

# Final Report

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## The Provost's Task Force for Academic Affairs Restructuring

Submitted to  
Elizabeth Davis-Russell  
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# Acknowledgements

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Very importantly, a large thank you is extended to faculty in Arts and Sciences, Education, and Professional Studies, librarians, secretaries, and administrators and professionals who willingly, graciously, and with sincere investment in the research, gave of their time and creativity to participate. The project, in large part, rests on their generosity of time and thought. We also thank Nancy Albro, secretary at SUNY Cortland, for her persistent transcription of the interview tapes.

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Anne Vittoria and Carol Van Der Karr  
Co-Chairs

# Preface

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“Our most significant assumption is that academic reorganization in and of itself will not solve the problems that SUNY Cortland faces.”  
—Academic Reorganization Committee Report (Nov. 1996)

“There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s the way light gets in.”  
—Leonard Cohen, “Anthem,” *The Future*, 1992

The 2005 Final Research Report is unlike others that have preceded it. Its uniqueness resides in the fact that it is based on a year-long qualitative research project and contains thought-provoking and candid narrative of those “in the trenches” at SUNY Cortland. In a word, it is “alive” because it contains the voices of faculty, staff, and administration. In sum, it provides a novel look at the relationship between the individual and the structure of the organization demonstrating how they are inextricably bound and mutually shape one another.

The Task Force for Academic Affairs Restructuring set out to investigate two major issues on the SUNY Cortland campus: improving communication and enhancing interdisciplinary programs and centers. Specifically, the Task Force wanted to elicit and understand participants’ perspectives on, construction of, and experiences with communication (in the multiple ways in which that may be defined) and interdisciplinary centers and programs at the College. This report contains two major sections: 1) Analysis and Narrative of the Participants and 2) Recommendations. All recommendations are grounded in the narrative of the respondents (see Introduction and Methods sections).

Task Force members identified experienced qualitative researchers for the construction of an investigative process that used qualitative research methods supported by a framework of organizational systems theory. The researchers’ purpose was to discover, not declare structural recommendations as they came from individuals at SUNY Cortland who make up the daily fabric and livelihood of the success of the academy. With that in mind, the researchers relentlessly set out to glean an understanding of how full-time faculty, librarians, and administrators/professionals make sense of their worlds *in their own terms* in the context of the two issues of communication and interdisciplinarity within the College.

Two of the underlying premises of the research, that 1) an organization is a living organism and 2) all organizations are anxious, were informed by Bowen Systems Theory (Bowen 1947, see Theory section). Our perspective is succinctly captured in the following explanation by Miller (2004:3) who adapted Bowen Theory to apply to organizations:

An organization is a living organism and aliveness is the active *relationship* of the parts, not the parts themselves. To understand how an organization itself can be anxious, you will need to view it as a living system that is more than the sum of parts, just as we are more than the sum of the cells of our bodies. Like the body,

organizations run on an incredibly complex system of interactions.”

After the researchers concluded the process of developing the research design, conducting focus groups and interviews, and writing the analysis, the Document Reading Group discovered the important quote at the top page 5 in their review of pertinent internal documents on earlier restructuring efforts at SUNY Cortland. While we cannot know precisely what the members of the 1996 Academic Reorganization Committee meant by this comment, we can speculate that it could be a warning against structural reorganization *without* attempting to truly understand the *perspectives* of the people within the organization and the ease and dis-ease of their day-to-day work life. The 1996 Committee’s “significant assumption” underscores the importance of the design and approach of the Task Force of 2005. We hope that this research project and the resulting recommendations may help to address and uncover what the 1996 Academic Reorganization Committee was prescient in suggesting: that there were unaddressed needs of discovery.

### Reading the Report

We have worked very hard to make the entire document accessible to readers knowing that in order to gain the best understanding of the depth of the inquiry, the basis on which the recommendations were developed, and a picture of the work life of participants, one needs to have a reader-friendly format to encourage the fullest reading of the document as possible.

We have rich material and major themes each containing sub-themes that will provide us with insights into the *multiple constructions of communication* issues across campus as defined by the respondents and significant insights into *structural issues regarding interdisciplinary studies and centers*. While there are several analytic themes which emerged from the data we would like to point out five of particular significance because of their impact on the work life and workplace of faculty, staff, and administrators as they relate to the issues of communication and interdisciplinary centers/programs at SUNY Cortland:

1. Will the *Real Purpose* [of the College] Please Step Forth?
2. “The Conspicuous Gender Hierarchy”
3. Marginalization
4. The Great Divides
5. “Orphans in the Storm”: Interdisciplinary Centers and Programs
6. “*The Swamp*”
7. The Information Paradox

The Report is divided into two sections according to the two issues of investigation, Issue #1: Communication and Issue #2: Interdisciplinary. The document is organized around themes. Each section contains a thematic analysis of the narrative of the respondents followed by recommendations. Each of these areas is divided further in the following order: Arts and Sciences, Librarians, Education and Professional Studies, and Administrators and Professionals.

All recommendations and alternatives for action coming from the Task Force are situated in the narrative of the respondents and the interpretations of that narrative. Very importantly, we feel that the study provides us with a unique window into the workplace and work life of faculty and staff as well as addressing the two aforementioned issues.

### **Additional Comment**

Since over fifty percent of the faculty at SUNY Cortland are part-time, we strongly recommend that a similar study be conducted with this group.

# Introduction

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In spring semester 2004, Provost Elizabeth Davis-Russell appointed the Academic Affairs Restructuring Task Force composed of a representative group of faculty across the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Education, and Professional Studies.

The purpose of the Task Force was to address a specific goal set forth by the Provost based on the Middle States Recommendations Report as follows: “To obtain a structure that provides effective, efficient, and cost-effective functioning.” In short, our charge addressed the question: how do we make our workplace a more effective environment in which to work on a daily basis?

Focusing on two major elements that can contribute to the realization of that goal at SUNY Cortland, the Task Force investigated the following issues:

1. Improving communication (in the multiple ways in which that may be defined) with and among departments, schools, and administration at SUNY Cortland.
2. Enhancing and determining the place and purpose of interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland.

The Task Force was charged with conducting focus groups and interviews with faculty in Arts and Sciences, Education, and Professional Studies, librarians, secretaries, and administrators and professionals; compiling and reviewing major external and internal documents pertaining to Academic Affairs; and, preparing a final report that would describe findings, activities, and recommendations for action. The Task Force based its inquiry on qualitative research methods protocol and sought, to the extent possible, to include a representative group from faculty, staff, and administration in Academic Affairs.

The research was conducted over a period of six months using intensive focus groups, interviews, and document analysis. Our purpose was to gain access to the cultural categories according to which participants interpreted their world within the academy. Specifically, we wanted to elicit and understand participants’ perspectives on, construction of, and experiences with: 1) communication and 2) interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland. The recommendations contained in this report are grounded in the narratives of the respondents and in the interpretations of that narrative. Therefore, readers must move through the document sequentially in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the intimate connection between the narrative analysis and the resulting recommendations.

In the pages that follow, we turn first to a detailed discussion of the research process and the methods used in the study. We move then to a discussion of theoretical concepts informing the analysis which then leads to the heart of the report—the analysis, narrative, and recommendations.

# Methods

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The Task Force for Academic Affairs Restructuring had as its research goal the investigation of two fundamental issues that were included in Provost Elizabeth Davis-Russell's goals from the Middle States Report. They are:

- Issue #1: Improving communication (in the multiple ways that may be defined) within and across departments, units, schools, and administration at SUNY Cortland
- Issue #2: Enhancing the structure and determining the nature and purpose of interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland

## The Research Process

*Conceptualization:* Provost Elizabeth Davis-Russell formed The Provost's Task Force for Academic Affairs Restructuring in the Spring Semester 2004 to investigate goals emanating from the Middle States Report. We began with a very deliberate, systematic process of considering the focus of our study. We felt our commitment was to find out from the stakeholders in the academy what *their* perspectives, ideas, grievances, and suggestions for improvement were on two of the goals set forth in the Middle States Report. To determine which two goals to choose we reflected on two things. First, we asked ourselves what might be one of the most fundamental processes underlying the functioning of an organization and arrived at the structure and process of communication. Second, we asked ourselves what component of the College was most glaringly in need of attention from a structural standpoint and that seemed to us to be interdisciplinary programs and interdisciplinary centers at SUNY Cortland.

## Research Question(s)

### (Issue #1)

What are the conditions of communication (in the multiple ways in which that may be defined) within and across departments, units, schools, and administration at SUNY Cortland? How do we improve communication in its various forms?

### (Issue #2)

What are the nature and purpose of interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland? How do we enhance their structure?

### Qualitative Methods

After considerable discussion, the Task Force decided to conduct the study as a qualitative research project. Even though we realized how much time and energy this would demand our goal was to obtain the richest possible information on the two issues before us. The project has taken a year and a half to complete, from the beginning conceptualization of the project to the collection of data, through the analysis of several hundred pages of transcripts, to completion of the final report.

Qualitative and quantitative methods represent two contrasting sets of intellectual pursuits and frames of thinking. Rather than formally testing an hypothesis, the process by which conceptual descriptions are formulated from data in qualitative science is usually inductive inference and synthesis. The qualitative tradition yields explanations that take us “behind the scenes” to let us glimpse assumptions and classifications that otherwise tend to remain hidden.

Having a distinct tradition of its own, qualitative research endeavors to “generate theoretically informed findings and is empirically based” (Gubrium 1994). The rigor lies in the analytic process which, like quantitative research, proceeds systematically through a series of stages. The theoretical lens from which the researcher approaches the phenomenon, the strategies that the researcher uses to collect or construct data, and the understandings that the researcher has about what might count as relevant or important data in answering the research question are all analytic processes that influence the data.

Our methods included intensive focus groups, interviews, and extant document analysis. Specifically, we wanted to elicit and understand participants’ perspectives on, construction of, and experiences with communication and interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland.

Anne Vittoria, Associate Professor of Sociology, was responsible for data collection, investigation, and analysis of the School of Arts and Sciences, interdisciplinary centers and programs, librarians, and Arts and Sciences secretaries. Carol Van Der Karr, Director of Advisement and Transition, was responsible for data collection, investigation and analysis of the Schools of Education and Professional Studies. Yvonne Murnane, Director of Graduate Studies, and Amy Henderson-Harr, Director of Sponsored Programs, along with the other Documents Reading Group Committee members, Sheila Cohen, David Miller, and Gail Wood, were responsible for examining past documents pertaining to Academic Affairs restructuring.

### Guiding Principles of the Research

- Inclusion: We made special efforts to reach and involve faculty and staff who may never have had the forum, opportunity, or impetus to express their views on the two target issues.
- We considered methodological strategies to maximize the best representation from faculty, staff, and administration at the College.
- Rather than skim the surface and produce a superficial report, our approach has been to gain a measure of depth and rich material (within the constraints of time) from which to do our analysis and bring forth ideas and recommendations. As researchers, we know that the results are only as good as the methods employed to produce them. The choice of methods was made to provide as much content validity as possible.
- And finally, our goal was to find out how faculty/staff interpret and make sense of their world here at Cortland in *their own terms* within the context of Issues #1 and #2, not to impose our template or a series of assumptions to which they were to respond.

### Research Design

We began with the general principle that research designs should follow from research goals. Therefore we chose to use intensive focus groups as the vehicle for collecting data.

*Rationale for Choice of Focus Groups:* Focus Groups is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Morgan and Krueger (1993:263) argue that the advantages of focus groups for investigating complex issues is that “the discussion in focus groups is more than the sum of separate individual interviews because participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other.” Thus, through this *interaction*, we are able to obtain important data on the convergence and divergence of ideas and perspectives among the participants, a particular strength of focus groups according to Carey and Smith (1994).

*Standardization:* There is no consensus about the design of focus groups, but the common approach has been to use a standardized set of questions for the group so as to facilitate comparisons among groups. Our approach was to use a combination of a fixed set of three or four open-ended questions with appropriate probes to address specific issues within the groups. The advantage of a combination of approaches is the ability to be able to compare across groups for part of each discussion while allowing for emergent needs to come from the group at a later point.

*Number:* In most projects, the number of focus groups is approximately four (4) to six (6) groups. Zeller (1993:172) argues that “the typical justification for this range is that the data become saturated and little new information emerges after the first few groups, so that moderators can predict what participants will say even before they say it.”

### Interview Guide

We decided to use an open-ended *Interview Guide* with only three to four major questions, with probes constructed to elicit maximum revelation of how the participants made sense of their work worlds in their *own words*. We believed this was the only way to fully understand how faculty, staff, and administration interpret their day-to-day work life and the issues of communication, interdisciplinary programs, and centers. See appendices for examples of the *Interview Guides* for segmented faculty groups, interdisciplinary centers/programs groups, and women’s studies groups.

Considerable attention was given to construction of questions so as to minimize the imposition of any a priori frameworks on the participants but rather provide the ultimate conditions for ideas to emerge from the group itself.

### Data Production

*Purposive Sample:* Purposive sampling is best used with small numbers of individuals or groups which may be sufficient for understanding human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors, and contexts. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth analysis. Specifically, we used a stratified, snowball sample to: a) illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest; and b) facilitate comparison and identify good interview subjects.

The Task Force decided on a research practice called “segmentation” to create groups that consisted of specific categories of participants. According to Morgan (2004:276), “segmentation offers two basic advantages. First, it builds a comparative dimension into the entire research project, including the data analysis. Second, segmentation facilitates discussions by making the participants more similar to each other.”

We decided that it would be worthwhile to see the divergence and/or convergence in perspectives among three groups depending on longevity at SUNY Cortland: Group I consisted of participants from 1-5 years (this decision was based on possible commonalities among pre-tenured faculty in terms of perspectives, attitudes, and needs); Group II consisted of

participants 6-14 years (this decision was based on those faculty who are tenured and in their middle years at the College); and Group III which consisted of faculty fifteen years and over (this decision was made on the recommendation of a long-time faculty member of the Task Force to capture a mix of experienced senior and near-retirement faculty).

An email letter was sent to every department chair in all three Schools and the Director of Memorial Library asking them to recommend full-time faculty to participate in a segmented focus group based on longevity at the College: 1-5 years, 6-14 years and fifteen years and beyond. A second identical letter (except with no request for segmentation) was sent to every chair in all three Schools requesting participants for the Women's Studies focus group. A third letter (with no request for segmentation) was sent to all secretaries in Arts and Sciences and all directors/coordinators of interdisciplinary programs and centers, with the latter requested to focus on Issue #2. A number of follow-up phone calls were made along with additional email to encourage participation.

*Confidentiality:* For purposes of accuracy and analysis, we chose to tape the group sessions. Participants were provided with an IRB human subject's consent form for granting permission to tape and to assure them of confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used on all informal and formal written materials used in the projects. Tapes were locked in a box in Anne Vittoria's office.

### Sample Characteristics

- **Arts and Sciences, Women's Studies, Librarians, and Secretaries.**

Total: 57 participants

Researcher: Anne Vittoria

Faculty: 48 participants

15 out of 17 Departments from Arts and Sciences had at least one participant in focus groups. These departments were Art and Art History, Biological Sciences, Communication Studies, Economics, English, Geography, Geology, History, Mathematics, Performing Arts, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology/Anthropology.

