CHAPTER 8. NJIT STUDENT ADMISSION AND RETENTION

STANDARD ADDRESSED: This chapter addresses Standard 8 of the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*: Student Admission and Retention.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The first element of NJIT's mission, as New Jersey's science and technology research university, is excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education, preparing students for productive careers and amplifying their potential for lifelong personal and professional growth. At NJIT, admission is associated with the following processes: educational outreach to the broader community; recognition of the complexities associated with the university's commitment to diversity in an urban setting; efficient application and acceptance procedures; provision of financial aid; clear policies with respect to transfer from other institutions; informed advisement; and provision of other timely and effective student support services. Each is important to the achievement of NJIT's educational mission. NJIT seeks to attract students to careers related to science and technology and to provide a comprehensive environment that will guide them to the successful completion of their studies, prepared to commence productive professional careers in their chosen field.

INTRODUCTION: Adhering to the institutional assessment framework defined in the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, NJIT admits students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

NJIT is an equity-driven, retention-intensive university. By tradition and desire, the university provides educational opportunities for a broadly diverse student population; by intention and design, the university prepares its graduates for positions of leadership as professionals and citizens. Achieving the combined goals of diversity and professionalism—admitting a broad range of students into majors that are challenging—remains a central concern of undergraduate education. In 2002, NJIT held a retention rate of 80% for first-time, full-time first year (FTFTF) students registering for their sophomore year, a rate that held constant in 2007. In 2010, that rate was 81%. Between 2002 to 2010, the retention rate has risen to 85% and has not fallen below 80%. Holding these retention rates has taken a concerted effort. In 2002, the NJIT graduation rate was 45%. In 2007, due to equally concentrated effort, that rate rose to 54% and has held relatively steady since that time. While admissions standards, judged by SAT scores, have remained constant—with average scores ranging from 590 to 608 in SAT Mathematics and 520 to 546 in SAT Critical Reading—college readiness remains a challenge in both its behavioral and cognitive aspects.

To ensure a clear understanding of the complexities of educating students in fields requiring advanced mathematics, science, and language skills, on February 3, 2011, President Altenkirch created a Task Force on Undergraduate Retention and Graduation. The Task Force was charged with examining recent national findings on college completion rates, benchmarking NJIT's graduation rate, and identifying strategies to improve that rate. The final report of the Task Force was submitted on May 15, 2011; the report included a vision, strategies, tactics, and measures designed to increase the graduation rate for the state's sole public institution devoted to advanced instruction and research in the applied sciences and technology. The report, along with efforts from 2002 to the present, substantiates that NJIT applies similar methodologies to the assessment of educational effectiveness as it applies to the assessment of institutional effectiveness. (An analysis of the Task Force is provided in Chapter 13.)
NJIT ADMISSION GOALS AND CHALLENGES: During the first half of the period from fall 2002 through fall 2010, the number of applications remained constant with small variations between 2,550 and 2,600 undergraduate students. In the second half of this period there was a very dramatic growth in the number of applications reaching 4,398 in 2010. The percentage of women applicants grew over this period from a low of 20.1% in 2002 to a high of 27.4% in 2010. The acceptance rate fluctuates, but shows a significant upward trend over this period. The FTFTF yield, the percentage of acceptances resulting in enrollment of a FTFTF student, dropped rather dramatically in the last two years of this period. The FTFTF enrollment shows very healthy growth with some volatility. The percentage of women enrolling as FTFTF has also increased.

Evolving from its earlier status as an engineering college (a topic analyzed in Chapter 1), NJIT is now a comprehensive post-secondary institution recognized by US News & World Report’s Annual Guide to America’s Best Colleges as a top-tier national research university offering bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. NJIT is now ranked 138 among the nation’s best national universities. Every year for the past five years, NJIT has increased its ranking on this widely-read assessment of the nation’s colleges and universities.

