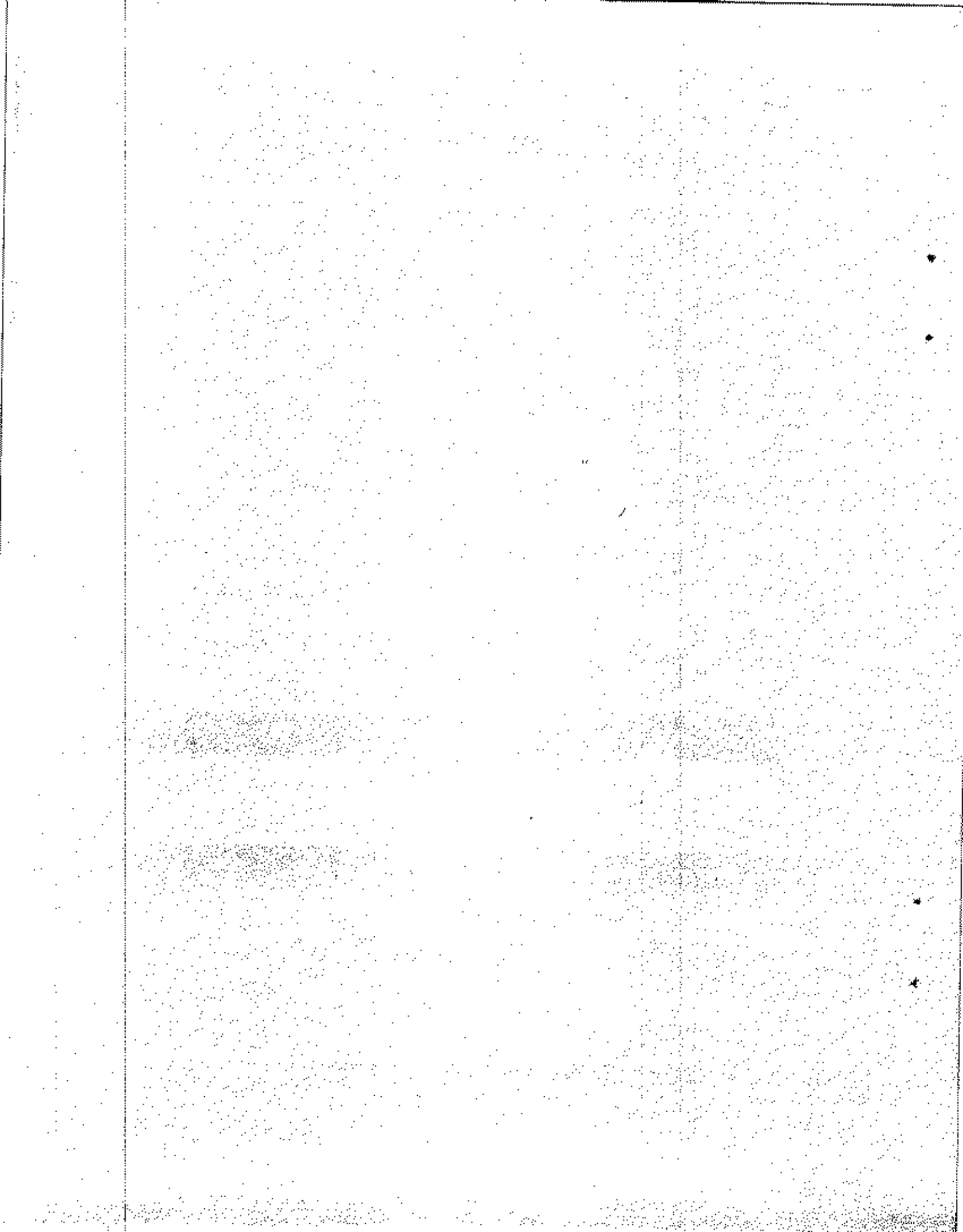




# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



## CHAPTER TWO: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. A Re-affirmation of Mission

*The mission of Queens College is to prepare students to become leading citizens of an increasingly global society. The College seeks to do this by offering its exceptionally diverse student body a rigorous education in the liberal arts and sciences under the guidance of a faculty that is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge. Its goal is that students learn to think critically, address complex problems, explore various cultures, and use effectively the full array of available technologies and information resources.*