Segmented Faculty:

1-5 years: 12 participants

6-14 years: 11 participants

15+ years: 10 Participants

Women's Studies: 15 participants

Arts and Sciences secretaries: 5 participants

Librarians: 4 participants

- **Centers and Interdisciplinary Programs**

**Total: 14 participants**

Researcher: Anne Vittoria

Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies	Director (1)
Women's Studies	(included above)
African American Studies	Coordinator (1)
Asian Studies	Coordinator (1)
Jewish Studies	Coordinator (1)
Native American Studies	Coordinators (2)
Center for International Education	Director (1)
International Studies	Coordinator (1)
Center for Aging and Human Services	Director (1)
Human Services Studies	Coordinator (1)
Council Members of the Center	Members (4)

- **Statistics for focus groups of segmented faculty in Arts and Sciences, Women's Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Librarians and Secretaries are as follows:**

Total number of focus groups: 15

Number of participants per group: ranged from 4 participants to 10. Median Number was 7

Length of Focus groups: minimum of 1 ½ hours, maximum 2 hours.  
Median: 1 ¾ hours

- **Education and Professional Studies**

Researcher: Carol Van Der Karr

Education Total: 7 participants

Departments participating were Childhood/Early Childhood, Foundations and

Social Advocacy, Literacy Education, and Educational Administration  
Professional Studies Total: 8 participants

Departments participating were Exercise Science and Sport Studies, Physical Education, and Health

- **Administrators and Professionals**  
Researcher: Carol Van Der Karr

Administrators and Professionals Total: 11 participants

Areas/Divisions participating were Deans, Associate Deans, and Administrators/Professionals

### Tapes/Transcription

Tapes were transcribed by the secretary in the Interdisciplinary Centers Office at SUNY-Cortland. She was instructed to transcribe tapes verbatim and when she had a question about the process she would contact Anne Vittoria, Co-Chair, for clarification.

### Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (cited in Lincoln and Guba 1985:339) describe the constant comparative method as following four distinct stages:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory, and
4. Writing the theory.

Qualitative data analysis is a complex process in which investigators must remain systematically faithful to allowing categories to fit the data, rather than actively creating categories to fit the data. We used the constant comparative method (Strauss 1987; Glaser and Strauss 1967) in this analysis which comes out of *Grounded Theory* developed by Glaser and Strauss which, in turn, evolved out of one of the three main theoretical paradigms in sociology, Symbolic Interaction. In the analysis of data for this project, one piece of data, one statement, one theme were taken and compared to all others that might be similar or different in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between various pieces

of data. The researchers raised questions such as: why is this different from that? Or how are these two related? Since our purpose was to generate knowledge about common perspectives and themes within the day-to-day experience of faculty, staff, and administrators at SUNY Cortland, our process continued with the comparison of each new account and focus group until all had been compared with each other. Thematic analysis and interpretive description are methods that depend on the constant comparative analytic process to develop ways of understanding human phenomenon within the context of everyday life.

We began the analysis by constructing graphics to help organize the material and provide a catalyst to our interpretation. We experimented with several graphic models (hierarchical and circular designs) to help us show relationships, compare and contrast our findings from different constituencies, and come up with the overarching categories. Analysis involved clustering the data into categories which in turn became the basis for the organization and conceptualization of the data. A critical part of the analytic process was the act of categorizing. Patton (1990:406) makes a very important point when he states that “The qualitative analyst’s effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data.” Because we used an inductive analytic approach, all themes and categories emerged out of the data. We were very careful to ground ourselves constantly in the narratives because as Dey (1993:99) reminds us incisively:

These categories, while related to an appropriate analytic context, must also be rooted in relevant empirical material: the analyst moves back and forth between the logical construction and the actual data in a search for meaningful patterns. The meaning of a category is bound up on the one hand with the bits of data to which it is assigned, and on the other hand with the ideas it expresses.

As we moved through the data, comparing and contrasting to the point of saturation of categories, we were mindful of the need to be sensitive to context and be ready to alter or discard categories and consider very carefully the rationale for our categorization. Alternative ways of interpreting and categorizing the data were explored at every turn.

In the tradition of Lofland and Lofland (1996), and Glaser and Strauss (1967) analysis proceeded simultaneously with the collection of data, with the evolving analysis determining the direction of further data collection (Charmaz 1983). Large chunks of time were spent with the data on a regular basis, scanning for connections and beginning, emerging patterns. At this stage rudimentary classification of terms (Charmaz 1983; Strauss 1987) and major subjects of interest began. Transcripts from focus groups and interviews were examined for similarities and themes connecting them as the analysis proceeded. At a second level in the analysis, a more focused direction was developed with regard to the theoretical literature seeking connections with what was emerging through the analytic work. Concepts from the

literature were used as sensitizing concepts to alert us to central issues and ideas. The process then focused on immersion in the transcripts, classifying, and doing definitive coding toward the development of conceptualizations and major and minor themes.

Absorption in the transcripts was vitally important. In the very act of reading them, there is a prompting of corollary thoughts that may produce slightly different nuances of meaning throughout subsequent readings and generate other insights. It is at one and the same time an enlargement and refinement of ideas. Essentially, it involves the analytic process of raising terms to concepts from descriptive statements and codes, all the while remaining close to the data to clarify the analysis and reach a “saturation” of the emergent categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Following Glaser (1965) the analytic process proceeded in a cyclical manner through the next level of elevating terms to concepts, reflecting upon and posing more conceptual questions on a generic level, and making further discoveries and refining concepts through the writing and rewriting process.

# Theoretical Framework

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It is useful to think of structure as part of a system which embodies both structure and process. An effective structure is also an efficient one; however, the opposite is not necessarily so. An effective structure has enough human and material resources to realize operational goals; promotes the growth of human beings; is not deterministic; has enough plasticity/flexibility to adapt to change; is not driven by mindless bureaucracy; and, is premised on and perpetuated by ideas (vision) not on functions alone.

When we first started analyzing the transcripts we had no theory of any kind in mind to “lay over” the narrative, which would be an anathema within qualitative science. As is consistent with analytic work within qualitative methods we were immersed in a process to discover what was emerging from the rich narratives we had collected.

Only *after patterns began to appear from that empirical data* was consideration given to what Herbert Blumer would call “sensitizing concepts,” such as those in Bowen Theory, and sociological theory. These concepts are only tools to help in the fine-grained analysis of data, perhaps helping to foster insights but also to be discarded if not appropriate. There was no a priori choice of theory in which to *fit* the narrative before us. Later on concepts from Bowen theory (discussed below) seemed to be illuminating with regard to what was emerging from the transcripts: a system and people with heightened anxiety.

One very important thing to keep in mind in looking at organizations as anxious systems is to know how the word “anxious” is being used in this framework. In and of itself anxiety is neither functional nor dysfunctional. Anxiety is simply a state of alert, increased readiness to respond which varies significantly among persons in varying contexts. As Miller (2003:24) states:

We can think of it as a state of readiness to do something or other that may or may not be appropriate in response to a threat that may or may not be accurately perceived.

## Conceptual Framework/Theory

### Premises (assumptions):

In this study the model of an organization is always premised on the idea of an organic, dynamic system. Two premises informed our analysis: 1) the sociological proposition that an individual’s statements and description of events are made from a perspective that is a function of her/his position in the organization or group. (Note: certainly, cultural background, social capital, and personality traits are also critical factors in shaping perspective;

however, time and the purpose of this study constrained us from considering those factors within the parameters of the project); and 2) the social-psychological proposition that the organization is not a system of static positions but is, importantly, a network of relations among persons in these positions.

### **“Experience-Near/Experience-Distant” Concepts:**

Within ethnographic research Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) developed what he calls “experience-near and experience-distant” concepts to differentiate between those concepts which are from the verbatim language of the respondents themselves and those concepts developed by the researcher. Specifically, Geertz (1983:57-58) defines these concepts in the following manner:

An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone, an informant, might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another—an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer—employ to forward scientific, philosophical or practical aims and understanding.

Geertz’s framework was an analytic tool we utilized in the development of major themes and throughout the analysis. The significance of his distinction becomes clear throughout the document.

### **Bowen Systems Theory**

The following is from Bowen Systems Theory, Center for Bowen Theory, adapted from Miller (2003).

#### **The Anxious Organization**

All organizations are anxious. From a systems perspective the goal within an effective structure is to pass on less anxiety than you receive. An ineffective system is one where the top levels are under-functioning and the lower levels are over-functioning and absorbing all of the anxiety. Threats come from two sources: external and internal.

We will return to the following ideas in the analysis and conclusion sections of this document.

1. In most organizations, threats to the group arising from external sources are discussed openly.
2. Potential threats to an organization that arise from inside are not necessarily discussed openly, for these tend to destabilize the sense of organizational cohesion. According to Miller (2004:12), “Members of the organization may not be in collective agreement that these threats exist, though they may be discussed incessantly in private huddles.”

### **Symptoms of an Anxious Organization**

*Adapted from Bowen Theory (Miller 2004:16)*

- People taking sides with other people instead of taking stands on issues; forming clusters, coalitions or cliques
- Turf battles; people asserting their territory to the detriment of the organization as a whole; feuding and backstabbing
- Blaming and scapegoating; excessive focus on the shortcomings of particular individuals or departments
- Overwork. People burying themselves in tasks in order to avoid problematic interactions or hoping that increased productivity will somehow solve the problem.
- Conflicting instructions and mixed messages from leadership. Bold new initiatives constantly being announced and then quickly abandoned.
- Distancing; people not saying what they really think in meetings; lack of communication between adversaries; people literally hiding out in their offices and cubicles.
- Heavy turnover; people simply leaving an organization to get away from their anxiety.

As Miller (2003:17) stresses:

All of these reactions serve to contain, discharge, or displace anxiety rather than address the threat provoked by it. The anxiety remains in constant circulation throughout an organization while the actual threats that gave rise to it remain largely unaddressed.

We move now to the heart of the report, the Analysis and Narrative section.

# Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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Former President of the University of Cincinnati and expert on organizational leadership, Warren Bennis, deadly serious yet somewhat in jest (perhaps to make the “medicine go down”), provides us with a view of the dynamics within the academy in his “Laws of Academic Pseudodynamics” as follows (1979:67):

The First Law of Academic Pseudodynamics: Routine work drives out non-routine work, or: how to smother to death all creative planning, all fundamental change in a university—or any institution. The Second Law of Academic Pseudodynamics: Make whatever grand plans you will, you may be sure the unexpected or the trivial will disturb and disrupt them.

## Setting the Context

SUNY Cortland is a complex formal organization and therefore, by definition, an anxious system according to Bowen Systems Theory (1947). There are threats outside and threats inside the organization which raise the level of anxiety at various times and at various nodes throughout the structural system. Heightened levels of anxiety throughout the system individually and collectively contribute to ineffective functioning. Proponents of the Bowen Theory such as Miller (2003) argue that *both* external and internal threats must be identified in order to lessen the heightened levels of anxiety in the system.

Following Miller’s typology we can identify at least three major external threats which are usually talked about openly and tend to unite members of the institution or organization against a common adversary:

- SUNY Cortland’s (and the entire SUNY system’s) struggle for its existence under a conservative New York State Governor and Legislature who have systematically attempted to dismantle the SUNY system. Where once there was sixty percent state support for SUNY schools there is now twenty to thirty percent state support.
- The excessive demands for accountability and therefore assessment in higher education across the country.
- The chronic under-funding of public higher education.

The consequences of this draining of the coffer and lapse of stewardship over the State University of New York are manifold and cannot be addressed in this report. One consequence, however, *is* critical to understanding how the participants in this study make sense

of their work worlds and because it's mention was ubiquitous: **the condition of excessive overwork for most faculty, staff and administrators.**

Having set the larger context we turn to the analysis and results of our investigation of two issues that may have implications for reducing anxiety in the system:

**Issue #1:** Improving communication (in the multiple ways that may be defined) within and across departments, units, schools, and administration at SUNY Cortland.

**Issue #2:** Enhancing the structure and determining the nature and purpose of interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland.

### Issue #1

Improving communication (in the multiple ways that may be defined) within and across departments, units, schools, and administration at SUNY Cortland.

“Organizational democracy,” that is, a style of operating which involves the open sharing of information and the inclusion of relevant constituencies in decisions affecting them, is always on trial in any organization or institution of higher learning. SUNY Cortland is no exception. Effective communication in its instrumental form as the exchange or passing on of information and in its dialogical form as focused on knowing and engaging the other as person and as worker is central to minimizing the levels of anxiety inherent in all organizations.

What then is the nature of communication as both structure and process at the College? What do we need to understand to improve communication and thus reduce anxiety in the system? The analysis of data will be organized as follows:

- I. DISCUSSION of overarching analytic themes and sub-themes with supportive narrative by Arts and Sciences, Librarians, Education and Professional Studies, and Administrators and Professionals.
- II. RECOMMENDATIONS for making the system less anxious through improving/changing structure and process by Arts and Sciences, Librarians, Education and Professional Studies, and Administrators and Professionals.

ARTS AND SCIENCES: FACULTY



The first two narratives below each embody both an ideal and a particular perspective on the “reality” of work life at SUNY Cortland and a third narrative speaks of hope:

*I suppose I have an old-fashioned view of a college. I think there are two essential groups in a college: the students and the faculty who teach them. I think everybody else should make the job of these two groups easier. They should do everything they can to make sure that these two groups are successful. I don't find that sort of atmosphere at the College anymore.\**

—Professor Emeritus. Arts and Sciences

*I'm thinking I have all kinds of ideas about new possibilities for learning, but then I get realistic and say, do you understand how much work it will take for you to pull this off? Cause there is no institutional support. You know it ends up falling on the individual to do extraordinary work to make anything that's supposed to be institutionalized actually happen. That's a big important thread. I hope that one gets through in the report 'cause it's true of everything.*

—Current faculty. Arts and Sciences

*There was that feeling that something new was happening, there was a new direction perhaps insight of a shared sense of invigoration, new jobs, my new job, together onward and upward, very personable. For those groups of new faculty who got to know those people as people will only give them more leeway than some of the older faculty. And maybe some kind of shared vision, shared newness. As we said, energy of newness, but it's also getting to know them as people without having a real record.*

—New faculty reflecting on Provost's Raquette Lake Retreat 2003. Arts and Sciences

**I. WILL THE REAL PURPOSE PLEASE STEP FORTH?  
(experience-distant)**

Consider the following clear articulation which captures a majority of participating faculties' perspectives on what they consider to be a major dilemma at SUNY Cortland:

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\* All narrative quotes throughout are those that best represent the perspectives of a majority of those participating in the particular focus groups except where noted. Participant's quotes are italicized for ease of identification in both narratives and overarching themes.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Arts and Sciences

*It becomes increasingly difficult to communicate the core function of the College which is education—I think that is sort of a difficult message to get. It is a basic lack of understanding about what the purpose of the College is. It just seems that the message is getting mediated through all of these other concerns, about how to socialize on campus. It comes back to the idea of a lack of a writing center on campus—a lack of focus and we get lost in the mess. We had a discussion with the Dean on the idea of devoting all this attention to branding the College and coming up with innovative ways with internships and learning communities to, if you like, distinguish Cortland. It seems like more of the same. It seems like more sort of surface level marketing spin.*

Faculty operates in a kind of “information paradox.” They are inundated, indeed overwhelmed with information, communication of all kinds (some incomplete, some fragmented, some academic spam, all through email or campus mail) and yet they “neither know enough” nor feel they are about the work they came here to do. What they are saying is that so much more of their days is filled with what they do not consider to be the real work of the academy—education and scholarship. One faculty member eloquently puts his deep concern about what we *need to be communicating* in the following manner:

*I mean, it seems to me that there is nothing, nothing more important than us communicating to each other what we do. What we do our research about, what we teach about, everything else is secondary. You know, a lot of the frankly mundane, you know, administrative structural kinds of things can be, are secondary because if we don't have that level of communication that I know what you do and you know what I do, then none of the rest of this is really workable. You know, we have to know each other as scholars before we can really do much else. And again, we haven't gotten very far.*

A primary issue brought up in all the faculty focus groups without exception was what we might refer to as “initiative overkill” and what it communicates about the College to outsiders and to the faculty within the College. A faculty member sums it up in the following:

*There is a recurring problem—to just kind of always go for the surface level. For some reason they're always enthused about taking on new initiatives without adequately funding the initiatives we've already started. They do it over and over again. You have to pick and choose. It's political too. But still they choose. I think this institution had consistently gone with just about everything and anything and the newest fad. We're supposedly embarking on new initiatives in the arts and sciences when we know that we have one that works: the learning communities. Why not just focus on that one? Maybe later we'll be able to move on to giving everybody research experience, giving everybody internships... Everything gets diluted. It's DI-luted.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Arts and Sciences

During the course of the months of focus groups and interviews, a female faculty member spoke of what was her “life blood,” (participation in a women’s literature group) but ironically Women’s Studies was the first thing to go because of time constraints. What makes someone give up their “life blood” consistently? What structurally contributes to this?