These rankings are a result of the university’s strategic priority to develop and offer programs in engineering, architecture, science and liberal arts, computing, and management that will attract, retain, and graduate a diverse student body. Over the past decade, NJIT has focused on recruiting and supporting undergraduate and graduate populations consistent with this aim. Among the strategic priorities set out in the Strategic Plan, 2010-2015 is to be nationally recognized for attracting high achieving students and faculty from diverse populations. Specific targets include the following: securing an overall enrollment of 11,000; recruiting a diverse mix of undergraduates reflective as possible of the demographics of New Jersey and at least 25% women; ensuring an increase in the middle 50th percentile for enrolled FTFTF from 480-580 for SAT Critical Reading to 500-600 and from 550-650 for SAT Mathematics to 570-670; maintaining a minimum of 15% Dorman Honors Scholars and 15% Educational Opportunity Program participants in the first-year class; and achieving a FTFTF retention rate of 86% and a graduation rate of 60%. As these targets are pursued, the university has remained committed to maintain its pursuit of excellence in the delivery of undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education. (An analysis of Strategic Plan, 2010-2015 is presented in Chapter 7.)

NJIT’s commitment to educating a diverse student population in science and technology has earned uncommon honors. NJIT’s rankings for 2011 reflect its commitment to diversity, quality of education, and social responsibility. Its diversity was reflected in the U.S. News & World Report’s 2012 Annual Guide to America’s Best Colleges where it ranked as 3rd in the nation for most international students. Further, Diverse Issues in Higher Education featured NJIT among the Top 100 Degree Producers for 2011 for awarding undergraduate and graduate degrees to minority students. In particular, for undergraduate degrees, NJIT ranked 21st in engineering, 27th in architecture, and 29th in engineering technology among African-American degree recipients; 8th in engineering technology, 13th in architecture, and 14th in computer and information sciences among Asian-American recipients; 6th in engineering technology, 15th in computer and information sciences, 18th in engineering, and 21st in architecture among Hispanic recipients; 15th in computer science, 22nd in architecture, 25th in engineering, and 29th in engineering technology among all minority undergraduate degree recipients. For graduate degrees, NJIT ranked 4th in engineering and 6th in engineering technologies among African-American master’s recipients; 5th in engineering technologies, 19th in engineering, 25th in architecture, 27th in mathematics and statistics among Asian-American recipients; 3rd in engineering technologies and 17th in engineering among Hispanic recipients; and 5th in engineering technology, 17th in engineering, 21st in mathematics and statistics, and 48th in architecture for all minority master’s
degree recipients. The *U.S. News & World Report’s 2012 Annual Guide to America’s Best Colleges* also recognized NJIT’s commitment to the quality of education, where it was ranked by guidance counselors at the nation’s top high schools as 124th. In addition, NJIT’s Newark College of Engineering ranked 82nd among engineering schools with doctoral programs and the School of Management ranked among the 261 best undergraduate business programs. *Forbes* magazine ranked NJIT among its 650 best colleges, 202 among research universities, and 157 among colleges in the Northeast. The *Princeton Review* listed NJIT among its Best 373 Colleges for 2011. Other noteworthy rankings reflected that NJIT’s academic programming is informed by market realities: The *Bloomberg Businessweek* survey ranked NJIT in the top 10 percent nationally for return on investment and classified it as one of four higher education “best buys” in New Jersey. Payscale.com ranked NJIT fourth among state universities for salary potential, both at the entry-level and mid-career. In the area of social responsibility, the *Princeton Review* ranked NJIT among the most environmentally responsible in the *Review’s Guide to 311 Green Colleges*, while the Corporation for National and Community Service named NJIT to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for the second year in 2011.

The natural tensions among NJIT’s aspirations to increase enrollment, diversity, and academic quality have required difficult decisions in recent years owing in no small part to dramatic decreases in the state’s financial support for the university, a topic analyzed in Chapter 3. Managing the economically challenging times that NJIT is facing—along with other post-secondary institutions in New Jersey and across the nation—has been complicated by a substantial outmigration of students from the state. Overwhelmingly, NJIT applicants are from New Jersey, yet the number of New Jersey high school students indicating an interest in STEM disciplines is declining in both absolute number and percentage. In 2010 college-bound seniors report issued by the College Board, student surveys indicate that only 6% of students are interested in studying engineering. The 2010 *Report of the Governor’s Task Force on Higher Education* found that, in the fall of 2008, 31,510 first-year students in four-year degree-granting institutions who graduated in the previous 12 months migrated from New Jersey. Only 4,167 first-year students came from another state to attend a four-year college in New Jersey; therefore, there was a net outmigration of 27,343 students. New Jersey can no longer ignore this is a loss of resources and talent, the *Report* argued.

