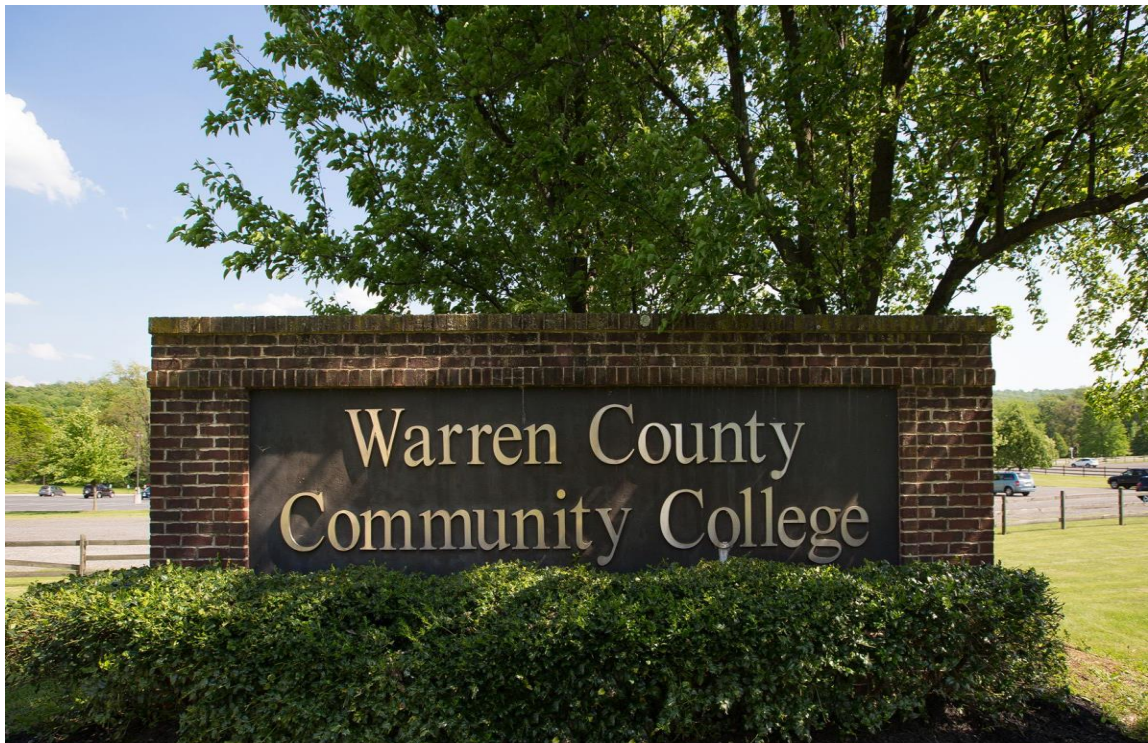


Warren County Community College PRELIMINARY SELF-STUDY DESIGN

Submitted to the Middle States Commission on
Higher Education (MSCHE)



February 14, 2024

Self-Study Design

Warren County Community College

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Institutional Overview

Warren County Community College is a small community college located in western New Jersey. Warren County is adjacent to the Delaware River (the border between New Jersey and Pennsylvania) and is part of the Skylands region of the state. The College serves just over 900 students per semester through its undergraduate program (UG) and just under 2,200 students annually through its high school dual enrollment (DU) program. WCCC graduates approximately 190 students annually, primarily in the AA and AS transfer programs.

College History

Warren County Community College is the youngest community college in New Jersey. The College's predecessor, the Warren County Community College Commission ("Commission"), was founded in July 1981 by the former New Jersey State Board of Higher Education (BHE) and the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders (now called "County Commissioners"). In its earliest years, the Commission operated as a "College without Walls," holding classes in local high schools and sponsoring (i.e., paying for) Warren County residents to matriculate at neighboring community colleges.

In 1987, the BHE conferred degree-granting authority upon the Commission. Classes began in a temporary educational facility leased by the Commission. Warren County Community College became licensed as the 19th and last community college in New Jersey by the BHE in 1991. WCCC was initially accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education ("Middle States") in 1992. In 1996, the College moved into its permanent campus site in Washington, NJ, which was renovated/expanded in 2006, 2012 and 2018. In July 2011, WCCC acquired a renovated education center in Phillipsburg, NJ (the Phillipsburg Education Center or PEC), approximately nine miles from the main campus. This site houses the college's continuing education programs, the UAS/Robotics offerings, and the Medical Assisting program. The NJ Department of Labor's WOIA office is housed in this building along with a small business incubator.

Background on Warren County, NJ

Warren County Community College (“WCCC” or “the College”), a small two-year public college located in Washington NJ, serves the citizens of Warren County, NJ (current population estimated 111,000). While Warren County is less than 1½ hours from New York City, it has only peripherally been affected by the urbanization/suburbanization of northern New Jersey. The County borders two major highways (I-80 to the north and I-78 to the south) and the Delaware river. These highways provide the east-west connection to the NYC metropolitan area with the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania.

The county consists of a network of small towns and townships. Its largest municipality, Phillipsburg, has a population of just over 15,000 residents. WCCC is in the southern part of the county but is accessible to Phillipsburg, Washington, and Hackettstown via Route 57, which connects these three municipalities. A shuttle bus service during the day between these three municipalities, which is the only public transportation available in the County. Because of the limited road systems and more mountainous terrain, access to the College is more difficult for students from the northern part of the county.

Warren County retains a distinctively rural character in a highly urbanized state. As of 2023, there were 1,755 farms operating on 75% of the county’s total developable acreage.¹ The balance of the acreage is residential and commercial. There are few large employers in Warren County, so many workers commute either east or west for employment opportunities. Any significant future population growth is unlikely as most of the undeveloped/underdeveloped regions of the county are subject to stringent land use restrictions intended to limit growth in the state’s watershed areas (“Highlands Act”). Most new development since the Highlands Act in 2004 has focused on 55+ housing. However, during COVID, there was a minor influx of families from eastern NJ to Warren County. As a result, while the college had been facing a decline with high school feeder enrollments, this decline has been smaller than anticipated.