A faculty member in the 1-5 year group attributes the “cloudiness of the core function” of the College to the “gradual creeping growth of the administrative center” of American colleges and universities as well as the increase in the “sort of attention and resources devoted to leisure recreation.”

Another faculty member picks up on the thread of the core function and expresses his concerns about how and if we are communicating a clear vision in the following:

*I have a real concern about the lack of communicating a clear vision. And, like, I need leadership and I think the Provost recognizes teaching as intellectual and she understands faculty development as an intellectual enterprise and she’s humane and she plans, but it looks like she’s doing it alone, speaking from my experience at my School. We need vision. We need somebody who can say, here’s what we want to do in one year, five years, six months, tomorrow.*

Another respondent is in agreement:

*I struggle on a day-to-day basis with how to teach students when they don’t have the most basic elements in place. I don’t see much happening to address that. And this recent innovation and talking about doing internships, it just seems to me not to address the issue, not to address that issue. I think that the idea of one grant college-wide to infuse more writing into your courses was deeply symbolic—one grant—that’s lip service to the goal of improving writing.*

and

*I’m often quite amazed at how students really have no idea what the mission of the institution is. And it’s right there in their hands, right? But they really are not clear, for instance, why critical thinking is important or why it should be a value. So not only do I have to teach them how to, but I have to teach them to value it.*

## II. “THE CONSPICUOUS GENDER HIERARCHY.” (experience-near concept)

Women faculty find themselves in a culture at SUNY Cortland which they define as masculinist in nature where communication is dominated by a patriarchal discourse which is invisible throughout campus. One faculty member described this discourse and the resulting climate it creates as a reason the College may have lost or have trouble retaining female faculty. She comments:

*My concern is about retaining faculty. We have new faculty and administrators that are women who are leaving or have left. And so for the remaining women it's like the hand writing on the wall. You look at other institutions, say the New York Times. They have done things so that sexual harassment, racial harassment, a sense of intimidation, anything that is less than respect— well, there will be consequences.*

Other women faculty members reacted to the preceding comments in the following ways, lending support to the articulated concerns:

*There is a lot of disrespect in the Miller Building, particularly in one or two of the offices. It is flabbergasting in terms of racial and sexual harassment and the attitude of some of the middle management. Significant problems and one that is costly to the college because of losing women faculty and staff because of the work overload but also the atmosphere for women here.*

and

*We have to worry about setting up Women's Studies as a major which we haven't been able to do. We do not have the communication or atmosphere such that if there is sexual harassment, racial harassment, sense of intimidation or for anything that is less than respectful there will be consequences for the people doing it.*

The idea of the “female voice” needing to be a substantial part of and a presence within various communication venues at SUNY Cortland came through loud and clear. These venues ranged from the all-college level in Faculty Senate to various interdisciplinary committees in Arts and Sciences to intra-departmental communication. Consider the following comment from women faculty and staff:

*(one of the reasons for getting on Faculty Senate) is that I'm definitely pursuing this 'ole boy's club and it makes me furious, absolutely furious. I know women on this campus are very busy. I am involved in care giving at the moment but in spite of that, I'm trying to keep my hand in, in addition to other things because I think this is important.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Arts and Sciences

And a comment on intra-departmental communication from a new, tenure-track faculty member:

*The female's voice should be taken into consideration because my communication with several male professors in my department was problematic. A lot of animosity from one male and it caused a lot of destruction in my life. I was constantly thinking, what shall I do?*

Interestingly, the person who expressed these sentiments was the only female in this particular focus group. One of the males responded to her comments with the argument that the treatment she received may have been a result of other factors such as cohort differences rather than, or in addition to gender. Of course it is possible to rebut the male's position through the recognition of the socialization of older cohorts of men at an historical time when sexist views were unchallenged in the larger culture.

And finally, an example from a female participant as she addresses the makeup of committees from her perspective and what that communicates:

*We have this incredible situation with committees, personnel committees and subdivision committees that sometimes are entirely made up of men, white men at that. You know they can't look at those things and not think there's not an issue here. The sexism is institutionalized.*

These comments along with more detailed responses on this theme in the Women's Studies section attest to a "chilly climate" existing at SUNY Cortland.

### III. MARGINALIZATION (*experience-distant concept*)

What are the faculty and staff marginalized *from*? Faculty in Arts and Science are marginalized: 1) from their work as scholars and teachers, and 2) from "their place" in the academy. Those who participated in the focus groups feel marginalized in terms of the climate of "anti-intellectualism," particularly on the level of the lack of understanding from administrators as to what faculty actually *do* in the academy and their not honoring the intellectual as prime in an institution of higher learning. Lack of resources and support for programs along with assessment that is short on meaning, the enormous amount of busy work and secretarial work contribute to the feelings of marginalization. There is a "disincentive for initiatives."

The following comments from faculty are representative of the majority of participants in Arts and Sciences:

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*We are overburdened with work—more regulations, committee work that relates to accreditation and mandates from SUNY administration. The paperwork, constant evaluation of programs and it doesn't come from a good place, from bottom up, but from top down and there is structurally a problem because there's more part-time people who don't have committee responsibilities.*

and

*The department chair's workload is absolutely, in my view, out of control. If one is expected to not really pull away from teaching, it's oppressive, it's absolutely oppressive. There are also good things to it as well but the list of things to do grows exponentially during the semester.*

***“This Would be a Great Institution if it Weren't for the Faculty.” (experience-near concept)***

Faculty perspectives on how they are regarded by “administration” range in varying degrees of negativity by cohorts. The administration *communicates* through their behavior and attitudes that the “dang faculty need to be whipped into line; that the faculty “don't have their act together and that they are recalcitrant.” One respondent summed it up in the following way: “Their (administration's) actions and attitudes communicate that they view us as high school teachers without the expense.” The 6-14 year cohort and the fifteen years and over cohort view the administration as treating them in an “unprofessional manner.” As one participant commented:

*There is the annoying sense that some folks have that we can't be trusted to do what we do. That is insulting and I hear a lot of people complaining about it. We're supposed to be professionals and can be trusted with programs.*

and

*I have, over the years, certainly since becoming Chair, seen this kind of disdainful attitude toward faculty that comes out of certain administrative areas. Not all by any means. I certainly would not say all. But some areas. And it's consistent. It's, you know, we've got to whip the faculty into line. We can't do this because they'll take advantage of us. They won't do what they're supposed to do.*

The 6-14 cohort as a whole are wary of the administration, though not totally disillusioned, with guarded optimism; whereas the fifteen years and over group vary in their views from expressing a mixture of clear disillusionment to guarded hope to disengagement. Interest-

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ingly enough, it seems that the youngest cohort, 1-5 years, and the oldest cohort, fifteen years and over, share one thing. They resort to disengagement or selective disengagement from a number of things other than teaching and/or trying to do research. The reasons for each group's disengagement is different and worth commenting upon particularly as it affects the system as a whole as well as the individual faculty member.

Let's backtrack for a moment and ask how we might come to understand marginalization as it relates to the basic needs of the individual as part of the system (structure and process). We can argue that individuals have different needs based on: 1) being taken seriously and treated with respect, 2) being recognized for what they do and treated as professionals, and 3) having a representative voice in decisions affecting them on various levels within the academic institution.

The consequences of the lack of satisfaction of those needs from all levels (faculty, staff, middle administration, upper administration) can lead to suspicion, disillusionment and disengagement. Equally important from a systems perspective it:

- Depletes the system of the talents of its members
- Contributes to an anxious system
- Contributes to over-functioning and under-functioning
- Results in a loss of vital energy, values, and ideas that could infuse the system

Two examples of what some felt was "an example of complete disdain for the faculty" were the printed schedule issue and the duplicating center issue. One faculty member was careful to point out in the following that blaming the administration as a general umbrella term was not justified, however:

*When we moved into the Banner system for recording grades and getting rid of the paper grade the conversation at Academic Affairs Council was of the order of how are we going to get the locked up and recalcitrant faculty to do this. Then their own data showed them that right off the bat they had eighty percent compliance first semester out of the gate. That looked pretty darn good to me, but their take on it was what are we gonna do about those recalcitrant faculty. I think there's a second half, however, because there's a time problem also. I think dialogue takes time.*

And from another faculty member:

*I feel like innovation has this enormous price attached to it, and we could make it easier.*

#### IV. THE GREAT DIVIDES

Throughout the faculty and staff discussion on communication at SUNY Cortland, there was a consistent thread: the experience of a separation (imposed or endemic) based on hierarchy, disciplinary boundaries, cohort differences, lack of trust, a fear factor, and suspicion. First of all, faculty across all groups identified an all-important *knowledge gap* that pervades all work and deliberations at Cortland. One faculty member summed it up succinctly in the following:

*I think it is a matter of the different divisions, schools, departments not understanding what others do! I think that makes a lot of different administrative offices not fully understand what we do and what we need to do it well. And we probably don't fully understand, for example, the Registrar's office. I think it's gotta be very difficult. I think there are a set of concerns there and the need for efficiency that sometimes people on the faculty can be less concerned about. Yet, that is not our main concern, we're not particularly concerned about whether Banner can or can't do something.. We want to do our curriculum. We want to be intellectually productive, but we can't deny that there's a valid concern on the other side. And I know that the people in Student Affairs often feel that they're not understood in what they have to do. And what they do it with is not necessarily understood by faculty.*

In addition to the lack of communication about, and understanding of others' domains and work demands across the College, faculty spoke of specific structural and cultural divides and their consequences.

##### A. Administration and Faculty

The perception of “top-down” communication from those at administrative levels in the College to the faculty are captured by the following comments:

*The problem is a top-down communication from the Miller Building and a problem getting material up the communication line. The communication is in the form of directives coming from the top. For example, the manner in which assessment has been communicated to us from above makes it meaningless. It is de-contextualized from specific department needs when in fact the process could be meaningful and we could learn something from it if done in our own way.*

With regard to the administration or people in the Miller Building:

*There's just an enormous feeling of hostility that I sense from faculty with regard to the Miller Building and frankly, from what I gather, from the administration toward*

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*the faculty. There seems to be a lack of respect both ways—more than I have seen in other organizations.*

and

*We don't actually know each other so how can we actually communicate? In order to communicate you have to know each other, because, trust is sometimes built by the simple fact of communicating with each other about personal things. I have no problem with the senior officers, the Provost and the President. I call them up, we have meetings, we talked about communication this summer.*

Several times throughout the group discussion there was a delineation about where the actual problems with communication existed. Faculty tended to identify the structural problem with communicating in the following way:

*I would place it as kind of that level right under the Vice Presidents and Associate Vice Presidents and the people who report to them because that's where I have observed it the most. I think Elizabeth has actually tried to walk the line between being faculty-friendly and yet not losing the support of that level under her. I understand that's a difficult job cause I have seen her in action trying to mediate.*

and

*The Registrar is respected, competent and works very hard—but there is an attitude. She's in a difficult position but there needs to be more dialogue.*

and

*I hear from others who attend meetings that you 'wouldn't believe the comments about faculty' and there were no faculty there. I think it's quite widespread.*

and

*Faculty committees might also be considered administration because they become part of the process of having things happen. I have observed a bit of "us" and "them" mentality. It seems as though there's some history to that effect as though some of the ways that the committees have been organized are to kind of cause a check and balance between interests of the different groups and that's frankly always baffled me. I come you know from ten years in a corporate situation where every, I mean my idea was that everybody is a part of the result, everybody ought to have an eye on the bottom line and if we don't survive economically, or in terms of marketing or anything then none of us has a job. So I look at myself as part of the administration as well. So that's why it got a little more complex for me.*

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One of the specific areas that emerged in the discussions that was disturbing to some participants centered on the experience of NCATE accreditation and the problem of miscommunication and filtered communication that some feel dominated the process:

*I think there was this fear on the part of the Provost and the President, that somehow we wouldn't get NCATE accreditation if we didn't let the "experts" run with it and they didn't listen to others. The Teacher Education Council (TEC) was a non-democratic, not really a Teacher Education Council. I really feel that one of the costs of this accreditation push and the mountains of paperwork and assessment data and all these things that are now demanded of us are pulling us away from our true mission of really educating our students.*

And from another faculty perspective:

*There were big problems with NCATE and the entire process of reviewing the program. Our program was unique. We have this one semester in which much was done. We prized it and the students loved it. As it turned out we had to give that up while we were trying to get that approved. It just didn't fit into the pot which was required by the State and in the final analysis the President and the Provost did not push and support the uniqueness in our program in Albany. The former President at that time was committed to what the State wanted and in the end I think it was the President's decision not to let us pass to the State for a waiver.*

Faculty have felt that the Provost's "ability or willingness to understand some of the major issues that are being faced" by Arts and Sciences faculty dealing with student placement in elementary and secondary education is a problem. As one faculty member commented:

*If you delegate being informed about something so important as NCATE and then rely on one translation, you may not be getting accurate information.*

In conclusion, another faculty member's representative comments about the "divides" being on a more global level within the College are indicated in the following:

*We probably need to be fair and acknowledge there is a two-way street and that there are just, you know, schisms, compartmentalizations on the campus. I think it is not just with us and the administration that we're against the administration. I think it's more of an expansive problem that really reflects the deep divisions in the institution and departmentalization and what we think we should do.*

Bowen Systems Theory argues that when there is "under-functioning" at the upper levels and "over-functioning" on the lower levels of the organization there is a heightened level of