To meet these challenges, NJIT has created and implemented a carefully designed recruitment plan to fulfill its educational mission.

**ADMISSION STANDARDS:** The general academic standards for the admission of first year, full-time students have not varied substantially since 2002. The major criteria for admissions at NJIT are a minimum SAT composite of 1050, or ACT composite of 23, an academic record placing the applicant in the top 25% of his/her graduating class (or approximately a 3.0 GPA); and three or four years of mathematics as appropriate for the major. With few exceptions the admission standards do not vary substantially among majors.

In May 2006 NJIT engaged the consulting firm of Noel Levitz to advise the university on its enrollment management organizational structure and strategies. The report suggested that the marketing and communications support systems were appropriate for identifying the message and image of NJIT in developing publications, in placing advertising, and in providing web support. Supported by such findings, the Enrollment Management Committee (EMC), comprised of key academic and administrative staff, continues to meet monthly to discuss and coordinate prospective student recruitment strategy. The EMC is a significant entity in assessing the effectiveness of existing recruitment campaigns. Committee members provide guidance and advisement on recruitment tactics and processes for both undergraduate and graduate student recruitment. They consult on web page design, content for printed marketing materials, and
media placement for advertising communications. White Whale Web Services, a consulting team, was retained by NJIT to design the new university website. The updated site effectively communicates the NJIT message while engaging viewers in the university’s culture. The site also appeals to out-of-state students.

The size and profile of NJIT’s entering classes are initially proposed by the Office of Admissions and Vice President for Academic and Student Services and are subsequently discussed and reviewed by the deans and the Provost. Important factors that come into play are current enrollments, degree program capacity, scholarship budgets, campus infrastructures (such as classrooms, laboratories, and residential space) and instructional capacity, including faculty and instructional staff. While the admission standards are reviewed each year with deans, these standards have not varied significantly over the past decade.

In terms of student performance, the Office of Admissions maintains awareness of the performance of students in the student cohorts through reports issued by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. (The program review process is analyzed in Chapter 14.)

UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT: The profile of the first-time full-time undergraduate population has become increasingly competitive. Although students accepted to the Albert Dorman Honors College are required to have a minimum 1250 combined SAT score, the average SAT combined score for the fall Dorman 2010 class was 1335. There has also been an increase in the Advanced Placement (AP) and college credit courses first-year students receive. In fall 2010, 65% of Honors College first-year students received advanced credits as compared to the 54% of the fall 2008 Honors College first-year class.

Students who have not been admitted as honors students are placed using SAT scores and high school transcripts. Students with potential weaknesses are placed into lower level preparation courses before being allowed to take first-year classes, a process that has been reviewed by the Task Force on Retention and Graduation. Institutional Research and Planning has undertaken detailed analysis to identify factors that drive student retention and factors that place students at-risk for graduation. These studies, many presented at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals, establish the importance of student academic preparation, academic performance, and student persistence in the first year to sophomore year.

UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT: NJIT pursues multiple strategies to overcome growth challenges and achieve its recruitment and diversity goals. Maintaining a minimum 15% enrollment of Dorman Honors Scholars, with concurrent maintenance and improvements in the SAT scores of FTFTF students, is achieved through the Albert Dorman Honors College Strategic Plan, 2008-2012. The Honors College growth target of 600 students has been exceeded, and a steady number of honors students will offer an opportunity to ensure academic quality.