So opens the revised Statement of Purpose of Queens College, affirming the high aspirations it has for its students and embracing the substance and values of liberal education. The current comprehensive Self Study process occasioned a thorough review of the College's Mission Statement. The text from 1985 was transformed into a shorter, sharper Statement of Purpose. What remains unchanged is the fundamental character of the College: an institution dedicated to teaching and learning, to scholarship and creative endeavors at the baccalaureate and graduate levels; an institution that reaches out to, educates and serves the people of New York.

The quality of the College's enterprises matters deeply to all its constituencies. With the prospects of budget cuts of a magnitude not felt by the College since the mid-1970's, concern is currently being expressed that the quality which the College aspires to, and takes pride in, will be compromised in serious ways. It may be, although energy and creativity are being directed to meet and beat these challenges. However, it should be noted that throughout the discussions about *how* to deal with current fiscal exigencies, there has been no backing away from the identity that Queens College has forged for itself since 1937--to be the means by which immigrants and the children of immigrants gain access to and succeed in the leadership circles of American society.

### II. The Financial Hurdles

The mid-1970's saw New York City on the verge of bankruptcy; enrollment at Queens was at an all time high, well over 30,000 students, when New York State assumed financial responsibility for CUNY senior colleges and the tradition of free tuition was ended. By the mid-1980's, the College had endured a decade of plummeting enrollments, retrenchment and attrition of faculty, and further budget cuts.

The mid-1990's find the College with significantly improved physical facilities, increasing enrollments, and very accomplished junior faculty --yet facing the accumulated consequences of budget cuts. The cuts and give-backs associated with the depressed New York economy have now given way to cuts attendant upon the agenda of a new governor that include proposing scaling back support for public higher education as part of a larger

cost-cutting/tax-cutting movement. Strategies used by the College to make its way through lean economic years can no longer serve it well as a new attitude toward the funding of higher education develops in Albany.

The College community has been, and will continue to be, seriously involved in strategic and financial planning. Decisions of the past five years have been guided by the 1988-1993 Five Year Plan, developed by ten planning committees with broad representation. There is now in place a 1994-1999 Five Year Plan; implementation of its recommendations has begun. In the past two years, the College has worked closely with the City University's Office of Academic Affairs on the Academic Program Planning Initiative, working to integrate College and University planning and to strengthen academic programming. In addition to the College's Academic Program Planning and Five Year Planning processes, formal program review is also linked to financial planning. A new subcommittee of the College Personnel and Budget Committee has been established to advise the President and Provost on budgetary priorities and allocation of resources. Thus, the shape of the College's response to these difficult financial times is being determined by discussions with appropriate groups and constituencies and is integrated with ongoing strategic planning.

The past decade has seen considerable improvement in how the College manages its finances, budgeting and information systems. Computerized systems to track and control budgetary, personnel and student information have been implemented successfully. Through the Self Study, recommendations have emerged to invest further in the integration of financial and information systems, expansion of the capabilities of the student information management database, and enhancement of the College's enrollment management efforts.

Historic improvements have been made in the College's ability to raise funds from non-tax levy sources. Between 1990 and 1994, annual appeals for private support raised \$19.5 million; funds raised in the fiscal year ending June, 1994 exceeded \$4.4 million. A capital campaign initiated in 1992, still in its "silent" phase, has pledges in excess of \$10 million. In contrast, in 1986, alumni/ae appeals brought in only \$512,000. Former President Shirley Strum Kenny also instituted a renewed focus on alumni/ae, and formed external advisory boards with strong alumni/ae representation to expand programmatic opportunities in business, journalism and the arts.