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anxiousness absorbed by the lower levels of the system. The following quote from faculty addresses this issue in the following way:

*When there's a problem of competence, it may not even be competence, it may be with the way that an administrative office defines its job or delimits the definition of it's job. Then it becomes a community responsibility to solve the problem. I have seen it over and over again. That we're drawn in to try and solve the problems that are basically administrative problems, that ought to be solved by somebody who is paid to solve those problems. Why are we volunteering our time on top of everything we have to do, to solve the problem that should be done by somebody who's capable.*

The Provost as well as Academic Computing Services were notable exceptions to faculties' concern over lack of meaningful dialogue between faculty and administrative units. With regard to communication as *dialogical*, the Provost's efforts were singled out in the following:

*I think the Provost has done a wonderful job with the newer faculty in terms of building rapport. I think the newer cohort of faculty have a better understanding of her philosophy, what her vision is. And frankly, I don't feel at risk talking with the Provost about things.*

and

*I think with the Provost, you're getting much more direct communication, information. You know what her intent is. They're talking about building graduate programs. That's something she is very interested in. She wants to put curricular programs into a department. It's very clear she's being up front about this. I think it's very clear.*

With regard to Academic Computing Services the following narrative praises the efforts of the new Director and others:

*Communication is also dialogue and one of the places that we are doing better is in Academic Computing. We're finding more dialogue. They've actually got a group together, which for years we asked for that and we were told it wasn't practical. It's so much better to sit down and discuss things. It doesn't mean that we don't have unpleasant surprises from time to time or that things that we don't agree with will happen. But at least there's some dialogue and I think we need to do even more of that. I have been pleased to see some of that but if we're short in any place it's in dialogue. We need more dialogue on campus, more listening, more exchange of ideas like that. Tremendously helpful.*

Another faculty member went on to comment that:

*A change in Directors brought this about. Previously, all they wanted was to send out information, more information—didn't have time to discuss it.*

#### **B. Cohort Differences**

Important cohort differences between the new faculty (1-5 years) and senior faculty (fifteen years and over) were evident and in several instances had powerful social consequences for communication within various departments and within the general college environment. In some departments faculty spoke of the “historically constant pressure between new and old faculty with chairs caught in the middle.” The following comments are reflective of a number of new faculty with the most notable exception being a faculty participant from the School of Education who happened to participate in one of the Arts and Sciences groups. There is a fear factor:

*The upshot is that people are afraid to speak up and the tradition has been to not talk about these things. People are simply unwilling to open their voice.*

and

*One problem is the informal culture and not a formal one. So you and I talk and commiserate and scream a lot and figure it out between us, but there's nothing formal. So it makes for confusion on the part of a new person. But it is always difficult.*

and

*It's hard for me to know who to talk to. It's a lot easier for me to just stay in my office.”*

The metaphor below summarizes what several new faculty have experienced in terms of communication in the form of lack of mentoring:

*I have felt left at sea as a new faculty.*

And the following extended comment from another new faculty member about internal departmental concerns with communication as well as a generalized concern about the campus atmosphere expresses a powerful anxiety:

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### Overarching Themes - Arts and Sciences

*(with regard to communication) what worries me the most is the ability to express ideas and concerns without fear of reprisal. I find it pretty jagged at this point. I had my tenure directly or indirectly threatened four times during the course of a semester by voicing opinions/alternatives. I spent this last summer figuring out how I'm gonna navigate—and my tendency is to bury myself in my other work. I'm not so sure this is restricted to my department either. There's not really an atmosphere that promotes frank discussion. It is very concerning...has to do a little with the divide between cohorts and it made it pretty unpleasant for new faculty particularly to express their ideas. There seems to be a lack of support both ways. More than I have seen in other organizations.*

This statement is representative of the struggle for voice among the new faculty who participated in this study as well as several tenured faculty. Low trust levels and the risk of becoming vulnerable within one's own department are realities in some departments. The reaction to perceived threats is the tendency to “bury myself in my other work” as expressed by faculty both within the new faculty groups and with some in tenured groups—one of the symptoms of an anxious organization or collective (Miller 2004; Bowen 1947).

One faculty member put it this way:

*There is a culture of niceness here at SUNY Cortland. Conflict is something that makes people very uncomfortable.*

Another in the 6-14 group speaks to not “having voice” in the following:

*It's just not possible to be honest and open as an individual, just not to be critical, even in a constructive way. There is a fear of people speaking their mind.*

and

*I think one of the issues is that I think of what we do as communication is simply receiving information, passing on information. We don't do very much of what Ruth (pseudonym) is talking about, really knowing one another in any way. Some people like it that way and others don't. So it's a matter of what different people want out of the workplace. For me, communication also has the aspect of accuracy. You need to be clear so that other people get the message you intended them to get and vice versa. There is great slippage in that.*

In contrast, the efforts of the Provost are praised by new faculty in the following:

*The Provost started from day one by the way orientations were done. As much as we hated it, the amount of time taken up at Raquette Lake, we'd sit and talk and*

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*she'd walk in, sit down and say, ask us what our problems are. The older faculty don't seem to have had that opportunity.*

When asked what assumptions faculty came away with after the impromptu talks with the Provost one participant commented: "That she actually wanted to hear our feedback. That it would actually make a difference."

Another new faculty speaks quite eloquently of the promise engendered in those early talks with the Provost and others at Raquette Lake:

*There was that feeling that something new was happening, there was a new direction perhaps insight, of a shared sense of invigoration, new jobs, my new job, together, onward and upward, very personable. For those groups of new faculty who got to know those people as people will only give them more leeway than some of the older faculty. And maybe some kind of shared vision, shared newness. As we said, energy of newness, but it's also getting to know them as people without having a real record.*

### ARTS AND SCIENCES: SECRETARIES

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*—We are, I believe, a dedicated group.*

The discussion of communication took two basic forms for the Arts and Sciences secretaries who participated in the study: 1) communication as dialogue among themselves and with students and faculty, and 2) communication technology and their perspective that technology had made their work life and workplace more complex and more arduous in several ways. Consider the following comments:

*The big positive about my job is that I love the people that I work with. It's a real team approach. Everybody gets along very well. It's the intellectual atmosphere. I can take courses. I can talk about what I am learning. I am totally included in any parties that the faculty has.*

and

*I've been in the same office for over twenty years, so I think that's a positive. We like the students, we like the faculty, we like to gather as a group.*

While expressing an affinity with their work and with the students and faculty in their department, secretaries also expressed that their voices are not heard within the hierarchy when it comes to decision-making:

*I think for the most part, we're not asked our view when certain decisions are made. One of the big ones was the movement of the duplicating center. That's like a major function of what we need to do. We take part of our time to walk to the duplicating center. It seemed almost like it was almost an underhanded type of thing to get this moved and that might have been a secluded circumstance.*

and

*There is an apology out there. The person that gave the apology realizes that communication about things like that are very important. But it's the kind of thing, even though he apologized and he knew he was wrong, that stuff can happen, does happen and should not have. There's an on-going discussion group right now.*

### I. A SPACE OF THEIR OWN

The first issue that secretaries talked about was their need for a place and time to get away from the pressuring pace of daily work if only for a few minutes. They also spoke of the need to affiliate as a group for support and for the potential of collectively organizing to have their voice heard on issues of crucial importance to them. In this sense space means a time and place to be heard and to speak with those in like positions. The following are representative of the group's thoughts:

*I think that we as a secretarial group need a place to go where we can just go and veg out for a minute. Because we are front line, first person, hectic, and sometimes I think we just need to get out. And it's frowned upon if we don't go during our break time, fifteen minutes. Hey, sometimes most of us don't get a chance to take a break. So if we can have, maybe a place to go other than a very busy food area where we're interrupted again.*

and

*Getting together as a group doesn't happen very often unless we're doing Banner training. One of the positive things I would like to see happen, that I have written down as development—staff development, I don't know what you want to call it. Other areas do it and other schools do it—having a lot of gatherings for their employees to get together for a celebration or just for a retreat, whatever they may want to call that, but I think that academic secretarial staff from this area need*

*some kind of motivational thing for us. And I am not talking about something that will take us away for another half day where we come back and feel stressed, but just a chance to release, maybe vent a little bit with some of the types of ideas that we are doing.*

and

*We come up with ideas and then other secretaries all trade. We never get a chance and I would love to see a mentoring program, like the new secretaries coming up or even knowing what a file is and how they're set up. To share.*

## II. "IT REALLY PULLS AGAINST YOUR SPIRIT": THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

A confluence of factors has created a much more stressful work environment for secretaries according to the participants in this study. They elaborated on how technology has increased dramatically over the last several years along with the increase in students, and multi-tasking which has become for secretaries the modus operandi of their work life. The following comments attest to this confluence and its consequences:

*Technology portion has increased greatly. And with being the front-line person, having people coming in the door, and having to have also that technical mode about you which takes many functions to accomplish, the thought process creates great stress because you have to remember where you left off, in the middle of something. Or you're asking somebody who really needs to be waited on to wait a minute and that really pulls against your spirit I think. It's just all the technology, things that have to happen that are very constant and very technical.*

and

*The voice mail system has created another whole job for us too. Learning how to use it and showing it to others. The whole telephone system, setting up mailboxes and messages and such. There's very little training once they plop those phones on our desk. There's very little training and I have asked about having something offered to us during the break—either a refresher or give us the short cuts and tips. And I hate the music! I hate the music! I'm embarrassed. It's a hokey, hoe-down kind of music and it isn't anything that is of any caliber at all. There are definite problems with that voice mail system.*

And the volume of students:

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### Overarching Themes - Arts and Sciences

*More students. So we are dealing with definitely more volume because of more students. Four or five times more adjuncts. Wonderful people but they don't know the system and they have a student load. We spend a lot of time training our students to work for us, so it's part of every supervisor's job. It's very time-consuming training people and setting up their hours with lab attendance. Every day you are getting something new from the Banner system. Another report. A report that we are responsible for.*

Note the imagery conjured up by one participant in her description of multi-tasking and the irony of a day off equaling “punishment”:

*Negatives are the increasing volume of traffic flow and the duties within. The daily interruptions of things. The Banner system training—every time we turn it on, actually, I'm learning something new. Thank goodness we have good training for that offered by the Registrar's office. There's just an awful lot of knowledge and keeping up with that system and how it works. There's lots more tools than we had before. We do a lot of multi-tasking. You're on the phone, you're directing somebody with your hand, you're doing an eye movement to someone over there all at the same time and I find as I've gotten older that multi-tasking also requires post-it notes. The fact that you don't have a break, or get a break, or leave, if you do, you almost pay for it when you come back. It's a punishment for a day off. No matter what you are doing on your day off it is a punishment almost to come back to the volume and the problems that were created while you were gone.*

The need for collective identity and time and place structured into their schedule for “letting off steam” was of critical importance to all secretaries. Demands of the system and structural imperatives of information and communication technologies weigh significantly on the infrastructure of SUNY Cortland, the secretarial work force.

### III. “HOLDING A STUDENT'S HAND”

One of the most significant aspects of secretarial participants' narrative was their dedication to assisting students. This assistance covers navigating the College bureaucracy, academic concerns, and many times social aspects of student life at SUNY Cortland. Secretaries' intentions with, and actions on behalf of students is the embodiment of what we have conceptualized as providing “enabling” functions. These are the functions within the organization structure that allow for higher order functions to take place.

*Amazingly enough, many, many students do not have a clue about how to register. How to look up what a course says. Generally, some of them, basically, cannot*

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*read. I mean they cannot understand what they're supposed to do. It comes down to that, reading things to students explaining what it means. They have trouble with technology. And they don't understand advisement. The majority do not. They don't have a clue how to go about finding their advisor. You have to hold their hand a lot, I find. We've been hand-holding too much. I think we've led them to believe that someone, somewhere will get you through it. We over-do that.*

and

*Advisement probably doesn't ask the right questions. I don't want lay any trip on anyone in particular. I think it can be fixed. There is mis-advisement at the community college level in the matriculation agreement and how they transfer to here.*

Throughout, the members of the secretaries focus group were clear that while working with students was requiring more and more time (partly due to increases in technology), assisting them was very rewarding as evidenced below:

*I still feel really rewarded when I do help them. I really, really do. I do a lot of work with transfer students who get misadvised. One of the biggest issues is transfer students coming in that are thinking about finishing in four years in our two and it really is not possible.*

#### IV. THE ART AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNICATION

When secretaries were asked what their perspectives were on the responsibility between faculty and staff in terms of communication and the meeting of deadlines, they were thoughtful in their responses. Implicit in their narratives are the critical factors of laying a foundation of trust, consistent vigilance to fostering understanding, and a dogged determination. The following are representative of the group:

*To try to get a professor, who never does anything, communicate to that person, how important it is, [there] has to be a lot of understanding going on.*

and

*It's gotta be both ways. It's gotta go back and forth. I think a lot of my faculty cannot conceptualize how long it takes to get something done. Like especially the searches.*

and

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*You mean when someone's given you something that they want done? Well, I have my little, a time line for example. This is the date that it's come in, this is the time the person has asked for it to be finished. In between there, you're just working toward that goal to get that completed. And the communication starts right from the get-go asking all the right questions so that in the end you can give them what they need, and by the time that they need it. So, every time someone asks something, there's a check list in your head, well I need to know this and I need to know that. If you gather that information, that's good communication and trying to meet the deadlines.*

and

*Understanding what they want. Understanding if they don't tell you or just knowing the job. And then, you as secretary have to decide where to draw the line.*

When pressed as to how responsible secretaries are for the faculty getting something done, candor prevails:

*I feel that I take care of the student. I want to kill the faculty, but so far I haven't. But, I will hand it to the faculty member and say, please take a look at this and sign it and give it back to me. And that means please don't leave my desk. And I have a mean look on while I'm doing that and there's only a couple, but I feel the obligation is there to the student.*

and

*I would hope that most faculty if they have a job for you to do, that they trust you as a professional person, as a professional secretary. Somebody who knows their job for the most part and would listen to suggestions and pay attention if we have a question and not just get frustrated with you and ask you to get that list and don't ask me any more. I like to be involved in other words and I like to know, to be informed.*

#### LIBRARIANS



*One important thing I want to mention that I don't think people are aware of: maybe librarians are the only ones on campus who are actually being asked to teach a credit course with no compensation whatever. This year we said no. It seems ridiculous that we can't even get paid for one credit. Librarians do not get summers off. We do not have the academic year. We work 12 months of the year so we're here all the time. And this includes the CAP instructors who are full-time teaching faculty. They do not have summers off. They do not have the time during the week off. They are expected to be there 5 days a week, the hours that the library is open. I think that in itself is a little overwhelming any way you look at the entire picture.*

An enlightening discussion took place within the librarians focus group, particularly with regard to what they believe to be the pervasive non-communication of the nature of the library as physical entity and the status of librarians in the academic community at the College. Two of the three major themes reveal details of librarians' perspectives on these matters.