NJIT has also had remarkable success in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and Aptitude to Succeed (APT) project. Established at NJIT in 1968, EOP admits educationally and economically disadvantaged New Jersey students to full-time study. These are students whose records do not meet NJIT admission profiles in some respects but who are judged likely, with some form of intervention, to succeed at NJIT. EOP students are provided financial and academic assistance to meet the challenges of a rigorous academic environment. APT, a program that began at NJIT in 2005, admits students with composite SAT scores generally lower than regularly admitted students but with good high school records. Early APT cohorts have achieved higher GPAs and have been retained at higher rates than regularly admitted students. It is clear that APT broadens opportunities for underprepared groups by better identifying students likely to
succeed than SAT scores alone. NJIT's success with students from underrepresented groups has been recognized in various forums including *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, which in 2009 ranked NJIT 11th in the nation in graduation of minority engineers.

NJIT is deploying improved technology to support improvements in admissions. The Enrollment Management component of Banner Information Technology, analyzed in Chapters 1 and 5, allows targeted marketing campaigns and rotating web feature stories about students, alumni, and faculty. Traditional print advertising is no longer seen as an efficient and effective means of attracting students.

Maintaining and increasing financial aid is also an important factor in increasing and attracting students to NJIT. Scholarships have doubled in the period from 1998 through 2007. Financial awards have been competitive with those of other public benchmark institutions. In the fall of 2011, NJIT disbursed $58M in financial aid.

The documented efforts to maintain high levels of safety on campus have mitigated many of the concerns of potential students and their families regarding crime. The NJIT reputation for campus safety is excellent as students indicate in satisfaction surveys.

The Office of University Admissions is well aware that the demographics of New Jersey and the Northeast United States indicate a period of limited growth of high school graduates wishing to major in areas integral to the mission of NJIT. For this reason, the undergraduate headcount is expected to grow modestly beyond its current size.

**GRADUATE RECRUITMENT:** Graduate student enrollment has declined over the past five years, with 2,824 students enrolled in 2010. Increasing the graduate student enrollment from the current 31% of total enrollment to 37% is a critical component of attaining the overall enrollment goals established in the *Strategic Plan, 2010-2015*.

NJIT traditionally draws a large percentage of its graduate student population from outside of the United States; hence, international recruiting plays a major role in the formation of the university’s overall student body. In previous years, student demand far outstripped the university’s ability to accept students, and no international recruitment strategy was needed. The university had a large number of well-qualified applicants and could be very selective in its admission process. This applicant pool substantially shifted after the events of September 11, 2001. Visa restrictions have tightened, leading to fewer international students applying to US colleges and universities.

Recent enrollment trends indicate that these numbers are nevertheless rising. Targeted scholarships are used to recruit international students. Graduate students are eligible for the Masters Fellowship, which provides $2000 per semester per student. Past efforts in the area of international student recruitment include agency-sponsored overseas recruiting trips, and individual faculty members have recruited in their home countries, primarily India and China, for targeted recruiting. At the present time, the university is implementing a coherent, long-term strategy for international student recruitment. NJIT has recently entered into an agreement with *IDP Education*, a company that has counseling centers worldwide, notably in countries in which NJIT recruits international students. In these countries, IDP hosts college fairs to recruit students. A planned pilot program in India and China is under review; if undertaken, the results will be evaluated according to the institutional and student learning assessment programs analyzed in Chapters 7 and 14. Additionally, in response to the rapidly growing and changing market for online degree programs, NJIT began in 2010 to work with *Embanet Compass*.
Knowledge Group—a partner with colleges and universities who have expertise in the not-for-profit online higher education market—to enhance the student experience in three NJIT online graduate programs that demonstrate academic excellence, meet students’ high expectations, and deliver a quality learning experience: the MS in Civil Engineering, and Graduate Certificates in Construction Management and Project Management. The first cohort of students began their studies in the summer of 2011.

New strategies have also been developed to increase enrollment, with emphasis on increasing international students. The new Banner Client Relationship Management system (CRM) allows the more effective management of the graduate student applicant pool. The admissions office projects an increase in the number of GRE names purchased for recruitment purposes. A budget has been set aside for this initiative.