There has been steady growth in the funding of research and institutional activities. In 1994, grants and contracts exceeded \$6 million, up from \$5.4 million in 1990 and \$3.4 million in 1985. Recommendations came forward in the Self Study to increase the support for the Office of Alumni Affairs, to encourage departments to maintain contact with alumni/ae, and to provide support and incentives for faculty to apply for research funds.

### III. Educational Programs and Academic Program Review

Since the last Middle States evaluation, three new undergraduate majors (Labor Studies, Religious Studies, Women's Studies) and two minors (Business and the Liberal Arts, Journalism) have been instituted; all five new programs are interdisciplinary. A new Honors Curriculum in Mathematics and Natural Sciences was also introduced. In the past decade, substantial curricular revisions were made to many existing academic programs, often as a consequence of the process of Academic Program Review initiated in 1989. The current process used for Academic Program Review grew out of observations and recommendations from the 1986 Evaluation Team that bluntly confronted the College with its deficiencies in this area by saying:

Perhaps most surprising is the absence of academic program review procedures of the kind now widely accepted and practiced in other high quality institutions.... In summary, there is a great deal of impressionistic evidence that academic programs at Queens College are very good. The curriculum, the observations of faculty, and the reports of students are all to this effect.... Even so good an institution as Queens College can benefit from systematic evaluation of its curricula and teaching.

The College responded to this criticism by implementing a process to review all academic departments on a five year, rotating cycle beginning in 1989. Many benefits have accrued to individual departments and to the College as a whole. Recommendations in the Self Study include improving the process through preparation of annual or interim reports following each self study, expansion of institutional research services to departments, and inclusion in the review process of any academic unit offering courses (e.g., freestanding minors).

In 1986, the Evaluation Team examined LASAR, the College's Liberal Arts and Sciences Area Requirements which had been instituted five years earlier, and found that:

This general education program is broadly conceived, and it serves both to expose students to a breadth of knowledge and to acquaint them with the various methods by which knowledge proceeds in different groups of disciplines. There are surprisingly few complaints about LASAR, despite its fairly restrictive approach to student choice.

In 1991, a full decade after LASAR was instituted, there was movement to revise LASAR. While proposals were made, no action was taken. There is now renewed interest in a complete review of the College's general education requirements, coupled with development of specific learning objectives and assessment procedures.

### IV. Students

Student diversity is a hallmark of Queens College. It is much more complex than the typical racial categorization; diversity comes from the intermingling of cultures, languages, religions and national origins as well. The University estimates that by the year 2000, half of all CUNY students will have been born in Puerto Rico or outside the United States--with all the attendant demands for increases in support for students whose native

uage is not English. Recommendations in the Self Study speak directly to the need for College to prepare for continuing demographic shifts.

Access to academic advising and to evening offerings and services are also matters of concern, as they were in 1986. The opening and staffing of the new Office of Academic Advising in 1994 signalled a major advance toward meeting longstanding concern in this area. Moving beyond assistance in program planning and registration for freshmen, Academic Advising plans to expand services to new transfer students and to undeclared majors. Evening offerings have been reduced in recent years, but to no greater extent than offerings during the day. Financial circumstances have not permitted enhancement of evening student services, though there still are staggered hours of service by all major offices such as the Registrar and Bursar.

While the College compares very favorably to other CUNY senior colleges in its graduation rate, there is no complacency over what still remains a significant rate of dropping or stopping out of college. A Retention Coordinator was hired in 1994, and the Self Study recommends that the Retention Coordinator and the Director of Institutional Research conduct a study of student drop/stop-outs in preparation for a major effort to improve retention and graduation rates in all College programs.

Supported by College and University funds and by a three year grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education, the College's Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) has developed into a program serving approximately 400 freshmen per year. Conceived of as a means to foster connection and community at a commuter college and as a means to improve the retention of students, FYI has programmatic features that ensure interaction between and among students and faculty.