#### **I. "THE BUILDING IS FOR SERVICE"**

##### **A. A physical space for students**

According to focus group members, there has been a "tremendous" number of students in the building this past year with more questions for the reference desk and the "level of questions has been better." It's a "different level of questions" than before. Two librarians comment that:

*It was very, very clear that the students looked at us as a physical space to come and study or use computers, or use printers. They were very concerned about the physical space.*

and

*The factors that bring students into the library are the use of computers because academic computing has closed its labs at a certain hour because of theft. Also, if you don't have any paper or toner in the printer in your room, then you go to the library—use the library's facilities which is okay because we are happy to have them in there.*

#### B. Communication Channels

One of the first things mentioned in the focus group was communication difficulties regarding what is considered a significant emergency on the campus, a power outage. On two different occasions, the University Police Department had not contacted the Director of the library directly about the power outage when the library had to be closed.

One participant explains:

*Now, the building is for service. It is imperative that she (the Director) be contacted when anything goes on in the building that is amiss. No one ever contacted her. The problem is that I don't believe there is any procedure. This hasn't happened before but now something's happening there and I don't know what it is. The Director of Memorial Library feels that she should be contacted anytime anything is not normal in the building, because there's so many people in the building. It's so big, you have to have a procedure. I am glad you pulled this together for communication because the Director is very actively concerned about the safety of the building and the safety of the people in it. For the major safety organization not to let her know about that, something's going on. Now, I don't know if it was a breakdown in University Police Department, if it was physical plant, I don't know.*

and

*For a lot of building administrators, the building is not part of the service, so whoever is the building administrator for Van Hoesen, you know, they may need to know that the water is off, but it's not going to affect everybody that walks in the door. Whereas, that building (Memorial Library) is part of the service. That's a whole different animal. We're open an enormous number of hours which puts the building in a service orientation.*

#### C. The Communication/Knowledge Gap

Communication across the campus, across all levels, about the evolving nature of libraries was a point of significant concern to librarians as noted in the following:

*I think one thing that is not being communicated across the board, and particularly to faculty, is what the physical space of the library used to be. It is not what it is now and it's not what it's going to be in the future. It used to be that libraries were all about, were storage houses. You know, they might as well be a storage shed. It was all about books and the books that were there or the journals that were there.*

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### Overarching Themes - Librarians

*And much, much more our role has become a place where people can come, can collaborate and cooperate and use resources and technology in conjunction and do activities. I mean the Teaching Materials Center is a great example of a move from a resource-based space to an activity-based space.*

and

*Also the Book Mark—the idea is to get people into the building to cooperate and collaborate and share ideas. And that really changes the physical space you need. It's something people are going to have to understand and come to terms with it because so many things are available electronically—people want access to stuff at a distance, that the physical library is becoming much more about teaching and learning, collaborating, working with technology.*

In many ways the Library as service and structural entity at SUNY Cortland is an island world. According to the perspective of librarians, Memorial Library is critically essential to the functioning of academic life yet suffering from a limited understanding of its place and potentiality by the larger College community. Librarians are clear in what they regard as their irreplaceable position within the continuum of learning at SUNY Cortland and resolute in their desire to articulate the service function of the Library as requisite for student learning and faculty scholarship.

Central to librarians' comments was the chasm between the services of the Library and general knowledge about the maximum ways to benefit from its resources. Consider the following comments:

*One thing we always have problems with. The faculty doesn't really know what we have in that library. They give assignments and they really don't know that the references are not there, that the resources aren't there. Well, the faculty member doesn't understand that our resources are on the Internet now, with these data bases and our catalog.*

and

*Communicate the fact that we're trying to maximize the resources and the services that we have. And that we make certain collection development decisions based on the fact of some things fit, where the things that faculty want us to buy, fit or don't fit with everything that we have.*

## II. "OUT OF THE LOOP": MARGINALIZATION

To a person, the group of librarians was adamant about what they view as a substantial *communication gap* between themselves and the rest of the campus regarding their status and role at the College. Even though they are faculty, the following comments reveal their dilemma:

*We aren't perceived as faculty. I feel like I am sort of out of the loop on certain things. Nobody knows that we're faculty because last semester I had several Education professors nominate me for a service award. But it was a professional award and I was ineligible. Some people just don't see us as professors and I don't understand that.*

and

*And also, you know, some of it's structural. It's so funny because there's these service awards—there's one for faculty, there's one for professionals. There isn't one for librarians.*

and

*Structurally, the library is a department with no chair and no dean really to report to. The director kind of acts as the chair and her boss kind of acts as the dean but because they aren't privy to the normal chair and dean things, how are they supposed to advise you about certain processes?*

The foregoing comments speak to a vital distinction in the work life of librarians: the difference in running the Library as a business and the needs and demands of librarians as faculty. One respondent, in an administrative position at Memorial Library, offers the following perspective on the quandary of often opposing expectations for librarians:

*Operating a library involves economic, procedural, policy and program issues plus the running of the library itself. The library is unique and some librarians are concerned with research but not concerned with procedures. While others are concerned with service and procedures but not with research. Yet, they are expected to do it all and offer the service. They are part of a weird evaluation process. With regard to DSI last year, librarians were at a significant disadvantage because of the pool into which they were put. It reflects the 'partition thinking' from above and makes them feel marginalized. It affects recruitment and retention of librarians. How do they balance research with being a librarian? Promotion criteria for faculty and librarians is very different and you cannot run a library on a ten-month schedule because of the loss of continuity. It is a rare librarian who can be devoted to scholarship and to the functions they have in the library.*

We can conclude overall that there is a clear “structural lag” between the vision and advancement of the Library itself as a service (which is beginning to happen) and the recognition and status of librarians with little relief from a persistent role conflict.

#### **Disabling Communication Structures: “This isn’t just about books.”**

The following comments suggest librarians’ frustration at getting their needs across. They take the opportunity to seek advocates outside of their own domain in the following:

*I’ve noticed that the deans don’t really know what some of our problems are. And even more than that—the chairs and even faculty don’t even know what some of their problems are. So we hear faculty complaining about why don’t we have these resources. And they think we are not trying to do anything about it. Yes, please communicate, tell your chairs so that they’ll tell the deans so they’ll tell the Provost so that it will be somebody other than our bosses’ boss telling the Provost that we have a resource issue.*

and

*I don’t think it has been communicated to the President and Provost in an effective way that this is happening and it adversely affects education. I think one of the things about having the library Director talk to the dean is that it brings it back to this isn’t just about books. This is about courses, and students and students trying to learn things. Because if we don’t have these books and we don’t have these materials, then it affects these courses in the various schools.*

and

*Regarding the President, I don’t think he knows either. I think he’s, you know, kind of aware that the library budget hasn’t been good. I don’t think he knows either. I don’t think he’s aware of things that we work with on a day-to-day basis which is we are continually writing to faculty or saying why we don’t have this or we need this or you know, my students can’t do their work without this and well, I think their hands are tied. I think some times if it was communicated to more people the library’s flat line budget for how many years now?*

Librarians in the focus group were asking for a structural change that would provide a conduit for a communication of their needs and access to those in decision-making positions. Clearly, access to decision-makers, from the perspective of librarians, is impeded within the communication/reporting structure for Memorial Library at SUNY Cortland. The

deeper latent meaning expressed here and throughout the discussions, however, is the lack of *effective integration structurally* into the system and the resultant consequences.

### III. THE PUSH OF TECHNOLOGY

Similar to what others have said, the acquisition of new technology has been a double-edge sword as explained in the following:

*Technology has become a really, really critical part of what we do. And you know when I came in one-half of my job was technology and as time has gone on it's become a larger and larger part of my job. I would say it's more than three-fourths now. And the technology is always changing.*

and

*We're looking at students three years ago who really they were beginning to be tech savvy, but now you're getting students who walk in the door who know a lot more than those students of three years ago. Freshmen, now you can pretty much start talking about data bases and they know what you are talking about. I bet there are only 25% of students walking through that door who do not have cell phones either in their ear or on their belt—the whole student body is changing.*

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

#### EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

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Although there are distinctions between the perspectives of the faculty of Education and the faculty of Professional Studies, several major themes emerged that were strongly echoed by both groups. The themes of these Schools are presented together because of this congruency in identification of issues, and descriptions of perspectives, and to illustrate the strength of these themes. This is done with full respect and acknowledgement of the distinctness of the Schools, and their disciplines, and faculty. This section will look at the ways in which faculty of the School of Education and the School of Professional Studies describe their work, roles, communication, and experience in the Division of Academic Affairs.

#### Work Identity and Experience

When asked to describe their work experience, faculty approached the question from several angles including looking at their day-to-day work, their workload overall, their role in the department, and relationships to colleagues. Faculty often feel valued and appreciated within the department more so than at the school or division level as indicated by the following:

*I feel very strongly that my work is not valued here. That's the big overwhelming thing for me. Not only do I work hard, a lot of people here do work hard, but I feel that I do quality work. I'm a decent, smart person. I feel like at a place like Cortland, I should be looked to as some kind of leader. In the department, that's true. And I have good relationships with people at other departments. But at my School level and beyond my School level there is not a clear appreciation for what I do and who I am as a person. (Education faculty)*

In describing their work, faculty most often focused on teaching:

*My primary job, the reason I went into education and came to Cortland, is to teach. Whatever else I have to do, whether it is committee work or reports, I do it because it needs to get done and is a part of the whole job. But I do it because it allows me to do what I love—work with students in the classroom. (Education faculty)*

Although the faculty had a clear sense of their own priorities, they also identified the challenge of enacting their role, given the competing requirements of faculty life. Often the faculty described the tension between what they feel is their responsibility and what they are actually doing with their time:

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*Very, very, hectic. There are a lot of things I have to do that don't allow me to focus on what I really have to do. OK, scholarship, service and teaching. But what about all of the administrative work I do getting cohorts together, organizing courses, and talking with students. Answering their every question...I spend a lot of time emailing, interviewing. How does that fit into one of the categories of teaching, service, etc. When I come up with a tenure folder, where do I put that? (Education faculty)*

and

*It's frustrating because you can't carry out the job that's described because the job that is really there in front of you is so different. I went to a retreat at Raquette Lake with the deans and the Provost and they were talking about portfolios and the importance of service, scholarship, number of publications. I wasn't in the right position then, but I felt like saying in the three years I've been here, everything I've been doing, things that have to happen for our program, where will that fit in these portfolios. (Education faculty)*

In addition to the multi-faceted nature of their work, and the dissonance among those facets at times, there is also a concern that the College, and some people within it, is not interested in supporting the individual and “looking out for” their best interests. Note the following comment on work inequity:

*It's almost like the College is willing for you to do the work, but they are not willing to watch out for you as an individual. And really, that is something we need to talk about at the department level and beyond. There really should be no question about the scholarship and the time we need for that. But, we need to provide the structures, if you're a brand new faculty, untenured, you shouldn't be a coordinator or chair of committees. This puts you at risk, not only in the sense of what you are doing and what you should be doing. But also, you can be labeled and you can be bullied. And that's not solely a phenomenon here at Cortland, but I think Cortland is particularly bad at saying, sure, go ahead—wear your little self out. (Education faculty)*

In response to this workload, faculty developed varying strategies. In one conversation an Education faculty described two strategies:

*There's a bifurcation. You've got people who go into hibernation and do exactly what they have to do to fly beneath the radar. Or they choose high profile things to do. But in general, they do none of the nitty gritty crap work. And then you have the people who are killing themselves to carry the rest of that load. Now, I often fault the first group, but I recognize that it's a coping mechanism. You make a choice.*

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

*Cortland makes you make that choice. You either give yourself over and then feel like you've been had. Or you say, I don't get paid enough. I've seen that in writing in emails—I don't get paid enough and I'm not going to do this. That's it, they've drawn their line and I don't always blame them. (Education faculty)*

Although the College and systems were often identified as causes of this overwork, faculty also saw their own sense of responsibility. They have a choice on what path to take, but feel that the students and the programs will lose out if they decide not to do all of the work.

### Women in Academic Affairs

In describing their work life, several women specifically identified gender as a key element of how they are treated and how they experience their work at SUNY Cortland. The theme revolved around the treatment of individual women and of programs that are female, in terms of faculty or students.

*There are serious gender issues here. Cortland has a hard time dealing with strong women and assertive women. I think that if I were a man, I'd be seen as someone who could rise up through the ranks as chair. I would be afraid to go forth and even put myself as chair...because I've seen people humiliated and not given any justification for how or why decisions were made. (Education faculty)*

One faculty describes an experience at an accreditation meeting that illustrated her frustration with differential treatment of women.

*There was a meeting with all of the departments that didn't have their stuff [data and reports] in yet. It was us and the science guys and us, all women. Now the one person who was responsible for all of their program information was a woman, and she wasn't there. They had given her all the work, how could she get six programs done on time? And they're [former Dean of Arts and Sciences] saying to the science guys, 'What can I do to help you get this done, because our goal is to get this done.' Then there's our Dean [at the time] saying, 'You were paid for this work, were you not?' (Education faculty)*

### Purpose and Goals of the College

On a broader level, there were discussions about the number and scope of priorities that the College and division have, and the challenge in integrating all of these for practice. There

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

was no dissent or discussion refuting the merit of the goals and initiatives, but there was a strong agreement on the overwhelming and ambiguous nature of priorities.

*If someone were to sit down with all the goals, it would be hard to easily describe how they all fit together. And you sit at your desk and wonder, what is the priority here? It's hard to figure out what the most important task is at one given time, because you always have five to ten critical tasks on your plate. (Professional Studies faculty)*

Faculty discussed how the multiple sources of goals coming from SUNY, the President, and the Provost were not always congruent or interpreted in the same way. This means that for every set of goals or priorities, such as our Mission, Mission Review II, and the Provost's goals, there are an exponential number of interpretations. In particular, the Long Range Planning system was identified as confusing, not always cohesive with broader goals, and ineffective.

#### I. "The Swamp"

*The Swamp...that is what this is when you try to get something done. You dip your toe in and all of sudden you're hip deep in muck and not moving anywhere. (Professional Studies)*

Faculty also expressed concern and a level of exasperation with the energy and tenacity it takes to work through new initiatives. The lack of focus on who can make decisions, where to go to develop ideas, and how to get things done makes it difficult to take on new projects. This then makes people more inhibited and less creative because they naturally think of all of the obstacles they may face and how the structure and communication makes work more frustrating and unmotivating. An element of this was related to structural and process issues and some was attributed to the sheer number of initiatives and the feeling that people are often overwhelmed with top down initiatives.

#### Role Ambiguity

In the same way that the mission and priorities are often ambiguous or seemingly inconsistent, the faculty identified certain offices and roles that were also unclear. This was not attributed to any individual or intent, but brought up because of how the lack of understanding of what some offices or people do, or are charged to do, affects the faculty work life. Graduate Studies was an example of this ambiguity:

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

*Graduate Studies is one area that truly needs definition. Is it an administrative office that provides the processing and records for the graduate programs? Or, is it more of a dean-type office that will guide program development and curriculum? Someone needs to decide because you don't know what goes to your dean and what goes to Grad Studies. This means, you become less and less certain of your work as a grad coordinator. (Professional Studies faculty)*

The role of the department chair was also identified as an area of ambiguity. This was discussed through the concept of workload:

*Look at the equity for chairs—the workload for chairs has to be so divergent over the schools. Just look at the size of some departments. Tell me those chairs aren't bogged down in personnel issues. Then there's curricular and program issues, advising. Where does advocacy for the department fall into that? Can they be everything to all the faculty in their department and who is helping them figure that out...because I think there are very different ideas about what a chair is and what their role is. (Education faculty)*

Faculty recognize that by the nature of disciplines and degrees, chairs will have different work experiences, but there was a recommendation that the basic requirements, the “primary tasks and standards” for chairs be identified and communicated. “You cannot hide behind diversity of programs to defend inequity in workload.” There was also the suggestion the deans need more time to mentor the chairs in order to make the roles as effective as possible.