Collaboration with peer technology institutions in other countries is another avenue for the expansion of NJIT’s graduate student population. A successful example documented by MSCHE is the NJIT association with Beijing Technology University, approved in June 25, 2009, following a site review by Mary Ellen Petrisko, Vice President at MSCHE and the NJIT liaison. This program demonstrates that the design and implementation of international programs of high quality are within the capability of the university. Additionally, in August 2011, the MSCHE Executive Committee for Substantive Change included Amity University (located in India), within the scope of the university’s accreditation.

STATEGIES FOR RETENTION: NJIT proactively seeks to retain students. The Center for First Year Students plays a pivotal role in supporting both first-year and transfer students in the successful completion of their first year of study, building a solid foundation for a successful college experience. The center provides a supportive and informative environment that connects first year and transfer students to faculty, staff, and university resources. The center is a clearinghouse for all questions and concerns new students have about academic and social aspects of college during the first year of study. The Center staff offers advice on making students’ first year experience successful and rewarding. To help students transition from high school to college, the center explains academic policies and procedures, offers referrals to campus services, including academic support such as tutoring and supplemental instruction. The center assists first year students to engage the university through the many clubs and social organizations available on campus.

The Center for First-Year Students administers placement exams to incoming first-year students and transfer students to ensure that they are assigned to courses appropriate to their level of preparedness. The Associate Dean works closely with faculty and students to resolve academic concerns or issues and coordinates the first-year seminar and academic advising programs.

All first-year students are assigned a faculty and instructional staff advisor or a professional advisor. In most instances, advisors are assigned from the student’s major department. First-year advisors are specially selected for their sensitivity to the needs of first-year students and are supported by workshops and periodic updates of curriculum revisions provided by the Center for First-Year Students. An advisor from a student’s major department is also assigned to the student.

Retention efforts within academic departments are integral to NJIT’s comprehensive retention effort. The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) offers one model. Two department representatives concentrate full time on advising students. The Student Advisor and Curriculum Coordinator counsels first-year students and sophomores and arranges activities...
including study groups, learning facilitators, and student clubs. The Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies is responsible for undergraduate programs and concentrates on contacts with upper division students and transfer students. Each student meets with an advisor during a three-week interval before registration begins. A comprehensive student handbook with detailed description of the curriculum and procedures is available on the web. To engage students early, the department hosts First Year Student and Transfer Student Receptions, a First Year Student Seminar Course, and an ECE Floor at student residence halls. Students live on the same floor and attend several courses (such as calculus and physics) together, assisting first-year students with college academic work and social life, making connections with faculty, staff and upper-class students. Advising and mentoring continue through the senior year, including a capstone senior design project, internships, and information on employment.

In the fall of 2011, NJIT formed an implementation team for Degree Works, a web-based product that enables students and their advisors to review past, present, and future academic coursework to evaluate progress toward degree completion. Degree Works integrates seamlessly with the Banner Student System utilized by NJIT. The intended outcomes of adoption of this system include immediate access to accurate academic planning information, more efficient advising practices, and better process mapping for curricula changes across colleges. Additionally, the potential for data mining in planning course offerings will facilitate timely completion of degree. The timeline proposed by the team suggests rollout prior to the course registration period for the spring of 2013.

THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM: NJIT's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) offers academic and financial support, as well as career and personal counseling, to first-time, full time students. Support is also offered to transfer students who received educational opportunity funding at their previous institutions and continue to meet their degree program's eligibility requirements. The EOP staff, directed by Lawrence A. Howell, has a long-standing commitment to providing services to students who are ready to accept the challenges of a rigorous university experience. EOP's mission is to provide educational opportunities and improve educational outcomes for populations traditionally underrepresented in mathematics, the natural sciences, engineering, computer and information science, business, architecture, engineering technology, and in the professions related to these fields.

At NJIT, EOP students find enthusiastic administrators and faculty who help to make participation in the program especially rewarding. Among the program's features are the following: financial support that includes a range of grants, loans, and scholarships; an Intensive Pre-first-year Summer Academic Enrichment Program to prepare students for success in their first semester of college; a Winter Inter-session to prepare students for success in their second semester; counseling and academic advisement throughout students' academic careers; undergraduate research experience opportunities which enable undergraduate students to work with faculty on research projects as preparation for graduate school; the Center for Academic and Professional Enrichment (CAPE) to provide tutoring and academic support throughout the students' academic tenure at NJIT; and access to job and internship opportunities through Career Development Services and academic departments.

