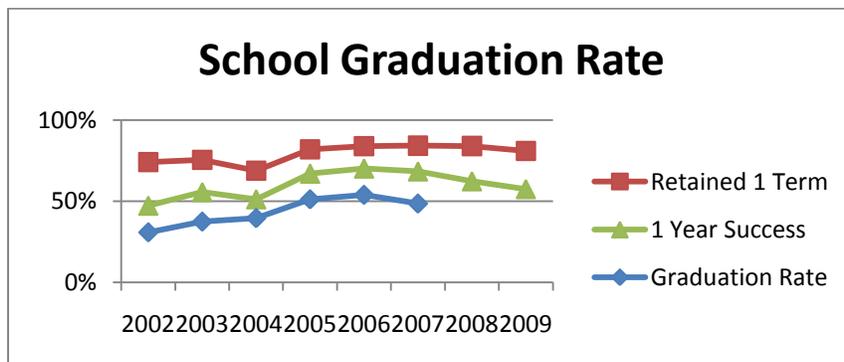
graduate from BFIT to complete exit loan counseling. Exit loan counseling occurs each spring to remind students of loans borrowed while at BFIT, and for which they are now responsible to repay. If a student cannot attend a session or leaves before a session is scheduled, the College provides an online alternative. Students who do not officially withdraw from the College are sent a postcard with exit loan counseling requirements.

Retention and Graduation

The College tracks fall-to-spring retention (first semester) and fall-to-fall retention (one year). BFIT does not report retention data to IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) because our Bachelor program does not admit any first-time freshmen and the retention data is based upon the Bachelor cohort. Retention rates by degree track students by their initial declared major and are not adjusted based on program changes. Students doing developmental math and English work are counted in the three developmental categories: those taking just English, those taking just math, or those taking both English and math.

BFIT did not begin distinguishing between first time freshman students and transfer students regarding graduation rates until the fall 2008 incoming class. This is why BFIT is reporting those data with regard to retention rates, but not graduation rates. Graduation rates are measured based on 150% of the program length. Since the Bachelor program does not directly enroll first-time freshmen, the graduation rate is based on three years.

The retention chart below reveals freshman retention, the one year success rate, and graduation rates the college has experienced from 2002 – 2009. As the charts reveal, the fall-to-spring retention rate for freshman students in 2008 was 84%, in 2009 the rate was 81%, and in 2010 the rate was 79%. The fall-to-fall retention rate in 2008 was 48%, in 2009 it was 47%, and it is projected to be 48% in 2010. The graduation rate for students who started in fall 2006 was 53% and those who started in fall 2007 were at 48%. BFIT projects that a graduation rate for those who started in fall 2008 will be 46% and 44% for those who started in fall 2009. See Standard One for more information. Certificate students, who on average make up 10% of the student body, who graduate within their first year are not counted as retained because they do not return for a second year which impacts our retention numbers. To address this, the Registrar also tracks success rates to include certificate students who generally graduate within that first year. In fall 2008 the success rate of our students was 62%, in fall 2009 it was 57%, and in fall 2010 it was 78%. These numbers include first time freshman and transfer students.



In an effort to address the declining retention and graduation numbers the College established a Retention Committee in fall 2010. The committee includes members from all aspects of the College community and meets regularly to analyze our retention rate and discuss possibilities for improvement. The committee has also broken into three smaller working groups, Early Intervention, Data Gathering, and Curriculum Delivery, to more closely examine specific components of the College. The goal is to implement initiatives in 2011/12 and continue ongoing evaluation. The work of this group has led to new initiatives to be implemented in the 2011/2012 academic year, which include:

- Students of Concern committee which will meet every week to review students who have been identified as being at-risk for attrition (attendance records, work with faculty and staff, and anecdotal information)
- Retention Committee which will continue the work which began in the fall 2010 in collecting and analyzing data and reviewing systemic/policy issues related to retention
- Providing faculty and advisors with clear guidelines on the usage of the SOS system
- Development of an exit survey that will better enable the college to understand why students left their program prior to receiving their degree.