Committees and task forces were very strongly identified as ambiguous in three ways. The first was that there was a lack of clarity of the role of each committee and the accountability of the committee; the second was in the authority of the committee to finalize a decision; and the third was in understanding how committees related to each other and to the offices and departments of the College.

*Committees, task forces...they are endless and they are ill defined. I'm not sure what the role of the Senate is or how a task force differs from a committee. (Education faculty)*

and

*It just seems like there is so much overlap, so it's hard to know who to contact, you never know what the status of a committee is, how to get involved, how people were even chosen. I wonder if the committees even know what each other is doing because there must be some toes being stepped on and redundancy of effort. (Professional Studies faculty)*

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The Academic Affairs Council was brought up as an example of this ambiguity. Perspectives on the Council were varied—some saw it as a decision-making body, while others thought the group made recommendations to the Provost. Those who had participated on the Council described it as having “a purpose that is very hard to understand” and not being sure of what the meetings were for, other than general dialogues, “that are dominated mostly by men or a few select individuals.” Following ambiguity of the purpose of the Council, faculty were uncertain of appropriate participation as evidenced in the following:

*If it's administrative discussions, then let it be the administrators. I have always felt, when I'm there, that I don't need to be there. They aren't plotting against faculty in those meetings; they are dealing with a lot of logistics. Bring me in when it's relevant to my work. I'm not sure why, say, Financial Aid, needs to be there, but I know why you should [referring to Advisement and Transition]. But maybe my view on it all isn't what the Provost's view is...I do know it is way too big for any meaningful discussions. (Professional Studies faculty)*

For those faculty not involved with the Council, there were discussions about the purpose of the Council, whether or not decisions are made at the Council, and, predominately, how information was then shared.

*The Academic Affairs Council, whoever that is...we don't receive minutes from those until about a month after the meeting and my dean doesn't share any of it with his chairs. So, at that point, those issues might move on and new issues are emerging. By then there is a new topic. Education faculty)*

For certain faculty, depending upon their experience within a school or department, there was a need for clarification of the academic department structures. A suggestion is that a review of the departments is needed to look at appropriate curricular connections, financial support, and personnel. The faculty in Professional Studies offer the example of Sport Management. Sport Management is a degree distinctive from the other areas within the Exercise Science and Sport Studies Department which also houses Athletic Training, Kinesiology and Fitness. It has an enrollment that requires more faculty and resources. From the disciplinary and administrative perspective, it would be best for Sport Management to be its own department.

## II. THE INFORMATION PARADOX: COMMUNICATION (experience-distant)

*I just don't feel like we are getting any real information. (Education faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

The relationship between the themes of role ambiguity and communication is illustrated through the insights above. Although it was a clear question on the interview protocol, it was rare that the question regarding communication had to be brought up by the interviewer. In most cases, communication emerged as the dialogue about work progressed, indicating that communication is an integral part of how faculty described their work.

The ways in which information was provided, interpreted, and withheld was a prevalent framework for describing communication. In reviewing the data, the same notion arose again and again: the idea that faculty are overwhelmed with information and, at the same time, do not have enough information. This information paradox was described by one Professional Studies faculty:

*One day, I'm filtering through emails and memos, and facing more meetings and I think—enough—I cannot take any more information. And then I turn around, maybe that same day...maybe that hour...and I say, I don't have enough information. (Professional Studies faculty)*

To that a colleague responded:

*That tells a lot. That does describe the whole problem with information. You get tired of reading it all and trying to figure out the relevance. The 'do I really need to know this' of something. But if you don't pay attention, you find out a week later that a decision was made that affects you. You get paranoid and buried in the emails. (Education faculty)*

Clearly, there is a prolific amount of information coming to faculty. What is problematic is that it is not always clear why or if the information is relevant to them or their department. There was an additional concern that this overload of information can also hide the fact that information that is needed is not being provided. It is just assumed it must be there, given the amount of email, memos, and meetings that we all attend.

Another concern with communication was the possibility and reality of interpretation at each stage, with information being received and being sent by the faculty. Most often, communication laterally among colleagues in a department was seen as effective. When the communication level was between the department and dean, particularly for the Education faculty, there was less confidence and clarity. Finally, faculty in Professional Studies saw the least effectiveness between their School and upper administration. They felt that the Dean might communicate something, but were less certain how information was interpreted and understood.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

The willingness and ability to share information across departments and schools was discussed in depth. At times this focused on the ability to learn about other departments, at other times it was a lack of information about their own school and information regarding their own department. In any case, there is concern that the College is becoming more and more closed and defensive about sharing data.

*I provide full reports with data, and every other department does as well. So, why is it so hard to see their reports or even just data? I want to know what's going on and what information they are reporting, so I can learn. I also want to know how each of them fit into the mission and planning for the College. All of this could give a reference point for my own department and help me figure out how to advocate what my department and students need. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*I'm not the greatest administrator in the world, but I have a lot of experience. And I know when you follow the money, you're going to figure out the program. And when I am told I cannot see the budget—red flag. (Education faculty)*

The question of the culture of information—why are we protective of information at times, why do we not share our data on ourselves—focused on the way data is used. Possibly, the proliferation of assessment initiatives has made people more inhibited. Another suggestion was that the leadership needed to set the tone for the collegial sharing of information.

### Decision Making

Without question, decision making was a central point of discussion. In a sense, decision making involves and is a form of communication. The focus was not the actual decision, but on the process and logistics of decision making. From the perspective of the faculty, decision making at SUNY Cortland can also be a form of marginalization depending upon the position and participation of the relevant faculty. The type of decisions discussed included personnel, policy interpretation, curriculum, and funding. In some ways, the larger formalized processes could be improved as indicated in the following:

*What are the avenues for taking care of situations? Where does policy begin and is there a clear process? Do you send it to Educational Policy Committee (EPC) and ever just get it done? Never, it is so convoluted and nothing gets done. (Education faculty)*

Along with formalized processes, the individual experience within decision making was described as frustrating at times.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

*The big thing is don't waste our time. The bitterness is because there are euphemisms they are using and they aren't coming down to us clearly. We spend hours of time debating and then we present it and it's just shut down—no conversation. (Education faculty)*

This section will look at the ways faculty discussed information and the conceptualization of decision making as integral to their work experience. Faculty identified the following issues in regard to decisions: timelines are unclear; decisions are made without full information; justification for decisions is not shared; lack of clarity when a decision is final; and authority and influence on decision making.

#### **Timelines are neither clear nor consistent**

When faculty have made a request, they feel that they are given little information on what will happen next and how long it will take to have a decision made on that request. Faculty comment as follows:

*I hand paperwork or requests into my chair or dean and I believe that he sends them on. But when I ask when I'll hear back on something, there is never a definitive answer. You have to just wait it out. I don't care how long it takes, just give me a timeframe. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*The trouble with not hearing back is that you stall in telling your colleagues about the decision. It's hard as a chair to have to keep saying, 'I don't know.' (Education faculty)*

Faculty also described the pressure they feel when asked to make a decision or provide information and are not given sufficient time as evidenced below:

*We are told, 'Quick you need to make a decision.' You are given no time, no information and you're not always sure what the issue is—what the exact decision is that needs to be made. Then you're yelled at if you don't make a good decision. (Education Faculty)*

and

*I'm constantly feeling the pressure to make a decision. There's no time to plan ahead, not time to collect data, to seek out better ideas. It's more like make a decision now and see if it was right. (Professional Studies faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

#### Communicating the decision and justification for the decision

Faculty expressed a particularly strong need for improving communication throughout the decision-making process. This included collection of information and the dissemination of information in the decision-making process. The faculty described a desire to know what is going on with other departments, including their data as noted by a faculty member:

*If decisions are data-driven, then we should have access to all of the data, not just our own. We should have access to the same information, to a reasonable level, that the decision maker has. How do I know how to work the system and improve my ability to gain resources if I don't have a point of reference? (Professional Studies faculty)*

Similarly, faculty are interested in the justification for particular decisions. A faculty member in Professional Studies provides the following example:

*It's very hard, very, to hear that of maybe ten approved searches, your school has received zero. Maybe there is a rationale, but where is it? If it's part of some strategic plan, let us see it and see when we are in the master plan. (Professional Studies faculty)*

Along with describing a lack of information for decisions, faculty discussed that the way final decisions are communicated was not always useful, or even thoughtful as the following comments indicate:

*When a decision is made that involves me, or my department, I would appreciate someone talking to me in person, especially if I was turned down for something. Frankly, I'm tired of hearing the decisions while I'm talking with someone at a retirement party...or from a secretary...or walking down a hallway. (Professional Studies faculty)*

#### Authority and influence in decision making

Faculty described a lack of clarity on who has the final decision and how individuals or informal groups of individuals seem to influence decisions.

*Be clear about whose decisions is whose. Give people the power in some situations and they won't want power in all situations. (Education faculty)*

The lack of clarity on “where the buck stops” was described by faculty in both schools. This

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

causes confusion on knowing how to work with the systems, whom to contact, and when a decision is final. The conversation between Professional Studies and Education faculty illustrate how this ambiguity affects them:

*If the EPC and the Faculty Senate make a decision, and the President then overturns that decision. What does that say about the authority of the EPC? What does it say about the President's trust in the system of governance? (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*It also makes it hard to move forward, because you aren't sure if an issue is resolved... (Education faculty)*

and

*That is very true. You don't know when you can confidently say something is decided without looking over your shoulder a bit. I think this also encourages people to not support and move along with a decision—because there is always the hope that it might change. So we have people stuck in their ways...just waiting out the system. (Professional Studies faculty)*

Several faculty felt that the ambiguity in some decision processes allowed for greater influence by individuals, depending upon their position. The phrase “some people have the ear of the Provost” was used by faculty in both schools to describe how having access to the Provost can allow for greater influence on decisions as demonstrated in the following:

*There are some people that go right to Elizabeth, right over a chair or dean or whoever. They feel they have the right to talk to her, but they don't use a system that allows others to know what's going on. If we all did that, she would be inundated, more than she probably is...but you feel like you're not playing the game right if you follow the channels. It's a no win—because you see those people get what they want and you wonder if you should just knock on her door as well. (Education faculty)*

and

*Long Range Planning is a great example of a good idea that is not implemented in a way that supports a broader set of goals. The people on the individual committees may or may not have the expertise or information to address an area, but they get to assign tasks, recommend funding, and make others accountable. How does this fit with the idea that I was brought in to set goals and make progress? I will learn I have \$3,000 but it must be spent in the way the committee wants, which is*

*frustrating because I could have used that money in a much more productive and meaningful way. No one even told me about it until they had to write a report. (Professional Studies faculty)*

### III. MARGINALIZATION AND THE GREAT DIVIDE (experience-distant)

Marginalization was also a strong theme in faculty discussions. The feeling that their school or discipline was not recognized or valued to the same degree as Arts and Sciences was described as The Great Divide. The overriding sentiment was that this marginalization was largely due to a lack of contact with other faculty and administrators and limited understanding or appreciation for the intellectual nature of disciplines and for the work faculty do in Education and Professional Studies.

*Otherring. It's us and them in many situations. Whether people do it thoughtfully or thoughtlessly it causes the same problems. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*Maybe we need to have bussing on campus [laughing]. To get people to know each other better. (Education faculty)*

Marginalization was often discussed in relative terms, with participants often comparing their school or department with another school or department. There was a sense that the schools or departments were marginalized, and sometimes diminished, because they were not as central as the School of Arts and Sciences and people within Arts and Sciences.

One element of the divide between schools was the perception that the disciplines in Education and Professional Studies were not respected nor understood.

*Some people, like the folks in Speech and some other places always treated me as a peer. Being on a search this year, I finally feel like they [Arts and Sciences] don't view me so skeptically. Like I've arrived. Like I've made it into the club. It's historical that education is put to the side. (Education faculty)*

and

*The Arts and Sciences faculty, what they think is "We don't want to be known as a teaching college—we're better than that." (Education faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

In discussing the history of the School of Education and its role in the previous School of Professional Studies, one faculty member noted:

*We [Professional Studies and Education] were in a ghetto together. But now it's a totem pole and we are on the bottom. (Education faculty)*

In a group of Professional Studies faculty, the discussion of representation and inclusion brought about the following example:

*On the submission form for Scholar's Day, our department was not on the list of departments. You couldn't check us off. When we called the Dean's office at Arts and Sciences, we were told to just write it in. OK, we know we can do that. But did anyone check to make sure all departments were represented? (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*That's hugely symbolic of how we are viewed. (Professional Studies faculty)*

The physical proximity or distance of departments was also identified as an issue, as it affected the amount and type of contact people had with members of the administration.

*I know that people miss the old faculty dining room, or the idea of that. But really, it would be for Arts and Sciences faculty because I probably won't or can't get there for lunch. In fact, it would be nice if we just had somewhere better to eat than Poolside—I don't care if there are students there, but can we eat in a room, not a hallway? (Professional Studies faculty)*

A final element of the great divide was described through participation. The faculty of Education and of Professional Studies felt that the nature of their work beyond the classroom demanded the bulk of their time and limited the amount that they could participate in campus-wide initiatives. This then limits professional development opportunities, networking with other faculty, interdisciplinary collaboration, and input on committees as expressed in these comments:

*I'm often asked why don't we [non-Arts and Sciences faculty] come to more workshops or get more involved. Why? Because we have no time. I can't grab a slice of pizza much less go to a sandwich seminar. (Education faculty)*

and

*As a graduate faculty, it is just logistically tough to get involved with a committee.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Education and Professional Studies

*If I am teaching and working until 10 at night, what are the odds I can make it in for an 8 am meeting? (Education faculty)*

To that, another Education faculty responded:

*Actually, there have been semesters where I haven't taught one course on campus, everything was at Mohawk Valley. Imagine how hard that makes it to participate in committee work. (Education faculty)*

### Faculty and Administrator Divides

Another divide that was identified was that between the faculty and the administration. Depending upon the position of the respondent, people saw the divide differently. Most often, administration was characterized by the Miller Building. The perception was that those offices housed within the Miller Building have access to the primary decision makers, thus giving them greater communication and influence as revealed below:

*It's a fortress that you don't feel comfortable in all the time and you don't feel like is a part of your work. (Professional Studies faculty)*

An interesting phenomenon was the identification of which people or offices are considered administrative. When asked to define whom they meant when they said administration, the answers included: chairs, deans, and Provost; deans and Provost and up; the Miller Building; and, any non-teaching personnel in Academic Affairs.

For those faculty serving as chairs, they sometimes noted that they could not always decide if they were faculty or if they were administrators and found themselves balancing between the two roles.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

#### ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSIONALS



This section will represent the perspective of those administrators and professionals who range from financial aid advisors, assistant directors, associate directors, directors, associate deans, deans, and associate provosts. We will use the term administrator for all of these roles, although it is clear that the respondents saw distinct differences in the type and level of administration.