## V. Faculty

Queens College has been able to attract a stellar group of new faculty in the past decade. Aggressive searches have been mounted to increase the number of faculty from under-represented groups, and the results have been very positive: between 1988 and 1993, almost half of all newly hired faculty were non-White, and over half were women. The Assistant Professor rank is now 21% Asian American and 16% Black. Recent additions to the rank of Distinguished Professor include physicist Azriel Genack, literary critic Morris Dickstein and Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. To support newly hired faculty, the Provost's Office has devised a multi-faceted program that includes orientation seminars and workshops, mentoring and released time from some teaching. The Self Study recommends continuing the efforts to diversify the faculty and to provide support and services for newly hired faculty.

The national conversations over the balance between teaching and research and over how teaching is valued and evaluated for the purposes of tenure and promotion are also taking place at Queens. Recommendations came forth in the Self Study with regard to

improvements in the documentation of both teaching performance and service contributions and with regard to the accounting of faculty workload.

## **VI. Academic Support Resources**

Funding for academic support units (Library, Academic Skills and Resource Center, Center for Instructional Media Support and Academic Computer Center) has been severely compromised in recent years, as the College has tried to cope with consecutive budget cuts. Given what were thought to be temporary shortfalls because of a depressed economy, choices were made for several years to keep/hire people, especially full-time faculty, at the expense of "things." Equipment replacement, purchase and binding of periodicals and books, introduction of new technologies and the like have been deferred. The emphasis was on maintaining service levels at almost any cost. These wrenching choices have meant that service levels remain, at least comparatively, unaffected.

In spite of the drastically reduced budgets for "things," there has been conversion to an on-line catalogue, access to new electronic databases and additional space for open access computing facilities. A new Learning Center, particularly equipped for languages, will open in fall 1995. Several of the Self Study Task Forces issued strong recommendations favoring a restoration of funding for these academic support units, especially the Library.

## **VII. Organization, Administration and Governance**

The trend toward centralization within the City University, noted by the 1986 evaluators, has continued. This has led to improved articulation for students, joint programs and proposals for a few joint appointments between campuses. However, campus autonomy over local decision-making on issues such as curriculum, appointments, and budgeting has been reduced. A redistribution of faculty lines among senior colleges based exclusively on enrollment began in fall 1994 and precipitated intense opposition on campuses like Queens where great sacrifices had been made to keep the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty as high as possible.

There are calls in the Self Study for the new president to review the internal administrative structure of the College. The Provost is encouraged to review all deans' positions. There are also multiple calls for greater communication: within the College and from the College to local community colleges. Recommendations were also directed to the Academic Senate: to undergo its own self study and review process, to review its representation and to encourage broader participation in governance by both faculty and students.

## **VIII. Assessment and Planning**

The slight use of institutional and management information, together with the inattention to both long and short term planning, rests on a leadership process that is informal and that operates from the instincts and

knowledge of long-serving, and very able and dedicated, campus officers. Such a leadership process is naturally attentive to what the College is and to incremental changes in that reality; it does not, however, focus on new initiatives or significant departures from present realities.

The 1986 Evaluation Team thus voiced their concerns over deficiencies in the College's planning processes. Shortly after her appointment in 1986, former President Kenny launched a major effort in campus-wide planning and recruited a Vice President for Planning. As noted earlier, two five year plans have been developed; almost 90% of the recommendations of the 1988-1993 plan were implemented, and implementation of the recommendations of the 1994-1999 plan has begun. The University's Academic Program Planning process has also enhanced the College's planning efforts. Recommendations have emerged in the Self Study to strengthen the link between long range planning and annual budgeting, to work with CUNY to integrate strategic and financial planning as well as capital and financial planning, to invest further in enrollment management and financial systems to support planning, and to expand the services of the Office of Institutional Research.