THE TASK FORCE ON RETENTION AND GRADUATION: The primary method of identifying at-risk undergraduate students is their academic performance. These students may exhibit poor class attendance, lack of engagement in the classroom, and low grades on the mid-term and final exams. During their first year, students with low grades on mid-term exams are given a mid-semester warning by email and letters are also mailed to their homes notifying and encouraging them to take advantage of tutorial services offered at the Center for Academic and Career
Enrichment (CAPE). Through self-identification, students are also encouraged to ask for additional assistance. Professors, too, help in identifying at-risk students, who are directed to meet their academic advisor or go to CAPE for remedial help. Students who fall below a 2.0 GPA for two consecutive semesters or fall below a 1.5 for one semester are placed on Suspension Pending. Key programs that play an important role for student retention include the First Year Orientation Program, the Transfer Transition Program, First Year Seminar, the use of academic advisors, and Early Academic Warning and Monitoring Program. These programs and strategies have contributed to boosting student retention.

To strengthen retention and graduation gained by enrollment management, NJIT has completed a study on graduation and retention requested by NJIT President Robert Altenkirch on February 7, 2010. The Task Force charge was specific: “To be recognized for attracting high achieving students and faculty from diverse populations, we must undertake an analysis of the reasons students withdraw and develop and implement retention tactics. It is the purpose of the Task Force on Undergraduate Retention and Graduation to complete an analysis of undergraduate retention and graduation and to recommend tactics for implementation that will yield improvements on both areas.”

The Task Force, in turn, reported five motions: that students have access to timely and successful completion of an NJIT degree; that for both calculus-based and non-calculus based courses, there will be no more than one 3-credit intervention for underprepared students; that students will be placed through valid test scores and previous educational experience by mid-April (or when such information is available); that NJIT will create a uniform model of advisement with involvement of faculty in professional development; and that all first-year students will take at most 16 credits per semester, with 18 credits as the exception, not the rule.

The Task Force also made four recommendations: that NJIT examine and improve the placement rate of students into credit-bearing courses and develop an evidence-based plan to reduce substantially the remediation rate for first year students; that NJIT create a unified advisement system for undergraduate students; that NJIT continue to contribute to the state’s economic competitiveness by producing professionals who will graduate in a timely fashion and contribute to workforce development; and that the university further strengthen the academic environment at NJIT as demonstrated through retention, improved student achievement, and graduation by permanently establishing a mechanism to examine issues related to retention and graduation under a shared governance structure.

The work of the Task Force serves as further demonstration that NJIT is committed to increasing retention and graduation rates, goals established in the Strategic Plan, 2010-2015 in a timely, responsible manner. All Task Force work was managed and assessed under the ViSTa framework, an indication that strategies of institutional assessment are being implemented to gauge plans for educational effectiveness.

INNOVATION THROUGH LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Concurrent with the work of the Task Force on Retention and Graduation was an initiative implemented in the fall of 2011. Community Connections, an initiative designed to foster communities of learning, is a program designed, coordinated, and assessed by NJIT’s Office of the Provost. As students transition to university life, their experience is more likely to be positive and successful if they gain the support they need. Learning Communities—designed, managed, and assessed under the direction of Associate Provost for Academic Affairs Judith Redling—engage students within a network of faculty, advisors, and peer mentors focused on facilitating this transition and enhancing their learning experience.
The **Learning Community** structure embraces assessment and advisement and creates an environment where students can celebrate a common purpose with integrity and civility. Social networking is used to form teams before the start of their first semester. With the support of team affiliation in their first year, students begin navigation along an academic timeline to graduation. Opportunities for research and service learning projects embedded in this timeline give greater purpose to the educational experience.