*The deans and their chairs to an extent are in this unusual role on campus. They are administrators, but they came up through faculty culture. So they work in the highly administrative areas but represent a very different type of culture.*

and

*I am a professional and may be considered an administrator. I tend to think of administrators as the fourth floor of the Miller building.*

These conversations looked at the ways in which communication, structure, and behavior enables or impedes the work of their specific areas and of the division and College as a whole.

#### **Goals and Planning**

One of the major frameworks used to describe work life in Academic Affairs was based upon the goals of the College and division and the role that the individual or his or her respective office plays in achieving those goals. The focus was on clarity of the goals and the ability to connect and contribute to those goals.

While the people supported ideas and goals of the college and division, goal clarification emerged across the interviews. On one level this was a simple communication issue: not all constituents on campus were aware of all the goals or their opportunities to contribute to the goal formation.

*If there is a strategic plan, then we don't know about it or don't think it's really being followed. Because faculty don't have information, they will make their own rationalization. If they aren't aware of the bigger plan, they can't be a part of it.*

and

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

*There are departmental objectives that are not always clearly in line with the institutional planning.*

When the goals have been shared and dialogue has occurred, there has been a higher level of cooperation and a higher level of common good among constituents. Sharing goals allows people to understand the context of decisions and helps make people see their work as part of the whole. The following comments explain:

*I have seen people within the schools, there was a real sense of, “ok, let’s be realistic, we only have x amount of money...what’s our most urgent need?” I’ve seen people be cooperative when there was enough explanation of the constraints and say, ‘I’ll concede because your need is more pressing and I’ll defer to you. When there was enough explanation of the constraints. Maybe next time I’ll get my position.’*

and

*Academic Affairs is enormous. In order to tend to those issues of academics and deal with all of the other issues of the institution is enormous in terms of responsibility and volume. The Provost does have say, rightly so, in budget and direction of the institution. There are too many things on the academic plate.*

### Shared Goals

The ability for the constituents of Academic Affairs to fully understand each others’ goals and work is hindered by the size of the Division. The biggest focus in terms of the range of constituents was in trying to identify shared goals and see a level of investment in those initiatives and goals that meet the needs of the entire College. Admission Open Houses and Orientations were provided as examples.

*It really isn’t Admission’s Open House, it is the College’s Open House. We coordinate it, but it is a campus-wide initiative. The same with Orientation—it should be seen as an institutional effort. But very often, people don’t participate or participate unwillingly. There are those who are great and see that bigger picture, so don’t get me wrong. But there are still those folks who say they are doing us a favor by ‘helping with your program’. It’s our program, all of us.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

#### Structure and Scope

Administrators and professionals spoke at length about the organizational structure of Academic Affairs. In particular, there was discussion and debate about the size and scope of the Division and how this may be affecting the Division as a whole and the role of the Provost. The sheer number of initiatives under a division was seen as a challenge.

*We talk about rallying around objectives of the institution. One of the things that is difficult within Academic Affairs is that there are so many different types of...not just different types of programs and instructional needs, but there are support services to academics. Sometimes each is working toward a different objective. So within one division, there are multiple agendas that might all need advocacy by the same leadership.*

Some people may not have the benefit of the Provost's ear all the time and the Provost may not have the benefit of knowing the nuances of the operation. More specifically, there was a concern about the number of direct reports to the Provost and how that level of supervision and contact is unparalleled on campus, or even at other campuses.

*It's hard to ascertain if it's a structural problem or if it's a matter of articulating common goals. I don't know why there are so many direct reports to the provost. You would think that some of those reports could be more effective in other places.*

and

*I have never been somewhere where the Provost has this many reporting lines. How does she get anything done? We have layers of leadership in the deans and we need to really think about how to better utilize or create more management so she isn't buried.*

In addition to the concern for the number of initiatives and people reporting to the Provost, there was also a concern about the level of representation at the President's Cabinet.

*The Provost does a good job managing a huge range of work. No other vice president has that scope. If you think about the amount of things that she is advocating for, there needs to be more voice at the President's Cabinet, and more decision making power. She's got this extensive constituency, but only one voice and one vote. I think she does amazingly well, but is that right?*

Given the range of functional areas, it is difficult to always understand the functional relationship between areas and enact a holistic and comprehensive plan.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

*Look at what common elements there are that could be brought into the structure. For example, enrollment is a graduate and undergrad, part time, summer...these are all enrollment issues and they report to different areas...or they've been eliminated like continuing education. Seems as though there is a fracturing of information that makes it hard to work under one plan.*

#### Committees, Councils, and Meetings

Committees and task forces, in fact meetings in general, were often described as a part of the divisional structure. The numerous committees reflect the concern for issues and willingness to address issues, but could be more streamlined and efficient.

*Sometimes how we manage things is with meeting overload. I think I've heard from enough people with experience from other places. There are so many meetings scheduled to have face time, it really eats up enormous amounts of time.*

The Academic Affairs Council was a point of rich discussion. All of the participants had views on what they thought the goal of the group was and very often it was described as an advisory council, providing information and discourse about issues that would assist the Provost in decision-making and planning. The purpose and composition of the Council was confusing to many respondents.

*I think the revised makeup since we went from Provost Council to Academic Affairs Council dilutes communication. When I say communication in that respect, I mean dialogue. Because you have so many faculty members on this now, everyone from honors and centers and all of this, you don't have the same conversations that you had before. It really becomes points of information and what's happening. On occasion you have a general discussion, but it's not the same as it used to be.*

#### Role Clarification and Accountability

The structural issues were closely related to discussions about role clarity and accountability. Because of the size and the scope of the Division, it is not always easy to understand all of the work and responsibilities across offices and departments. The Graduate Studies office has a unique role that was hard for people to completely understand.

*It's very clear at the undergrad level that the deans are responsible for academics and enrollment. At the grad level it's confusing. You have the coordinators who are like a chair, then there's Director of Grad. But I don't know what the dean's role is in the graduate programs. It's an unusual structure.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

In the same way that some found the structure confusing, there was also a line of conversation about the responsibilities of certain positions and the equity among these positions. Respondents acknowledged that perfect equity is not realistic or even needed, but they were uncertain of basic expectations of certain roles and where authority for decision making is housed. This was often in regard to the role of deans and chairs.

*The chair is an interesting role. I work with all of them and I have a complete continuum of responses. I'm not sure what I can reasonably expect or what they are required to do or respond to...and that makes it all very interesting to say the least.*

and

*Let's say that we define retention and graduation rates, which we should all be addressing. Then we go our own ways and ok. But the degree to which people have addressed that and coordinated is unknown. The degree to which it is being embraced is unknown.*

At times, it seems that individuals are not certain of their responsibility or levels of authority. They might not realize that they have the ability to resolve a problem or make a final decision, so they involve more people.

They might also overstep the perceived boundaries of their position.

*Some offices take advantage of structure and access. If they're a real self-promoter, they're going to get out there. The structure doesn't limit doesn't stop that from happening. I see people, a person, taking authority where they really don't want to have it.*

These perspectives were closely linked then with the issue of accountability. The specific term accountability was used repeatedly when people discussed structure and worklife in Academic Affairs. When respondents were asked to describe what they meant when using the term accountability the following ideas were offered:

*We pay faculty to work with students. There is no excuse why grades should be late, unless of course it's a car accident or something like that. The lackadaisical attitudes are horrible and I don't care if I'm on the bad list. Without that data we are hamstrung in being able to make sound decisions. We pay them to teach, we pay them to evaluate students. They're not doing the job if they are consistently late. That's accountability. The same happens with advising. There is not recourse.*

and

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Overarching Themes - Administrators and Professionals

*No work, no pay. Hold the paycheck. [Laughter] Ok, that's extreme, but in what other field can you simply not do your work on time? If there's no penalty or recourse, what do they do? The problem is perennial, because it has not been addressed.*

and

*I guess I see it a little differently. When can we make something mandatory? The multicultural training started out as mandatory, but now it's we strongly encourage you to attend. At what point do we say, this is part of your job. And this isn't just with faculty, this is across the board.*

Accountability also referred to the ways in which work was done and the behavior of people within positions. There was a sense that some people acted in inappropriate and non-productive ways and that those issues are related to accountability. The Provost has been seen as a strong support during these issues.

*I see people not want to communicate or collaborate afterwards. The Provost has been fabulous in rectifying these conflicts. But it shouldn't have to be like that. She shouldn't have to be reacting to these. The immediate supervisor should be dealing with it.*

### Communication

Throughout the discussions, the importance of communication was prominent. Communication affects the level of mutual understanding, perceptions of marginalization, and ability to work within the existing structures.

The intended messages do not reach all of the constituents, particularly the faculty. The way the messages are delivered and the way the message is received varies. A lot of the messages within Academic Affairs are diluted by the time they reach the faculty.

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# **Recommendations: Issue #1**

ARTS & SCIENCES: FACULTY



OVERARCHING THEME I

Communicate in every way possible the “core function, the purpose of the College which is education.”

HOW?

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

Recommendation 1

Establish and fund a writing center which promotes critical literacy for students and *structure* it into their curriculum from the beginning of and throughout their college career.\*

While expressed in a myriad of different ways, faculty in Arts and Sciences see efforts, time, money, and priorities directed toward initiatives which do not address the core function of the College as gravely missing the mark. Consider the following comments representative of the larger groups:

*It becomes increasingly difficult to communicate the core function of the College which is education—I think that is sort of a difficult message to get. It is a basic lack of understanding about what the purpose of the College is. It just seems that the message is getting mediated through all of these other concerns, about how to socialize on campus. It comes back to the idea of a lack of a writing center on campus—a lack of focus and we get lost in the mess.*

and

*It reminds me of sort of working on your own house—the foundation is crumbling, but it’s much more fun to redecorate the living room with some exciting new knick-*

\* All recommendations are grounded in the ideas and narrative of the participants in this study as well as the analysis of the researchers.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

*knacks. And we keep redecorating the living room, and you know, despite what they are saying about the SAT scores and students performing well, those of us on the front lines of teaching can see that increasingly there are lots of students with writing problems, critical skills problems and they can't maneuver a text book, much less a monograph or primary sources.*

Furthermore, faculty see attention focused on “branding” the College as mistaking the surface level for substance. Note the following:

*We had a discussion with the Dean on the idea of devoting all this attention to branding the College and coming up with innovative ways with internships and learning communities to, if you like, distinguish Cortland. It seems like more of the same. It seems like more sort of surface level marketing spin.*

and

*I struggle on a day-to-day basis with how to teach students when they don't have the most basic elements in place. I don't see much happening to address that. And this recent innovation and talking about doing internships, it just seems to me not to address the issue, not to address that issue. I think that the idea of one grant college-wide to infuse more writing into your courses was deeply symbolic—one grant—that's lip service to the goal of improving writing.*

#### Recommendation 2

**As a complement to Convocation, develop mechanisms for students that sustain an awareness of the serious pursuits of learning, thinking, and writing as a way of life over the four years.**

Institute a “Reading for Awareness” campaign with the selection of one common book for students to read (to have read) as they enter the College for the first time and for returning students and faculty each academic year.

*I'm often quite amazed at how students really have no idea what the mission of the institution is. And it's right there in their hands, right? But they really are not clear, for instance, why critical thinking is important or why it should be a value. So not only do I have to teach them how to, but I have to teach them to value it. Sometimes that throws me off a little bit. Why is it important to communicate in a group?*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

*Why shouldn't they just do their project and not care what anyone else cares about it and be done with it? Which is often an argument that we have to go through. I would think that some support and communication from the institution, just making those things known generally to students. Obviously that needs to be reinforced in the classroom. So they have an idea of why they are here in the particular college and what it is about, you know, our overall mission is that they somehow get into before they reach the classroom. Obviously I need to reinforce it, but that seems like a big one.*

Find ways to connect SUNY Cortland Convocation with a “Reading for Awareness Colloquium” at the beginning of each year to discuss the book and the mission of the College. Use Brown Auditorium as a site for gathering to symbolize the importance of such a project. Or, alternatively, locate sites in Corey Union. Use the Resident Assistants as resources to encourage maximum participation.

Find ways to *integrate* this shared intellectual experience into the academic life of that particular year across Schools and disciplines so that it serves as a source of “unity of purpose” for all and chips away at the presence of an “anti-intellectual” climate. Keep the discourse alive across campus regarding the development of academic/intellectual “traditions” for students at SUNY Cortland through imaginative structures.

#### Recommendation 3

*“Stop new initiatives until we really do a few really, really well. Identify priorities.”*

This perspective was *overwhelmingly* consistent throughout all groups by a majority of the participants in Arts and Sciences.

*There is a recurring problem— to just kind of always go for the surface level. For some reason they're always enthused about taking on new initiatives without adequately funding the initiatives we've already started. They do it over and over again. You have to pick and choose. It's political too. But still they choose.*

and

*The problem on this campus is that we start too many things and do not fund them or fully finish them. Someone needs to have the guts to cut back on things that are not viable. Right now, we try too many things and don't follow through on them.*

and

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

*You know, new initiatives keep coming down, coming down. And every time I hear of something new I wonder if this one will make it this time. When do we stop and really really commit to making what we have, like the learning communities totally viable? More depth instead of breadth.*

Faculties' perspective is one of seeing initiatives having "come through" many times from the "top down" and never implemented leading to a credibility gap between faculty and administrators. Complicating the process, however, are the many levels through which information on initiatives has to travel. It moves down through the deans' level to the chairs council to the individual departments with interpretations of the original directive at each level in terms of how it is characterized and presented. Addressing this communication structure is a long-term, on-going effort.

*An initiative comes from above and just drops in a hat. It doesn't land anywhere.*

Consistent with these faculty perspectives is the notion that we gloss over things and do not commit to the completion of projects. We do not make them strong and operational over time with staffing, funding, and a future.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Institutionalize learning communities and give them the stewardship and resource support they need to be ongoing and fully realize their potential as a uniquely successful offering at SUNY-Cortland.**

Learning communities were cited on several occasions as an example of an initiative that has great potential for addressing two priorities: sustaining the core function of the College and providing for innovative academic programming. Learning communities are the rare initiatives that can creatively address the substantive (core function of the College) while still providing a very attractive recruitment tool for students. We strongly support existing working committees on learning communities. We strongly recommend that major attention be directed toward the institutionalization and imaginative integration of these communities into the academic program at SUNY Cortland.

**Recommendation 5**

***“Fix Faculty Senate”***

*Before I leave I want to say that I believe we are in dangerous trouble with regard to what’s happening with Faculty Senate. But I don’t know what to do about it.*

Faculty Senate is where purpose and governance at SUNY Cortland intersect and where significant academic issues that affect both students and faculty should be deliberated and debated. Just as education of minds should be the centerpiece of the university, the education of citizenship in the academy should be exemplified in the participation in and conduct of SUNY Cortland Faculty Senate. The striking thing is that while student government involvement on the Cortland campus has been impressively high in the past year, the involvement in faculty governance in the arena of Faculty Senate has been impressively low. Faculty who have been at the College for many years expressed deep concern over the situation within Faculty Senate.