Institutional assessment procedures were investigated as part of the Self Study. Improvements through the implementation of review processes for both academic programs and administrative units were noted. However, efforts still need to be directed toward a multi-dimensional assessment of the general education curriculum, to assessment of student learning outcomes in all college courses, and to the formal and systematic linking of data collection, analysis and planning in all academic and administrative areas.

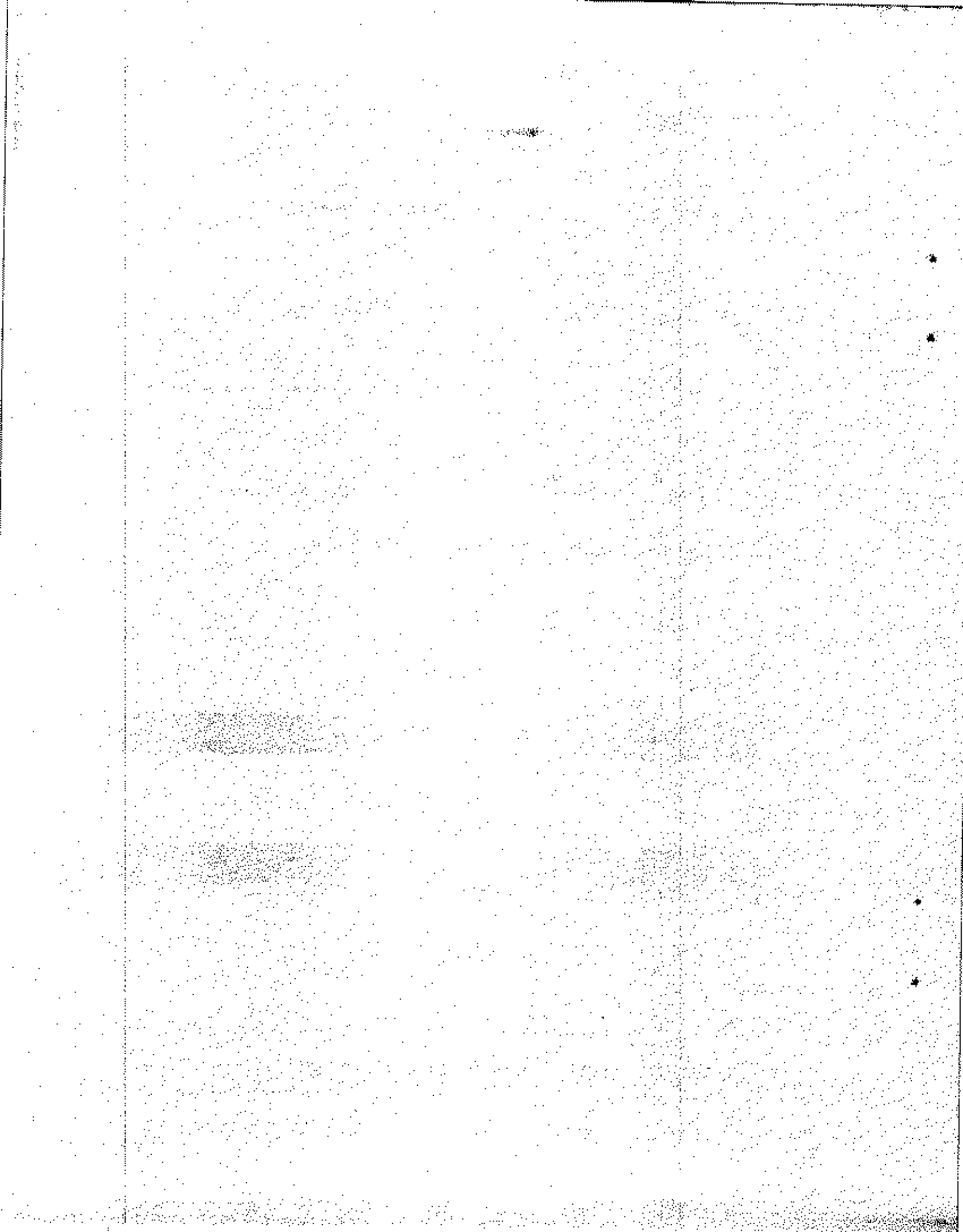
## **IX. Future Directions**

Queens College has much to be proud of and grateful for: the quality of its educational programs, faculty and staff; the dedication of its students to their studies in the face of great financial and personal pressures; the collegiality and mutual respect that exist on campus; its strong tradition of educating students in the liberal arts tradition so that they may aspire to and succeed in any field or profession. The primary aim of planning during this present financial crisis is to make decisions that will help the College to become a stronger, more resilient and more focused institution, to maintain and enhance the quality of the educational experience for Queens College students. The College will face painful choices. The goal should be for the campus to work together to establish the priorities and to affirm the values that will enable Queens College to support the high expectations and aspirations of future generations of students.



# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THE SELF STUDY PROCESS**



## CHAPTER THREE: THE SELF STUDY PROCESS

### I. A Perspective on Self Study

*Designs for Excellence*, the Commission on Higher Education's handbook for institutional self study, provides a full description of the accreditation process used by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. In it, the benefits of self study are put forward:

Self-study is an analysis by its own members of an institution's educational capability and effectiveness. It is the most important part of the Middle States evaluation procedure for the institution. . . . The undertaking of a well-planned and clearly focused self-study should result in a common effort to assess and improve the institution.

The administration of Queens College, the Self Study Steering Committee and nine task forces took this principle to heart, stressing at each stage the importance of the *process* of self study. *Designs for Excellence* also suggests that: "Benefits are proportional to the incisiveness of the inquiry: the aim must be to understand, evaluate and improve, not simply to describe and defend." In this spirit, this Self Study is meant to be a critical self-examination of Queens College in 1995, balancing a sharp focus on needs and deficiencies with a healthy reassessment of the institution's strengths and special character.