¹ Warren County Agricultural Development Council, Update of COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, July 2020.

The county has experienced change in the race and ethnic background of its population over the last decade. In 2014, the County was 90% white with Black and Hispanic residents representing the other 10% of the population. However, in the last decade the County has become more diversified. The chart below shows the racial/ethnic breakdown of both the college and county populations.

Race/Ethnic Category	% of Total Students Fall 2024²	County Population Census Est. 2023
Asian	2%	3%
Black/African American	12%	8%
Hispanic/Latino	24%	12%
Two or More Races	3%	2%
White	55%	75%
Other	4%	<1%
Total	100%	100%

Legal Governance

As a public community college in New Jersey, WCCC is guided by the various NJ Statutes, including those that specify the composition of the Board of Trustees. The Board consists of eight members appointed by the County Commissioners (the governing board of the County) and two members appointed by the Governor. Members serve a four-year term but may be reappointed. The Board also consists of the County School Superintendent (ex-officio voting member), a non-voting “Alumni Trustee” elected by the graduating class, and the President (ex-officio non-voting member).

The Board of Trustees meets at least seven times a year, including a day-long retreat usually held in late March or early April. They undertake two orientations (one by the College and one mandated by statute through the Council of County Colleges). Board members actively participate in professional development through the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and make annual presentations at the ACCT conference.

² The college population excludes dual enrollment students (headcount 953). The county population data is directly from US Census Bureau data.

The Board includes four main committees: Executive Committee, Operations Committee, Finance and Audit Committee and Policy Committee. The Executive Committee meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss issues that may arise between Board meetings. The other three committees meet individually before each Board meeting. The Finance and Audit Committee also meets separately (without executive staff) with the auditor prior to the presentation of the annual audit.

The Board's comprehensive policy manual guides the College's compliance with state, federal, and local legislation, and sound higher education practice. The first chapter of the policy manual contains the Board's by-laws. All policies are reviewed on a five-year cycle, but some are adjusted more frequently based on changes in the regulatory landscape.

Mission and Vision

The **Mission of WCCC**, modified slightly with the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, is to

Serve a community of learners through accessible, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities designed to meet educational goals and aspirations of students from all backgrounds

The **College's Vision** was amended with the latest Strategic Plan to reflect changes in the expectations for higher education, propelling WCCC to adapt its offerings to employer and general workforce needs. The vision statement is

Provide short-term and life-long learning opportunities to enhance individuals' success, strengthen commitment to the community, and reflect innovation and change

Strategic Plan

WCCC was near completion of its Strategic Planning process in spring 2020 when COVID disrupted the process. At the time, WCCC shifted to devising strategies to cope with COVID 19 challenges. When the College fully restored its operations to pre-COVID levels in Fall 2022 the

plan was updated and revised to focus on the post-COVID era.

The five key themes in the Strategic Plan are:

- Revitalize the student learning experience through current ideas and technologies to embrace new learning realities.
- Enhance community relations & provide next generation workforce development initiatives to both employers and students.
- Focus on access, equity and inclusivity while also improving student learning outcomes simultaneously
- Ensure capital funds are invested wisely to ensure key programs and community facility needs and facility longevity.
- Provide stable and sustainable resources to enable the institution to invest in new and renewed technologies and in improved instructional quality.

The overall success of this five-year strategic plan is being assessed through four success goals:

Goal 1: Survive and Re-emerge a Stronger Institution post-COVID

Goal 2: Increase & Enhance Academic Programs and Student Success

Goal 3: Increase Total Funding Post-COVID through Grants & Other Revenue

Goal 4: Recover Enrollment through Improved Recruitment & Retention

The work toward these goals is organized around several key themes of focus, which provide a framework for action. Student success underlies each theme and informs the strategic directions in each.

Student Data and Program Offerings

Of the 3,488 students enrolled during 2023-24, 1,058 were matriculated at some point during the year in a degree program. Warren County's student enrollment is quite different than many institutions as many of the students are non-matriculated high school students. During Academic Year 2023-24, the WCCC served 2,192 students through dual enrollment.

12 Month Enrollment Data (2023-24) From IPEDS						
Total Students	Male	Female	Degree-Seeking	Non-degree Seeking	Full-time	Part-time
3,488	1,537	1,951	1,058	2,430	726	2,762

New students in 2024-25 could choose from 23 (A.A., A.S., A.F.A and A.A.S.) and seven certificates.³ While Liberal Arts continues to be the most popular major, the Business Program has grown over the past few years. The College has been approved since 2014 to offer distance education programs. As a practical matter, however, only a handful of students graduate by taking a degree completely through distance education. Almost all distance education students come from New Jersey (and most are from Warren County).

The College’s program offerings have evolved over time, reflecting evolving employer needs, the availability of partnerships and internships and changing student demand. One value of a small college is the ability to quickly adapt to changes in the higher education landscape. The College has provoked its A.S, and A.A.S. offerings to meet the needs of the community, moving three programs from A.A.S to A.S degrees. In 2016, the College started offering an elective to allow students to receive a drone pilot license. This quickly evolved into an A.A.S. in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (drones), which includes concentrations in Robotics and in Precision Agriculture. The latter was created to assist the local farming community with crop monitoring. Warren has partnered with both Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and New Jersey Institute of Technology to enhance these offerings and to add an A.S. program. As of spring 2025, the College is working with Warren County to explore a food processing program to assist local beef and dairy farmers and provide a market in the western New Jersey region for meat processing and production. This is a multi-year initiative that will involve a number of partners and require State of New Jersey approval.