In addition to these initiatives, the College has taken further steps to improve retention and graduation rates, including:

- Creating a new position, Assistant Director for Advising and Academic Success, to be hired for the 2012 academic year
- Adding a pilot course, the Franklin Seminar, designed to support students to be successful in and prepared for the rigors of college level coursework. Through contextualized learning students will learn how to be successful in their college level course work and understand how to utilize the resources that the College provides to assist students as they work toward graduation
- Investing in capital improvement projects for the 2012 academic year geared towards improving the students co-curricular experience (Ben's Den, a cafeteria, and the Student Affairs Suite)
- Improving the College's web-based SOS (Support Our Students) system, an "early warning" system, allowing faculty and advisors to communicate via e-mail like messages to detect and solve student concerns quickly. Integrating the SOS system with the Students of Concern committee

Career Services

The Office of Career Services, vacant during the previous self-study, was staffed in fall 2008. A vital position to a career-oriented College, the director provides leadership for employment readiness, four-year college transfers, internships, and job placement. The director has collected placement statistics for alumni, creating a stream of opportunity for graduates each year, while cultivating new relationships with industry. The office offers a myriad of workshops each year promoting skills necessary for gainful employment. There are required internships in two majors (Medical Electronics and Ophthalmic Assisting), with developed internship opportunities in others, and continued development of optional not-for-credit internship opportunities. This has increased the experiential education aligned with the mission of the College. The Career Success Seminar, launched in spring 2011, is a new graduation requirement developed and implemented by the Office of Career Services to be consistent with our goal of employment readiness.

Student Affairs

The Department of Student Affairs is staffed with qualified professionals. Each staff member holds the necessary educational degree and years of professional work experience in their area of expertise. Each member is affiliated with, and participates in, professional associations such as National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), North East Association of College and University Housing Officers (NEACUHO), National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Boston Area College Housing Association (BACHA), and National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). Each Office within the Department of Student Affairs has its own budget to facilitate activities, allocate resources, participate in professional development and maintain day-to-day operations of each office. While the physical offices are readily accessible to the student population, there is a need for more space and private offices.

To enhance academic support services a Director of Advising position was created in fall 2009. While maintaining the current advising structure, with a majority of full-time staff and faculty handling caseloads of 5-10 students, it was determined that the College needed a centralized office for the long-term direction of advising. Responsibilities of the director include preparing resources for students and advisors and available on both the College website and student portal. Central to the position is training advisors to ensure proper support and accurate information delivery. In the 2010-2011 academic year 27 faculty and 17 staff members served as academic advisors. An Advisor Manual, created in summer 2010, assists advisors in delivering services. An Advising SOS web page was created in fall 2010 to allow advisors the ability to document meetings, concerns, or general notes about advisees and keep record of their progress. The Director of Advising also oversees the Academic Success Center (ASC) which provides one-on-one or group tutoring in math, physics, English, writing, computers, and electronics. Sign-in logs showed 240 students utilizing tutoring in fall 2010 and 350 in spring 2011. Various faculty throughout the College comprise the tutoring staff and have a set weekly schedule; 16 faculty provided tutoring support in the fall 2010 semester and 14 in the spring 2011 semester. In addition to those who providing tutoring in the ASC faculty also keep weekly office hours and make themselves available by appointment at a student's request.

The Director of Advising coordinates the First Year Experience (FYE), the required new student orientation program. Created in 2007 in response to college-wide concerns with the college readiness of our student population, the two-day program seeks to combine the critical skills needed for college success with a comprehensive understanding of resources and expectations at the College. In addition to engaging with the faculty in their course of study, students have the opportunity to purchase textbooks, obtain their College IDs, and socialize with their peers. In September 2010, 9 faculty and 11 staff members all taught various educational and social sessions during the two day event. The Director of Advising also coordinates the newly revamped Parent and Family Orientation (summer 2010). This is open to any family member and is conducted as a separate program from the student FYE. Family members learn about topics such as financial aid, student accounts, academic success for their students, and local resources.

As the number of students presenting Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) from their earlier education increased, it was incumbent upon the College to meet these needs and, if necessary, provide appropriate accommodations for student success. As a result, the College hired a Learning Specialist on a part-time basis in fall 2008. The Learning Specialist worked closely with Enrollment, Placement, and accepted students once they presented documentation or verbal information concerning a learning challenge. With the departure of the part time Learning Specialist in summer 2011, the College deemed it necessary to expand the role of this position and hired a full-time Assistant Director of Advising for Academic Success.