### II. Planning and Organization

The planning for the Self Study began under former President Shirley Strum Kenny and Provost John A. Thorpe early in fall 1993. A full recounting of this process may be found in Appendix A. Upon reflection on the options offered by the Commission on Higher Education with regard to focus and format, a decision was reached to undertake a *Comprehensive Self Study*. It was further agreed that one focus of the Self Study would be student outcomes assessment. In September 1994, Dr. Kenny became President of SUNY at Stony Brook, and Dr. Stephen M. Curtis was appointed Acting President of Queens College. A search for a permanent successor to President Kenny has been completed with the appointment of Dr. Allen L. Sessoms as eighth president of Queens College. Dr. Sessoms will take office about August 1, 1995.

The Provost appointed a Steering Committee and nine task forces to help develop the Self Study. Almost 100 faculty, staff and students served on one or more of these groups. A complete listing of the members may be found in the preface to this report.

The work of the Steering Committee and its nine task forces built upon that of the College's Planning Committee, which had recently completed a Five Year Plan (1994-1999). The priorities identified in the second Five Year Plan include: improving the advisement of students; supporting initiatives that will further quality teaching and research

at the College, and continuing to reassess the relationship of research, teaching, and service to the goals of the College; making computer and information technology available to all on campus; developing and implementing a College plan for maintenance and replacement of facilities and equipment; and implementing meaningful outcomes assessment practices for the College.

Task forces worked throughout the fall 1994 semester. Their reports were reviewed by the Steering Committee and assembled in edited, condensed form as the Draft Self Study report, issued to the campus community in late April 1995. The Draft Self Study was subject to five hearings in early May, and revised by the Steering Committee to reflect the suggestions made at the open hearings and in writing. In May, 1995, the Steering Committee voted to approve the final version of the Self Study for submission to the Evaluation Team. In light of the continuing uncertainty over the College's budget for FY 1996, it is the College's intent to prepare and submit an update to the Self Study during summer 1995 to provide the Evaluation Team with information as to the extent of financial exigency and retrenchment necessitated by the threatened budget cuts.