The College uses data to inform its program and course offerings, including student demand, instructor availability, regional employment, student retention and success and relevance of the

³ The college has placed several programs on moratorium and combined others into existing degrees. These are listed in the 2024-25 catalog.

curriculum make program offering and scheduling decisions. This has meant making the difficult decision of eliminating certain low enrollment programs and offerings, programs that have limited career opportunities and programs with less successful outcomes from the catalog. These have included the A.S. in Ecotourism as well as A.A.S. programs in Food and Beverage Management and Automotive Technology. The latter two were offered in partnership with the local technical school. The elimination of these offerings was a joint decision of both Boards of Trustees.

For fall 2024, four-degree programs (AFA Creative Writing, BA-Communications, BS-Graphic Design and AS-Addiction Counseling and two certificates (Communications and Addiction Counseling) were placed on moratorium. Three have been absorbed in one way or another with other offerings, while the Addictions Counseling is being eliminated because of low demand, less desirable student outcomes and the increased difficulty in finding clinical practicum sites for students in the program.

Warren currently employs 56 full-time staff, including 12 10-month tenured faculty, five 12-month teaching administrators plus nine administrative staff who teach one or more classes per semester. The full-time employee complement is augmented this semester by fifteen senior adjuncts and 11 adjunct faculty who teach one or more courses.

Warren's Strengths

- ***Education-Focused Institution***

As noted previously, the College was the last public college established in New Jersey and initially established to broker educational offerings to other community colleges. By the time Warren was established and was looking to build a campus in 1995, all major state bond programs were exhausted, so there were no state capital construction bonds for a campus. Any capital funds provided to the college were to be provided by the County of Warren. County leaders over the last forty years have been incredibly supportive of financing traditional transfer programs as well as workforce development initiatives.

The State of NJ initially financed the construction of public colleges, including student centers, athletic facilities, and student dining halls on college campuses through public bond funds in the 1970s and 1980s. By the time Warren’s campus was built in 1995, state bond funds had been exhausted. Warren’s one academic building was designed with basic academic programs and services in mind through county bonds. When the prior President tried to secure funding for student amenities, County officials made it clear that county was not able or interested in funding a multipurpose student center. In 2004, the State effectively limited most of the college’s growth through the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (“Highlands Act”), which limited new development in pre-existing urban zones. Even if funding was available for new facilities, the College has almost no developable space to expand its Washington campus.

These conditions can be a barrier for enrollment at Warren as some student athletes seek to continue their sport at the community college level. However, Warren also sees its small size of about 900 matriculated students as an attraction for some students, as students from three of the County’s six high schools have graduating classes of less than 100 students. Due to a small footprint, WCCC is more cost effective than peer institutions and does not have to worry about the renovation challenges of older, outdated facilities.

- ***Dual Enrollment Program***

Warren has a large high school dual enrollment program, especially in proportion to its matriculated student population, serving over 2,000 (unduplicated) students annually. WCCC services all six public high schools in the county by offering general education dual enrollment courses at every county high school. WCCC is the only college in NJ to offer these services completely free to high school students. This is possible because of annual funding from the county to support the credentialing and monitoring of high school courses.

Teachers in the Dual-enrollment program are master’s-prepared, and their courses have been evaluated through WCCC for course equivalency. Dual enrollment is coordinated through the Dual Enrollment Coordinator, who works with each district to ensure that sufficient rigor and oversight exists for the program.

Upon successful completion of their high school courses, student grades and their college equivalent credits are reflected in their WCCC academic record and transcript. Dual enrollment credits are considered as transfer credits, where only successful completion of a course at a “C” level or better is recorded (in New Jersey, these are referred to as “transcription courses”). WCCC does not charge students for transcripts or the transcription services. Because of the NJ transfer law, all credits earned at Warren are guaranteed to transfer to NJ colleges. In addition, many out of state institutions accept these credits as counting toward degree fulfillment.

Operationally, dual enrollment credits generate some state support, but since approximately 60% of incoming first-year students have taken an average of 9-10 dual enrollment credits, state support is offset by tuition revenue loss. The College has fought vigorously within the NJ community college system to retain its free dual enrollment program, despite pressure from other colleges to require community colleges to charge tuition to high school students.

- **Increased Grant Support**

Since 2018, the College has been increasingly successful in leveraging funds through Competitive Grant programs to support the enhancement of programs and technology services at the College. For example:

- In 2019, the College opened the Building Annex, which included a new lecture hall, a computer lab, faculty offices, ADA compliant restrooms and the College’s droneport. This was supported through the competitive \$2 million NJ GO bond grant program.
- In 2022, the College opened the Joseph Warren Drone Center, funded through a \$1.9 million Securing our Children’s Future competitive state grant. This grant supported the renovation of underutilized space in the Phillipsburg Education Center to create a series of classrooms and labs for the UAS program.
- In 2022, the College was awarded a \$750,000 Precision Agriculture grant through a Congressional Earmark to support the development of a precision agriculture option for the UAS program. This grant supported start-up equipment as well as staff to develop the Precision Agriculture option.

- In 2023, the College was awarded a \$783,000 Equipment Leasing Grant through the State of NJ 2022 Winter Grant competition. This grant has enabled WCCC to undertake classroom technology upgrades in most of its classrooms, along with servers and wireless upgrades.
- In 2023 the College was awarded a \$2.25 million Title III grant over a five-year period to improve retention and graduation rates for lower-income students.
- In 2024, the College was awarded a \$699,000 grant for an expansion of the Precision Agriculture program.

- **Ability to Pivot**

WCCC has developed an ability to pivot as regulatory and external requirements are mandated or opportunities become available. WCCC does not have a large bureaucratic or hierarchical leadership model, so decisions can be made quickly. The faculty and the faculty-led Curriculum and Instruction Committee have been a key in addressing academic needs through its expeditious course development and review of new curricular offerings and program changes. Because of the College’s structure and work-ethic, WCCC has a number of “firsts” in New Jersey public higher education:

- WCCC was the first NJ community college to reduce the number of credits for associate degree programs to 60 credits and certificate programs to 30 credits, effective fall 2017. This requirement was later mandated by the state of NJ to become effective in 2019. The major change for the AA programs was the elimination of an orientation course and a change in the number of math/science credits counting toward the liberal arts degrees.
- The College was the first NJ institution to make remediation optional in fall 2016. College data indicated that the major hurdle for students was the math requirement. With the elimination of the College Algebra requirement for Liberal Arts programs⁴, two remedial algebra courses were not needed, which was a key obstacle for some students. The

⁴ With the reduction to 60 credits in the AA programs, students were no longer required to take College Algebra and instead could take a combination of one math, one science and one technology class. Students could satisfy the math requirement with Statistics or a number of other college math courses.

elimination of remedial courses also coincided with the significant growth in dual enrollment courses, so some students were able to finish at least one college level Math or English class in high school. WCCC's outcomes and graduation rate improved after these changes were made.