The College has entered into a partnership, now in its fourth year, with 40 Berkeley Street to house BFIT students. The Residence Life and Housing component began in 2007 with 18 students and has grown to accommodate 58 students in fall 2010 and 46 in spring 2011. Initially the College had two part-time live-in employees, Resident Advisors, providing oversight and support to students. Following discussions with various constituents and a 28% resident student attrition rate from fall 2009 to spring 2010, the College hired a live-in Director of Residence Life and Housing in summer 2010. The Director provides supervision to two Assistant Resident Directors (ARDs, formerly Resident Advisors) and works closely with the Admissions Office when a prospect shows interest in College housing. The Director, in conjunction with the ARDs, develops supportive educational and psychosocial programming for resident students. A Resident Life Handbook is published annually describing resources and policies associated with housing. A Resident Hall Association was formed in fall 2009 to coordinate additional student programming and serve as a liaison between resident students and staff. New furniture was purchased in fall 2010 for each residence hall room in addition to a new wireless internet system being installed for all residential students.

In fall 2010, the Director of Residence Life and Housing also began serving as the Student Conduct Coordinator, which is a new position for the College. This involves the oversight of the Student Conduct system through administrative hearings, and by coordinating the Student Conduct Board. The coordinator created the process for the Conduct Board, updated the Student Conduct Code, trains Conduct Board Members, and collaborates with the Director of Advising to facilitate Academic Honesty policies and hearings. Behavioral based records are kept within the office of the Student Conduct Coordinator, and academic honesty records are kept within the office of the Director of Advising. Suspension or expulsion, for either academic honesty or behavioral issue, is noted in the student's official academic record as well. Policies on ethical standards and student's rights and responsibilities are clearly stated in the Student Handbook and Planner, Course Catalogue, and the BFIT website. In addition, the Student Handbook also directs students to the Dean of Students with any concern, complaint, or suggestion they may have throughout the academic year.

The Director of Student Involvement and Leadership has increased and strengthened the foundation of student organizations at the College. In an effort to increase student engagement, the office has placed an emphasis on leadership development, community service, organizational structure, and marketing. The implementation of a student activity fee in fall 2010 provides financial support for events, student

organizations, and new furnishings for the relocated Student Recreation Center. Additionally this office received a grant from AmeriCorps *Vista, Massachusetts Campus Compact in 2010, to hire an Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership focused on increasing student civic engagement. With the enhancement of this office many new student activities have been introduced and student leadership organizations play an integral role in student life and success.

The Director of Athletics oversees the men's intercollegiate soccer team that competes at the NJCAA Division III level. The athletics budget is overseen by the Dean of Students. To meet eligibility requirements, students must be full-time and maintain the standards set forth by the NJCAA and BFIT. It is of vital importance to the College that student athletes have satisfactory academic progress. Educational programs and academic expectations are the same for student athletes as for other students.

A volunteer clinician, a Master's level psychologist, dedicates one day a week to BFIT. He advises students on a wide range of issues, both academic and non-academic, that may serve as impediments to College success. There is a referral process at the College by which the Dean of Students is notified by a member of the staff or faculty who encounters a student issue that appears to be outside of his or her expertise. The Dean of Students or the volunteer clinician makes referrals to outreach services when necessary. In the case of a health emergency, either 911 is called, or Student Affairs Staff refers students to the appropriate medical facilities.

A web-based course management system (CAMS) with a student portal was launched in fall 2009 and serves to enhance the students' experience and allows them to better manage their education. Among the functionality features of the student portal are a forum for students to communicate with professors, view and download class assignments, see midterm and final grades, and download unofficial transcripts. For many faculty and staff it also serves as a vehicle for marketing events and announcements to the BFIT community.

Managed by the BFIT Crisis Management Committee, the Dean of Admissions, Dean of Students, Director of Operations, and Chief Financial Officer serve as Crisis Plan Administrators. The Director of Residence Life and Housing will be a first responder on site with campus access should anyone need to enter the building quickly. Each Crisis Management Administrator and the College's Security staff will have immediate and constant contact with one another during an emergency. The Dean of Students will take the lead role in determining and facilitating a course of action during an emergency to ensure students are safe. These processes and procedures are part of the overall Crisis Management plan at the College and will continually be assessed to ensure their efficiency.