The Learning Communities feature peer mentors, sophomore or junior level students who take a leadership role in guiding first-time students. Mentors have identified themselves strongly with their major (i.e. through club activities, co-op experiences, and other levels of professional development) and have established a network of affiliations with the broader NJIT community. They are experienced with team building and are prepared to facilitate the formation of study groups and connect students with faculty and available campus resources (like tutoring and counseling). Peer mentors are typically assigned to about 12 students in a learning community and engage with students online, in select classes, and other group activities. A peer mentor is an important voice of experience and point of contact for communicating questions or concerns.

As part of the assessment of student learning framework analyzed in Chapter 14, the Learning Communities will be measured by their goals: to contribute to first-year retention to the sophomore year; and to contribute to an improved graduation rate. Assessment of the success of the program is based on student achievement in the NJIT Core Competencies, as well as by analysis of affective aspects of student performance such as collaboration, engagement, and tenacity. In the fall of 2011, 265 students, 21 mentors, 9 advisors, 17 instructors, and 10 staff members were involved in learning communities.

**EXTRACURRICULAR RETENTION EFFORTS:** In addition to the approaches described above, beyond the academic orientation there is a rich array of activities that help orient students to community life, student activities on campus and diverse resources to make their experience at NJIT unique. Specifically, broader retention approaches aim to improve the quality of student life. Student input is sought on food services; campus activities, especially weekend activities, have been increased as have the number of student clubs to engage and actively involve students.

**Phi Eta Sigma**, a national honor society for college first-year students, is especially noteworthy for advancement opportunities. All first-year students are eligible to join who have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 at the close of any full-time curricular period during their first year. Phi Eta Sigma is an outward recognition of personal accomplishment and serves as an incentive for continued academic achievement. It provides students the opportunity to meet scholars from all academic disciplines on campus and to join them in promoting academic excellence and campus community service.

**TRANSFER TRANSITIONS:** NJIT has a comprehensive transfer and advisement program. Before the beginning of the fall and spring semesters, transfer students are invited to attend a transfer orientation program. Departmental academic advisors are available for review and awarding of transfer credits and academic advising. Students also have an opportunity to speak with representatives from Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Admissions, EOP, Health Services and International Students offices. NJIT has well defined articulation and joint admissions agreements with community colleges in New Jersey. The joint admissions program allows a student to enroll at a community college and complete the appropriately designated associate degree program. Students can then transfer to NJIT in order to complete their bachelor’s degree.
Admission to NJIT is guaranteed for students who complete their degree and maintain at least a 2.0 GPA. As well, NJIT has a well-defined system to review transfer credit from New Jersey community colleges. Students who transfer to NJIT from any New Jersey county college review the Comprehensive State-wide Transfer Agreement for guidelines concerning transferability of credits from New Jersey public community colleges to NJ public four-year institutions. Credits for international students are evaluated by World Evaluation Services, Inc. A robust web site is maintained for transfer students.

CONCLUSIONS: Working Group 5 was charged to determine compliance with MSCHE Standard 8: Student Admission and Retention. The Working Group found that NJIT had achieved exemplary performance in communicating published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit.

The Working Group found that NJIT had achieved emerging excellence in the following areas: admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and reflect the mission of the institution; admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions; programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution’s qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes at appropriate points; accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including placement testing; and ongoing assessment of student success.

The Working Group found that NJIT had met the following standards: communication of statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, available to prospective students; and accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate, regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds.

STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE: After extensive deliberation on the university’s commitment to admitting and retaining students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with the university’s mission and goals, NJIT has identified the following areas of improvement. These four areas will be integrated into the strategic planning process:

1. NJIT will ensure that each student has a clear path to timely and successful degree completion;
2. NJIT will continue efforts in the spirit of the Task Force on Undergraduate Retention and Graduation to ensure ongoing review and revision of admissions, curricula, advising, and other factors contributing to student satisfaction, engagement, and retention;
3. NJIT will design a centralized, cohesive advisement model to improve coordination among current academic support units in order to enhance retention and graduation;
4. NJIT will investigate the impact of innovative programs on student success in order to enhance best practice.