- Finally, WCCC was the first institution east of the Mississippi to move to a digital textbook environment through its partnership with *Cengage Unlimited™* in Spring 2019. All programs, except Nursing and UAS, use Cengage texts. For one price, students may download books for all their courses for a 12-month period. Currently, students can obtain all their books through Cengage for \$175, saving students up to \$1,200 per year on traditional books. Students have access to supplemental information from Cengage, including MindTap, to provide ancillary course support. Cengage books are now integrated with Canvas, the College's new LMS platform.

Challenges and Opportunities Post-COVID

All higher education institutions in the Middle States region faced challenges during COVID. Pivoting to distance education was a bit easier for WCCC, as all courses were required to have course shells in the Jenzabar e-Learning system. The statewide shutdown coincided with the College's spring break, which allowed faculty to begin re-orienting their courses for distance education.

Governor Murphy enacted a very stringent series of restrictions for New Jersey. In-person classes were not permitted until spring 2021 with a few exceptions for labs and outdoor programs. Complying with these requirements meant adding sections and purchasing an on-line platform for synchronous classes (WCCC used "Go to Meeting" at that time. The College did not fully emerge from the State's COVID rules until the Fall 2022 semester, although many programs resumed more in-person classes by fall 2021.

COVID presented some challenges for WCCC that were unique. Because of the College's small full-time staff complement, WCCC could not offer remote work assignments in lieu of

in-person positions. Turnover, retirements, and disability leaves decimated some of the College's offices, as most had just one or a small handful of employees. The college's location, its lower pay scale than other NJ colleges and the NJ First Law (which requires certain personnel to be New Jersey residents) made it difficult for the college to fill positions. It took until Fall 2024 until all major outstanding college positions were finally filled.

Like many colleges, WCCC experienced enrollment reductions during and after COVID. On the credit side, the college has adapted to enrollment changes by more eliminating small seat classes and returning to more structured scheduling blocks. Overall, the College's undergraduate division (matriculated, non-matriculated students not dual enrollment) has remained very constant over the past four fiscal years, although headcount and full and part-time enrollment has varied from semester to semester.

The College's Continuing Education division still has not recovered from COVID. This division primarily served Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) students in its career programs and its offerings primarily focused on entry level health professions programs.⁵ The suspension of workforce training requirements for several years, plus increases in minimum wage and abundant entry-level job opportunities, has limited participation in WIOA job placement training services. In addition, most medical programs require in-person and clinical experience. These requirements, along with restrictions in nursing homes, caused the cessation of the College's Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. While a few career programs remain, the Continuing Education division has pivoted to additional employer Customized training programs, especially short-term UAS training.

Institutional Resources

WCCC's net position has remained strong in the post-COVID period. As noted below, its net position has remained over \$26 million over the past three years, with unrestricted and designated

⁵ WCCC decided in 2007 to relinquish Title IV eligibility for entry workforce programs as most programs were solely loan eligible. Thus, WIOA grants has been a primary source of funding for lower income students. This is a riskier financial decision for the College, given the holdback of WIOA funding until certain educational and workforce placements are met, but a better financial option for the students.

funds at just under \$7.5 million. The College carries no debt and has a small long-term liability for a sick-leave payout. WCCC has a lease agreement with the New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority to pay for 25% of the annual debt service for the Equipment Leasing Fund program. In 2023, the Board set aside a designated reserve to cover these costs of these payments throughout the life of the lease agreement.

Statements from the FY24 Management Discussion and Analysis to provide a snapshot of College finances are shown on the next three pages. The first statement is the College’s Statement of Net position. This chart indicates that WCCC’s financial statement has remained strong over the past three years as the College has navigated the post-COVID period.

Statement of Net Position (College Funds (in Rounded \$000))			
	<u>FY24</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY22</u>
Total Assets			
Current Assets	8,897	8,479	8,921
Capital Assets	<u>18,712</u>	<u>19,320</u>	<u>19,933</u>
Total Assets	27,609	27,799	28,855
Less Liabilities:			
Current Liabilities	1,278	939	2,253
Non-Current Liabilities (College)	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>
Total Liabilities	1,390	1,051	2,365
Net Position	26,219	26,748	26,490
<u>By Category</u>			
Investment in Capital Assets	18,712	19,320	19,933
Restricted	21	23	24
Unrestricted-Designated	6,032	6,224	5,444
Unrestricted-Undesignated	<u>1,453</u>	<u>1,182</u>	<u>1,089</u>
Total Net Position	26,219	26,748	26,490

The data above represent College funds, exclusive of the WCCC Foundation (a component unit) and the pension and Other than Post Employment Benefit liabilities. As a public entity in New

Jersey, WCCC participates in the Public Employment Retirement Systems (PERS) or the Alternate Benefit Program (ABP). PERS is a defined benefit plan and ABP is a defined contribution plan. Participants in both plans may receive post-employment healthcare if they meet certain requirements. WCCC only pays annual contributory costs for current employees. All pension and OPEB expenses and liabilities are borne by PERS and paid through the NJ Department of Treasury.

As the Net Revenue portion of this chart indicates, the College has sufficient funds to meet the NACUBO recommendation of 40% of operating expenses or six months of payroll and benefit costs. Warren has met or exceeded these goals using both unrestricted and designated funds.