APPRAISAL

Strengths

- The Office of Career Services has cultivated industry relationships yielding new Industrial Advisory Board members who provide insight and thoughts on curriculum changes to serve current trends in

industry. In addition these new relationships have provided new internship and employment opportunities for our students and graduates.

- The Department of Student Affairs has implemented the BCSSE (Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement) and other means of eliciting student feedback such as utilizing the Student Government Association with the purpose of understanding student experience and concerns to shape our programming and increase retention, enhance first year experience, and better academic advising. Outcomes of the assessment include the reintroduction of the men's intercollegiate soccer team, leadership workshops, community service programming, changes in student government structure, and creation of new student organizations such as IEEE or Outdoor Adventure Club.
- The College introduced a Student Leadership Summit in summer 2010 for members of the current Student Government Association and other identified student leaders to engage in a weekend of team-building activities. Additionally in spring 2011 the Office of Student Affairs held its first annual Student Engagement Awards recognizing those students who actively engaged in the BFIT and broader community.
- The expansion of the Department of Student Affairs, through additional personnel, programs, and grants, has greatly enhanced the student support services and student life. With greater student involvement and voice, students are given the opportunity to take on greater accountability, civic responsibility and overall engagement. In addition, new policies and procedures have been put in to effect that create overall institutional cohesion and effectiveness.

Concerns

- Recent focus has been placed around data collection, but more can be done, both to collect and analyze data. A position with a focus on Institutional Research would benefit the College and strategic planning greatly. With more data, the College could better measure the connection between student success initiatives and retention and graduation rates.
- While the expansion of the Office of Advising is in progress, the student population would benefit from full time professional advisors. Faculty and Staff currently serve as advisors but often lack the appropriate training, background, and time to effectively advise.
- There is a need for essential campus amenities such as, expanded renovated offices for various student-related staff, a dining facility, gymnasium and a more permanent solution for housing of the residential students either by a long term lease agreement with 40 Berkeley or exploring other housing options.
- For the Office of Career Services to fulfill the mission and Strategic Plan 2011-16, the additional programming, internship management, measurement of graduate outcomes, and increased industry partnerships, additional personnel is required.

- A cut in federal funding for our work-study program has led to a further decline in campus employment and overall hours a student can work. With an already thin number of professionals and administrative assistants, more student employment and funding would benefit the College and students.
- A designated area for placement testing is needed, as is a fulltime placement office and a fulltime coordinator. Review of Accuplacer and all placement methods is necessary. While the College recently raised the math placement standards, the College's academic placement standards are low comparatively with other comparable Boston area colleges.

Projection

- The Dean of Students will manage the growth of Student Affairs, researching ways to dedicate more space for purposes of academic support, advising, and the addition of formal offices for Student Affairs staff, which will allow for improved privacy when working with students. An initial feasibility study began in spring 2011.
- The College will seek more residential housing for students as a means to build upon the current threshold of 80 by fall 2013. The Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life and Housing will coordinate.
- New staffing is necessary to meet student needs. The Office of Career Services will hire an Assistant Director in a proposed budget in the AY2011/12, as funds allow. Budgeting to hire a part-time clinician at least four days per week to address mental health issues on campus will also be placed in the FY2013 budget by the Dean of Students.
- A placement committee will be formed in summer 2011 to discuss student placement scores and college standing. The committee will be comprised of the Placement Coordinator, the Dean of Admissions, the Director of Advising and a rotating member of the Admissions department.
- The Dean of Students and Director of Athletics will oversee the return of intercollegiate basketball after a two-year hiatus, as students regularly inquire about additional athletic opportunities. Sports programs contribute to recruitment and retention efforts. Proposed start date would be fall 2012, or as funds allow.
- After successfully establishing new connections outside of our traditional recruitment area of the City of Boston to the Eastern Massachusetts suburbs, Rhode Island, and Connecticut in fall 2010, the Admissions Office will look to continue expansion over the next five-year period by exploring viability of our programs in the New York and New Jersey higher education market, as well as expanding our ability to recruit and support international students.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

All departments supporting student needs have either begun or have continued effective institutional planning based on a variety of student, faculty and staff feedback, review and oversight, including surveys, polls, committees, meetings, consultations and discussions.