The College’s financial information can also be analyzed by a review of revenues and expenses. The chart below indicates the latest audited information (excluding Pensions, OPEB and the WCCC foundation). Revenues and expenses in FY24 reflect a normalized year for WCCC (all HEERF(COVID) funds had been exhausted in FY23. Note that expenses exceeded revenues in FY24 because of depreciation costs, which do not affect the College’s cash position.

Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Change in Net Position			
	<u>FY24</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY 22</u>
Operating Revenues			
Student tuition and fees	2,325	2,499	2,511
Federal grants and contracts	1,182	2,148	4,297
State/ local grants and contracts	1,574	1,278	929
Other	240	245	227
Non-Operating Revenues			
State appropriations	3,126	2,777	2,647
State ABP	187	198	195
County Operating	2,530	2,481	2,468
Capital	446	813	1,102
Misc./Investment Income	460	316	236
Total Revenues	12,071	12,755	14,612
Total Expenses	12,600	12,497	12,178
Change in Net Position	(530)	259	2,434

In Spring 2024, the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education began a monitoring system for public colleges and universities based on new accountability legislation. Institutions were categorized in four financial risk categories from “Least Risk” to “Most Risk” with institutions required to provide follow-up information or possibly have on-site monitoring because of this review. In September 2024, WCCC was notified that it was judged to be the category of “Least Risk” and was not required to follow up further with the fiscal monitoring process.

Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

These are the institutional priorities to be addressed in the self-study.

- 1) Ensure that educational offerings are congruent with student and employer needs within the region.
- 2) Enhance programs and services to improve student retention and academic success.
- 3) Embracing changes in the higher education environment, including the proliferation of AI, which may affect the delivery of educational programs.
- 4) Focus on physical renewal along with financial efficiency and sufficiency.

The chart below indicates how these goals relate to the seven MSCHE standards.

Self-Study Priorities	Standard I - Mission and Goals	Standard II - Ethics and Integrity	Standard III - Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	Standard IV - Support of the Student Experience	Standard V - Educational Effectiveness Assessment	Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	Standard VII - Governance, Leadership and Administration
Ensure educational offerings congruent with student and employer needs	P	A	P	A	A	A	A
Enhance programs and services to improve student retention and success	P	A	P	P	P	A	
Embrace changes in the higher education environment and, including AI, which may affect the delivery of higher education programs	P	P	P	P		A	P
Create a sustainable future by focusing on physical renewal along with financial efficiency and sufficiency	P					P	P

P = Primary focus; A = Additional focus

Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

As a result of undertaking the self-study, the college has identified the following outcomes to be achieved:

- 1) Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Fourteenth Edition)* and provides evidence by Standard in alignment with the Evidence Expectations by Standard.
- 2) Leverage periodic assessment through each standard, using assessment results for continuous improvement and innovation to ensure levels of quality for constituents and the attainment of the institution's priorities, mission, and goals.
- 3) Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process, including analysis of a range of data, including disaggregated data, to ensure students are appropriately served and institutional mission and goals are met.
- 4) Use the Self-Study process, along with any recommendations from the MSCHE team visit to develop the framework and priorities for the next Strategic Plan.

Warren County Community College's current strategic plan was initially scheduled to end this year. However, the plan was delayed due to COVID. As a result, WCCC intends to extend relevant initiatives in this plan for another year (some will dovetail into the next plan). The College will take advantage of the timing of the Self-Study process to finalize its next Strategic Plan. Specifically, as the teams are working on demonstrating compliance with the MSCHE standards, they will also consider recommendations for the next iteration of the College's Strategic Plan. WCCC will take advantage of the inclusive self-appraisal process to inform new directions for the institution.

Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups

The College began the Self-Study process in Fall 2024, with the introduction of the process at the Fall In-Service meeting. At that time, volunteers were asked to participate in the process and to indicate a team preference. Of the 54 full-time employees at the time, nearly 80% are participating in some manner in the process. Because of WCC's small employee cohort, the College did not select co-chairs for each working group. However, each group has one or more individuals who can serve as backup in the unlikely event of staff turnover. The organization for the Self-Study is as follows:

Steering Committee

Co-Chairs

Barbara Pratt, VP of Finance and Operations

Dr. Simone Patterson, Dean of Learning

Research Team

Dr. Allison Witucki, Institutional Researcher

Mindy Marinelli, Student Accounts Manager/Data Analyst

Facilitators

Sarah Lutz, Executive Administrative Assistant

Alexis Russo, Admin. Assistant, Financial Aid and Marketing

Team Chairs:

Standard 1-Joseph LaBarbera, Dean of Accountability

Standard 2 -Sytyra Ware, HR Director and Title IX Coordinator

Standard 3-Susan Howey, Professor of Mathematics

Standard 4--Ivory Luke, Director of Retention Strategies and EOF

Standard 5-Dr. Marianne Van Deursen, Provost and VP of Academic Affairs

Standard 6-Barbara Pratt, VP of Finance and Operations

Standard 7-Samir Elbassiouny, Executive Director of Advancement

Working Groups

Standard I

Team Chair-Joseph LaBarbera, Dean of Accountability

Dennis Florentine, Director UAS Flight Operations and Former Dean of Administration

Tracy DiTolla, Teaching Administrator of Art/Student Advisor

James McCoy, Coordinator of Public Safety

Peter Miller, Chief Pilot

Karen Boyle, Office Manager

Standard II

Team Chair-Sytyra Ware, HR Director and Title IX Coordinator

Lori King, Associate Professor of History

Dr. Anthony Perone, Dean of Enrollment Management

Dawn Smith, Coordinator of College Marketing Integration

Jacqueline Daly, Director of Financial Aid

Standard III

Team Chair-Susan Howey, Professor of Mathematics

Kerry Frabizio, Associate Professor of English

Dr. Nancy Wilson-Soga-Professor of Psychology

Tatyana Aguilar-EOF Coordinator, Recruiter

Jeremy Beeler-Vice President of Student Services

Lashonda Arrington-Hughes, Teaching Administrator/Nursing

Standard IV

Team Chair-Ivory Luke, Director of Retention Strategies and EOF

Liliana Koster-Academic Advisor/Bilingual Advisor

Annie Walters-Academic Advisor/Disability Coordinator

Sussy Ferraz—Financial Aid Associate

Sara McGuire-Budget/Finance Manager and Veteran's Coordinator

Rose Lynch-Instructional Support Center Coordinator

Standard V

Team Chair-Dr. Marianne Van Deursen, Provost and VP of Academic Affairs

Dr. Lori Antonelli-Professor of Education

Adam Kyle—Teaching Administrator/Precision Agriculture

Dr. Lisa Stoll-Director of Academic Technology Services

Adediji Anderinsole-Senior Adjunct Chemistry

Jeanette Phillips-Executive Administrative Assistant-Academics

Standard VI

Team Chair-Barbara Pratt, VP of Finance and Operations

Marilyn Brooks-Lewis, Associate Professor, Accounting and Business

Kenneth Bovasso-Purchasing Manager

AJ Lacomba, Chief Technology Officer

Michael Walsh-Facilities Management

Eileen Barto-Purchasing Technician/Receiving

Standard VII

Team Chair-Samir Elbassiouny, Executive Director of Advancement

Dr. Jennifer Harrison, Professor, Sociology

Eve Azar, VP for Corporate and Continuing Education

Sarah Van Horn, Senior Exec. Administrative Assist to President/Board of Trustees

Michele Guarriello, Accounts Payable/Payroll Technician

Facilitating Data/Draft Reports

The college has already begun using a Canvas course as the document shell for the sharing of information, drafts, and as a temporary depository for evidence. Final versions of these materials will be copied to the MSCHE portal for the Visiting Team.

Lines of Inquiry

As part of the Self-Study process, WCCC is to identify lines of inquiry that will help guide our working groups in their focus on compliance within each standard. These are as follows:

Standard 1

How effectively do the college's mission and goals align with the evolving higher educational needs of the Warren County region?

What specifically has the College learned from the 2022-2025 strategic plan outcomes that will inform the approach and strategies for the next strategic plan?

What specific external factors may impact the College as it addresses its new plan and how does the WCCC intend to meet these challenges?

Standard 2

How well do the college's policies and procedures ensure that the college meets its overall mission?

How effectively has the College adapted to changes in the state and federal regulatory environment over the past several years?

Where are areas of greatest concern for the College in the future with changes in the regulatory atmosphere and how is the college positioned to adapt to change?

Standard 3

To what extent do the programs that we offer serve the needs of our community?

How well has the college pivoted its programs and services, particularly post-COVID, to meet changing demographic, community education and workforce needs?

How well has the College changed the classroom and on-line learning experience to adjust to changes in student learning strategies, particularly post-COVID?

Standard 4

How well do the student academic support programs enable students to achieve their personal academic goals?

To what extent has the institution been able to achieve additional student engagement in the post-COVID environment?

To what extent can the college leverage technology to promote additional student success?

Standard 5

To what extent has the college pivoted its assessment processes to make them more meaningful to determining future strategic directions?

To what extent has the college refined its assessment processes to make them more meaningful and effectively inform future strategic direction?

To what extent is the assessment culture embedded in non-academic activities of the campus?

Standard 6

How effectively is the college utilizing its financial resources to achieve its strategic planning goals and its infrastructure needs?

To what extent have the new state of NJ accountability measures provided both positive and negative impacts on the college campus?

To what extent is the college addressing on-going and planned facilities, infrastructure and technology needs and opportunities?

Standard 7

To what extent does the college governance structure support the mission and goals of the College?

To what extent is the College preparing for the next generation of College leaders?

How effectively is the leadership of the College preparing for likely changes in the higher education landscape in New Jersey?

Organization of the Final Self-Study Report

Report Chapters

The tentative organization of the Self-Study Report is as follows:

- Cover Page
- Certification Page
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Executive Summary
- Requirements of Affiliation
- Standard I
- Standard II
- Standard II
- Standard IV
- Standard V
- Standard VI
- Standard VII
- Summary of Recommendations
- Summary of Abbreviations
- Compliance Report (Separate Document/Information)

The report will be organized by standards with the evidence inventory uploaded into the MSCHE portal under the applicable standards. Because some evidence appears in multiple standards, the College will load them under each Standard.

Chapter Layout

(Sample using Standard II):

Standard II-Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and define hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

Overview (Bold, Underscore)

These should be 1-2 paragraphs describing how the Standard is met by WCCC.

Discussion and Analysis (Bold, Underscore)

This section will contain the documented evidence on how WCCC is addressing the relevant elements of this standard. Depending on the Standard, this portion of the document may be 7-10 pages in length.

--Subheadings will be used to separate key topics in **bold** using bullet points. For example:

- **Commitment to Academic Freedom (Standard II, Criteria 1)**

--Data charts will be inserted as appropriate

--Referenced documents will reference the document inventory

Please make sure to address all relevant criteria under the standard, even if it is to just reference the evidence inventory.

Key Accomplishments

Focus on relative accomplishments achieved since the last Self-Study (especially achievements in the post-COVID period). In some cases, achievements prior to COVID may no longer be relevant. Use bullet points for each key accomplishment.

Evidence

Include references to policies, studies or material that demonstrate the College compliance with that criterion. In some places, charts may provide clarity or additional information. When using charts, number the chart for the chapter and then the figure. “As Figure II-3 indicates...”

Future Challenges and Opportunities

(Think of this as some of the issues the college may be faced with in the future or items left undone. If there are already plans to address this, mention those too.)

Recommendations(s)

(Think of this as a possible action plan that we may want to incorporate into the strategic plan)

Evidence Inventory

Any documents that the college references will be found in the document inventory on the Middle States portal. For example. Standard II Criteria1 focuses on academic freedom. The College would upload documents related to Academic Freedom into the II.1 section under the portal.

Submission Progress: 0%
0 of 54

Uploaded Evidence Library

Upload Report 0/1

Evidence Inventory URLs 0/5

Additional Documents

Standards

I. Mission and Goals 0/4

II. Ethics and Integrity 0/9

III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience 0/8

II. Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

A candidate or accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

II.1 Criterion is Complete

1. a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights;

This criterion is not relevant for my institution

[Upload Files](#) Or drop files [Add From Library](#)

Add notes here...

In the text, the author would reference any document parenthetically using the Standard and Criteria number in bold as follows:

(Academic Freedom policy-Evidence II.1)

(Article IV Academic Freedom WCC Contract -Evidence II.1)

In the text, we might mention this as:

WCCC has a policy on Academic Freedom (**Academic Freedom policy-Evidence II.1**). This commitment is also reflected in the WCC Faculty Contract under Article IV (**Article IV Academic Freedom WCC Contract -Evidence II.1**).

References for Documents Used More than Once

a) Documents under more than one criterion in a Standard

There may be cases where a document can refer to more than one criterion in a Standard. If that is the case, just reference the original reference in that Standard. So, for example, Standard I.1 calls for a clearly defined Mission and Goals. This is contained in the Strategic Plan (**Strategic Plan-Evidence I.1**), but it also can apply to Standard I.2, which requires that Institutional Goals be reasonable and realistic. In this case, again reference the Strategic Plan (**Strategic Plan Evidence I.1**), using the criteria number of the document where it is first mentioned. No document should have more than one evidence number in any standard.

b) Documents Used in Multiple Standards

Some documents will appear as evidence in more than one standard. In this case, the document will be numbered separately under each standard. Going back to the example on the Strategic Plan. This document is referenced under both Standard I.1 and Standard VI.3. In this case, under Standard I it would be referenced as (**Strategic Plan-Evidence I.1**), while in Standard VI.3, it would be referenced as (**Strategic Plan-Evidence VI-3**). While this sounds confusing, this will help our facilitator upload information into the MSCHE portal. It will also help the evaluators, who are often assigned a particular standard and therefore will look for all the documentation under their standard and not cross-reference other standards.

c) Large Documents

For the convenience of the reviewers, WCCC will upload relevant pages or policies, rather than referencing the policy manual itself. (Example, rather than referencing Policy XXX in the policy manual, the college will copy and paste that policy into a separate document, so that Team members do not have to flip through hundreds of manual pages.

In the case of documents available only in electronic format (such as the Catalog), the College will reference the College Catalog, URL, the Working group should reference the appropriate page numbers in the evidence inventory. (2024-25 College catalog, page __).

Editorial Style and Format

Editorial Guidelines

The following general language and reference guidelines should be observed for the final Self-Study process:

- Use active voice instead of passive voice!
- Use third person (the students, the faculty, the administration) rather than first person (I, you, we)

- Use the plural “they” instead of he/she
- Refer to positions and offices, rather than names of individuals.
- Refer to the college as: WCCC, the College (capital C) or Warren County Community College
- Capitalize the first letters of important words in area/office names: Academic Affairs, Student Services, Campus Operations
- Use capital B and T for Board of Trustees
- Academic disciplines (for example, science, history, mathematics) are all lower-case words. The exception is English.
- Acronyms should be written out with the first usage, followed by the acronym itself: Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE); use acronym only after the first usage. A separate page will be included with acronyms used throughout the document.
- Use the naming convention for the Evidence Inventory (see prior section). If something is to be included that does not comport with the Evidence Inventory, please reach out to the Team Co-Chairs or Facilitator to discuss.
- Use italics for the title of any book or periodical or article.
- Use quotation marks for a direct quotation.
- Subheadings capitalize first letter and first letter of each noun only.
- Write out all numbers from ten to zero not 10 to 0.
- Always hyphenate Self-Study; use capitalization as shown; also capitalize Steering Committee
- Use commas between all elements in a series using the Oxford comma style.
- Avoid the use of semi-colons, contractions, pretentious word choice, wordiness.
- Remember that “data are.” Datum is the singular.

Formatting Guidelines for Working Group Reports

The facilitator will set up templates for each teams report to help standardize the presentation. The following formatting guidelines should be used when preparing the report chapters:

File Type:	All reports should be in MS Word; standalone tables can be in MS Excel
Font	Use Times New Roman 12-point font
Headings	Chapter Titles should be all upper case/bold and centered. Sections titles should be bold, underscored, and right justified.
Margins	Top, Bottom, Left and Right Margins are 1.0.”
Paragraph	Fully justify text in paragraphs.
Spacing	Submit documents in single space. Double space after headings and paragraphs; do not indent paragraphs.
Tables	Excel tables within text should be centered on the page using Times New Roman 11-point font. Working groups can forward charts to the facilitator and she will add them.
Lists	Use bullets instead of letters and numbers. Use the solid circle (•) bullet format setting in MSWord.
Pagination	Number pages by section (example under Standard II, pages are II-1, II-2, II-3, II-4, etc.) Page numbers should be contained in a “footer,” right justified, in 12-point Times New Roman font.
Submission	Post report drafts under your Standard under the Middle States Steering Committee Group under My Warren; Marked as “Draft” <u>with date</u> in “header” right justified.

Evidence Inventory Depository

The Evidence inventory will be housed in Canvas under the MSCHE 2027 course. Some materials have already been uploaded to this course.

Self-Study Timeline

Date Due	Activity	Responsible
<i>Note most dates represent an anticipated "Complete By" Date)</i>		
<u>2024</u>		
9/11/2024	Brief Board of Trustees on the MSCHE Process	CC
10/14/2024	MSCHE Kick-Off with Staff at In-Service Session	CC
11/4/2024	Survey Employees for Interest in MSCHE Process	CC
12/20/2024	Finalize Working Group Teams	CC
<u>2025</u>		
1/15/2025	Draft SSD Shared with Steering Committee	CC
1/31/2025	Working Groups review SSD	WG
2/11/2025	SSD Reviewed by the Board of Trustees	CC
2/14/2025	SSD Uploaded to MSCHE	CC
2/77/2025	Working Group Meeting (In-Service)	WG
3/30/2025	Steering Committee Meeting	SC
4/24/2025	Working Group Meeting	WG
5/29/2025	Team Chairs summary of work completed and information needs	TC
6/17/2025	Steering Committee Meeting Reviews Chair reports	SC
By 9/11/2025	MSCHE Feedback Provided to SC/WG	CC
9/25/2025	Steering Committee Meeting	WG
10/24/2025	Working Group Meeting	WG
12/1/2025	Team Chairs submit updates to Steering Committee	TC
12/9/2025	Update of status to BOT Operations Committee	CC
<u>2026</u>		
1/22/2026	First Draft Provided SC with additional information needed	SC
2/26/2026	Working Group Meeting	WG
3/27/2026	Working Group Meeting	WG
4/23/2026	Steering Committee Meeting	SC
5/28/2026	Teams Chairs Provide Draft Chapters to Steering Committee	TC
6/16/2026	Steering Committee Reviews Chapter Drafts	SC
Summer 2026	Second Draft is worked on	CC
By 9/10/2026	Second Draft provided to SC and WGs	CC
9/24/2026	SC and WG Provide feedback	SC/WG
by 10/15/2026	Draft #3 Provided to Community, BOT & Team Chair	CC
by 11/19/2026	Team Chair Visit	CC
by 12/10/2026	Final Meeting all Committees	SC

2027	Final Draft Provided to Community for Comment/Final Revisions	CC
by 1/15/2027		
by 1/22/2027	Final Report and Documents to be Uploaded to MSCHE	F
4/4/2027	Possible Team Visit	

CC= Co-Chairs; SC = Steering Committee; WG= Working Groups; F=Facilitator

Communication Plan

- College Employees

The College has established a Canvas course for all participants on the Steering Committee and working groups to house drafts and documents. The remaining college employees will be added as observer members of this course.

The Course already has been created and some of the Evidence Inventory has already been uploaded to this location. College staff will eventually locate final documents from the Canvas site to the MSCHE site.

- Students and External Stakeholders

The College will establish and Middle States page on its new website (that will be implemented by mid-February). This will include information about the process and include basic MSCHE documents, the approved Self-Study Design Document, schedules and information and the final report.

- Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has been receiving reports on the Self-Study process. There was an initial kick-off introduction at the September 11, 2024, meeting. MSCHE updates are included at each Board meeting. The Board approved this Self-Study Design at its February 11, 2024, meeting.

Evaluation Team Profile

Ideally, at least some team members will have familiarity with the challenges and opportunities inherent to a small community college environment, particularly one in a relatively rural setting. WCCC's size enables the College to provide individualized services to students and to collaborate closely with one another to address and facilitate student needs. At the same time, the College's size also presents some fairly significant limitations. WCCC does not have depth or breadth of faculty, employees, or facilities to provide the comprehensive services routinely offered at other institutions (for example, we cannot focus on non-instructional issues such as expanded auxiliary services or athletics). With only 55 full-time employees, WCCC does not have the layered levels of bureaucracy and formal leadership that exist at many colleges. The College must continually prioritize limited resources to meet the instructional goals of students and that ability to pivot has been a characteristic of WCCC over the past 20 years. In terms of specifics:

- **Team Chair:** WCCC would prefer a team chair who has significant expertise with small community colleges, preferably someone who has served in a chief executive role. We would like an individual who understands that employees at small colleges wear multiple hats and have varied responsibilities in comparison to peers at other colleges.
- **Team Members:** Because the College is primarily a transfer institution, we would again look to members of the community college sector with similar demographics. It is the College hope that team members will also understand a small two-year college located in a more rural area.
- **Peer, Aspirant, and Competitor Institutions:** As a public community college in New Jersey, Warren's peers and competitors would be its fellow NJ community colleges as the colleges all share in the same state funding pool.

- **Major Programs by Enrollment**

As the data below indicate, WCCC’s largest programs at the college are geared for transfer students. The fall 2024 matriculated students by program are:

Transfer Programs	Matriculated Students
AA Liberal Arts (including Nursing Intent):	413
AS Business	129
AS Biology/General Science	76
AS Computer Science	41
AS Criminal Justice	35
Specialty Programs	
Unmanned Aerial Programs, AAS and Cert.	43
Individually Accredited Programs	
AS Nursing (ACEN)	31
AAS Medical Assisting (CAAHP)	25

WCCC has few one-year certificate students (most are in the UAS Drone Pilot program). In almost all other cases, students tend to earn certificates jointly with a two-year program. In addition, the College has a large dual enrollment program at six high schools in the state.

Final Comments

Thank you to Dr. Terence Peavy and Dr. Ryan Hartnett for assistance in the preparation of the Self-Study design process. We look forward to making enhancements in the Design Document as we continue the College’s journey through the Self-Study process.



President

Dr. William J. Austin, Jr.

MSCHE Steering Committee

Co-Chairs

Barbara Pratt, VP of Finance and Operations

Dr. Simone Patterson, Dean of Learning

Members

Samir Elbassiouny, Executive Director of Advancement

Susan Howey, Professor of Mathematics

Joseph LaBarbera, Dean of Accountability

Ivory Luke, Director of Retention Strategies and EOF

Mindy Marinelli, Student Accounts Manager/Data Analyst

Dr. Marianne Van Deursen, Provost and VP of Academic Affairs

Sytyra Ware, HR Director and Title IX Coordinator

Dr. Allison Witucki, Institutional Researcher

Facilitators

Sarah Lutz, Executive Administrative Assistant

Alexis Russo, Admin. Assistant, Financial Aid and Marketing

Warren County Community College Board of Trustees

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Neveah Bruck, Alumni Trustee (Non-Voting)

Dr. William Austin, President (Non-Voting, Ex. Officio)