This condition is related to several factors, not the least of which is the “overwhelming workload” experienced by faculty that seems to have geometrically increased over the last few years. This, however, is not the only factor, nor arguably, the major one. One may argue that the “demise of Faculty Senate” is the quintessential manifestation of the intersection of several conditions at the College.

**Recommendation 6**

**Create incentives for faculty to participate in Faculty Senate.**

More uniformly, make participation have definite value for the reappointment, tenure, and promotion process.

<b>Recommendation 7</b>	<b>Work at changing the perspective held by Arts and Sciences faculty that Faculty Senate has now become what a faculty member described as a “forum for top administrators to push through their agendas and have them rubber-stamped.”</b>
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Whether the above comment is actually “true” is in the most important sense moot because as W.I. Thomas (1923) stated, “if men define things as real, they are real in their consequences.” If the “rubber-stamped” perspective—that control of the Senate has somehow been wrested away from faculty—is the prevailing one, then the consequences may be one contributing factor to the lack of participation in the major check-and-balance governing body on campus, the Faculty Senate. The question then becomes: what has created this perspective? Serious consideration needs to be given to self-evaluation of how Faculty Senate has been used and perhaps abused by both faculty and administration over the last several years.

## OVERARCHING THEME II

**Put structures into place to change the “atmosphere for women” and “conspicuous gender hierarchy” at SUNY Cortland.**

### HOW?

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

<b>Recommendation 8</b>	<b>Structurally support and institutionalize a Women’s Studies community, beginning with “<i>hiring a Coordinator who is a real community builder to coordinate Women’s Studies and teach classes.</i>”</b>
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Several new faculty spoke eloquently of feeling the press of a masculinist culture at SUNY Cortland, their lack of voice, and their need for a “place” in the academy to do their work and to realize their “life blood.”

*We need to think about a way to institutionalize women’s studies that gives people a sense of security, has a career path built into it and can link up with what students are doing.*

and

*Faculty could teach women’s studies courses and it would count for their careers in their department. She gets credit, gets recognized for being on the Women’s Studies Committee. Their tenure track is structured so they can go do what is their “life blood.” They are building their career in both women’s studies and in their discipline—they could be united.*

**Recommendation 9**

**Structure the Chilly Climate Committee so that it becomes known and active on the campus.**

Educate all members of the school community, including board members, administrators, supervisors, faculty, staff and students about climate issues and the forms that they take. Provide information campus-wide on the purpose and goals of this committee in conjunction with the Committee on the Status of Women. This would strongly complement the Provost’s Women’s Initiative Committee activities in the past two years.

*My concern is about retaining faculty. We have new faculty and administrators that are women who are or have left. And so for the remaining women it’s like the hand writing on the wall. You look at other institutions, say the New York Times. They have done things so that sexual harassment, racial harassment, a sense of intimidation, anything that is less than respect—well there will be consequences.*

and

*There is a lot of disrespect in the Miller Building, particularly in one or two of the offices. It is flabbergasting in terms of racial and sexual harassment and the attitude of some of the middle management. Significant problems and one that is costly to the College because of losing women faculty and staff because of the work overload but also the atmosphere for women here.*

and

*On this campus, it's ok to be sexist.*

and

*We have this incredible situation with committees, personnel committees, and sub-division committees that sometimes are entirely made up of men, white men at that. You know they can't look at those things and not think there's not an issue here. The sexism is institutionalized.*

<b>Recommendation 10</b>	<b>Implement the following five recommendations from the national report, “An Action Agenda for Improving Equity for Women: Recommendations for Campus Administrators” by Bernice Sandler, Women’s Research and Education Institute, Washington, D.C.</b>
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These selected recommendations are taken from a number of suggestions in the document and could structurally assist in changing the atmosphere for women at SUNY-Cortland:

- a. Make the creation of an equitable climate a clear priority. Demonstrate it by public statements and personal behaviors.
- b. Educate all members of the school community including board members, administrators, supervisors, faculty, staff and students about climate issues and the forms that they take.
- c. Build an assessment of attention to gender issues into performance evaluations of administrators, supervisors and faculty so that they are accountable.
- d. Evaluate how personnel and other policies affect members of the school community as members of families. Many “women’s issues” are “family issues.” Examine sick leave, flex-time, and part-time employment. Establish a policy which allows for an optional extension of the tenure period for those persons who are primary care givers for family members, old and young, or whose presence is required because of illness in the family or the birth/adoption of a child.
- e. Create a structure for mentoring activities for women at all levels. Include mentoring of students as part of faculty job descriptions.

**Note:** For additional recommendations on women’s issues at SUNY Cortland see the companion piece in Women’s Studies Focus Groups analysis and recommendations.

### OVERARCHING THEME III

**“Make the faculty feel like they’re at the center of the university corporation and not at the margins.”**

#### HOW?

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

#### Recommendation 11

**Create the kinds of structures that put faculty together and build in an hour within the schedule that is called “*The Faculty Hour.*”**

The desire for a richer intellectual climate at SUNY Cortland and a time structured into the weekly schedule for a common hour were compelling topics among focus groups as expressed powerfully in the following:

*I mean, it seems to me that there is nothing, nothing more important than us communicating to each other what we do. What we do our research about, what we teach about, everything else is secondary. You know, a lot of the frankly mundane, you know, administrative structural kinds of things can be, are secondary. If we don’t have that level of communication that I know what you do and you know what I do, then none of the rest of this is really workable. You know, we have to know each other as scholars, before we can really do much else. And again, we haven’t gotten very far.*

and

*Structure a common hour into the schedule. It would make a big difference. Things really happen when faculty do it. If we have a common hour where I am talking about my research and citizen X over there is criticizing it or vice versa, then they*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

*know me and we can begin a conversation of what we might want to teach together, what research we might want to do. Share ideas, not because we are part of a task force but because we are actually communicating. The “Faculty Hour.”*

and

*Find a place for greater intellectual discussions. Or have a real faculty dining room. It used to be that way in Brockway. Faculty have a different kind of interaction when students are not there.*

and

*To find a time, during the day that is free, as we’ve been talking about for the last few years for faculty discussions, seminars, so that they become a part of the natural schedule.*

Theme I (page 68) and Theme III (page 75) are closely related and “twin-born.” Theme I urges the *articulation* of the purpose of the College (education), while Theme III *enacts* the recommendation. It is no coincidence that these two Themes are interwoven as two sides of the same coin of what a university should be about in the spirit of John Henry Newman in his The Idea of a University (1852). The major structural change that has affected communication, and therefore purpose, is what faculty argue is the “managerial style of higher education administration that we have.” As evidence of the “creeping administrative function of the College,” faculty point to administrative functions like Institutional Advancement “taking over Brockway.” As one faculty put it, “so there was a building that had a nice space for seminars and it is gone.”

#### Recommendation 12

**Restructure Academic Affairs Council so that it’s a “much stronger faculty-oriented group.”**

The suggestion is to include the Vice Presidents, Associate Provosts but not their staff on the Council. The Deans, Associate Deans and Center Directors and representation from the Arts and Sciences by divisions: social sciences, natural sciences, humanities. Faculty see this as a “symbolic message” achieved through structure that would “send a message that the Provost is paying attention to faculty concerns and even giving them greater weight than in the past.” It becomes a “much stronger faculty-oriented group.”

#### Recommendation 13

**Make faculty perspective a priority in decision-making. Following from the above recommendation, this could be addressed through a two-committee structure with the addition of a new Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.**

*As long as the administrators get our input, full input and listen to us, then I'm willing to allow them to make their decision. In fact, I want them to make a firm decision. It's when I don't feel that we've had enough input that they really understand the situation from the faculty's perspective, general departments or individuals, or they have an "agenda."*

Democratic intentions within academic organizations are always at risk at best, and subverted at worst. We know about Robert Michels' (1959) "Iron Law of Oligarchy," the tendency for control to increasingly centralize and fall into fewer hands. Though slightly different in process, we know also of the inevitability of bureaucracy from Max Weber (1958) who theorized further that administrator and visionary could not reside in the same individual but must be divided into at least two leadership roles. Whether or not we agree with Weber the point is to build into the structure leadership roles that address both functions, and provide optimal access for faculty and staff voice through effective council configurations.

#### Recommendation 14

**Decentralize. Let departments determine the content and character of instruction and make assessments meaningful.**

From the faculties' perspective, there was a strong association between the demands from multiple kinds of assessment on faculty and decentralizing. Faculty in all cohorts spoke of the endless number of ways that are being developed to assess faculty and departments "coming down from above." The suggestion is to maintain the reflective statements on teaching introduced by the Provost and find a way to tailor the rest of the assessment protocol to the particular nature of the discipline, the College culture, and consideration of the audience who is going to be using it. Assessment has the potential of being a creative tool of discovery but faculty feel disengaged and hostile toward the current forms because as one

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faculty put it, “it suffers from the fact that we report to the administration rather than ourselves and so there’s a strangeness about that.”

*I think that the Provost level is very important and I would say to her: Decentralize more. Meaning that if program reviews need to be made they would be decided at the local level that it wouldn’t be something that we’re just responding to from the State. Also that the State Education Department would not keep coming down with mandates like 100 hours of observation which we know is unbearable, too much, students don’t need it and it crowds the schools.*

#### Recommendation 15

**Structurally create a function within the organization that relieves faculty of “clerical work” and excessive paperwork.**

In the segmented focus groups, faculty discussed consistently the amount of what they term “clerical work” as inundating them over the course of the academic year. The nature of the work involved assessment, multiple revisions at times of catalog-entry material, special reports, student reports, planning reports, and other miscellaneous work. They found the volume of such clerical work exceedingly invasive and detrimental to their responsibilities of teaching and scholarship.

*Everything needs to be catalogue-ready and they come back to us when they’re not. I know it’s a mandate to have it catalogue-ready, but pay someone to format stuff for the catalogue. This is not what faculty should be doing. It’s an example of a mandate from above that affects people on the ground. Too much clerical work for faculty. I really feel that one of the costs of this accreditation push and the mountains of paperwork and assessment data and all these things that are now demanded of us are pulling us away from our true mission of really educating our students.*

### OVERARCHING THEME IV

**Close “The Divides” by structural innovations that address the “knowledge gap” among constituencies of the Cortland campus.**

**HOW?**

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

<b>Recommendation 16</b>	<b>Utilize successful examples of increased quality dialogues between different constituencies at the College as models for creating structures to address the “Divides.”</b>
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One excellent example from the focus groups was what has occurred between Academic Computing Services and faculty since the advent of a new Director.

With regard to Academic Computing the following narrative praises the efforts of the new Director and others:

*Communication is also dialogue and one of the places that we are doing better is in Academic Computing. We’re finding more dialogue. They’ve actually got a group together, which for years we asked for that and we were told it wasn’t practical. It’s so much better to sit down and discuss things. It doesn’t mean that we don’t have unpleasant surprises from time to time or that things that we don’t agree with will happen. But at least there’s some dialogue and I think we need to do even more of that. I have been pleased to see some of that but if we’re short in any place it’s in dialogue. We need more dialogue on campus, more listening, more exchange of ideas like that. Tremendously helpful.*

Another faculty member went on to comment that:

*A change in Directors brought this about. Previously all they wanted was to send out information, more information—didn’t have time to discuss it.”*

#### Recommendation 17

**Institutionalize and build on the mentoring and communication efforts of the Provost with regard to new faculty; however, this effort needs to be expanded beyond the first year as requested by several new faculty.**

While there is an active mentoring program in operation for new faculty at SUNY Cortland, focus group participants' experiences suggest the consideration of an on-going mentoring project. This project for new faculty, during the pre-tenure years, would connect and collaborate with individual departments. In the context of mentoring activities and communication as *dialogical*, the Provost's efforts were singled out in the following:

*I think the Provost has done a wonderful job with the newer faculty in terms of building rapport. I think the newer cohort of faculty have a better understanding of her philosophy, what her vision is. And frankly, I don't feel at risk talking with the Provost about things.*

and

*I think with the Provost, you're getting much more direct communication, information. You know what her intent is. They're talking about building graduate programs. That's something she is very interested in. She wants to put curricular programs into a department. It's very clear she's being upfront about this. I think it's very clear.*

and

*There was that feeling that something new was happening, there was a new direction perhaps insight, of a shared sense of invigoration, new jobs, my new job, together, onward and upward, very personable. For those groups of new faculty who got to know those people as people will only give them more leeway than some of the older faculty. And maybe some kind of shared vision, shared newness. As we said, energy of newness, but it's also getting to know them as people without having a real record.*

—New faculty reflecting on Raquette Lake Retreat with the Provost and others

#### Recommendation 18

**Build into the structure ways for segments of the campus to understand what other parts of the College really do. Define and operationalize the “two-way street.”**

As is true in many organizations, knowledge of the inner workings of departments and units beyond one’s own is negligible. One may accept this as inevitable in a very large organization; however, faculty in the focus groups saw this gap in knowledge as seriously affecting communication and effective functioning. While no magic wand in the facilitating of multiple kinds of communication, a creative project to address the knowledge gaps should be a major priority. The “two-way street” mentioned below recognizes the mutual responsibility of faculty, staff, and administrators in such an endeavor. The following comments are very insightful and are representative of the larger group of faculty participants:

*We really don’t know what other parts of the College really do. We really don’t know each other so how can we actually communicate? One of the ways to go is to have it open that we can have a meeting with people in administration next year or the next and have them come over for a departmental meeting. I think it is a matter of the different divisions, schools, departments not understanding what others do. I think that makes a lot of administrative offices not fully understand what we do and what we need to do it well. And we don’t fully understand what they do and what they need.*

and

*I think there are a set of concerns about the need for efficiency that sometimes people on the faculty can be less concerned about. Yet, that is not our main concern, we’re not particularly concerned about whether Banner can or can’t do something. We want to do our curriculum. We want to be intellectually productive, but we can’t deny that there’s a valid concern on the other side. So, I think we need to be fair and acknowledge that it’s a two-way street and there are schisms, compartmentalizations on campus.*

ARTS & SCIENCES: SECRETARIES



**OVERARCHING THEME I**

Structure outlets for the “front line, first person” in academic departments.

**HOW?**

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

**Recommendation 19**

Institute “staff development” for academic secretaries.

All secretaries in the focus group were in agreement with what one secretary articulated as follows:

*Getting together as a group doesn't happen very often unless we're doing Banner training. One of the positive things I would like to see happen, that I have written down as development—staff development, I don't know what you want to call it. Other areas do it and other schools do it—having a lot of gatherings for their employees to get together for a celebration or just for a retreat, whatever they may want to call that, but I think that academic secretarial staff from this area had some kind of motivational thing for us. And I am not talking about something that will take us away for another half day, where we come back and feel stressed, but just a chance to RELEASE, maybe vent a little bit with some of the types of ideas that we are doing.*

The main thrust of the Arts and Sciences secretaries' needs was not in the area of gaining more technological knowledge, although that was mentioned, but in the area of affiliation with one another and the sharing of ideas they had learned from being on the front line. They desired to share and brainstorm about techniques to handle tasks in their own ways. Informal knowledge, their “local knowledge,” rather than formal knowledge seemed to be

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### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

at the core of their multi-tasking world. They have little opportunity to enlarge upon that knowledge together and with others in the form of staff development. In many ways “local knowledge” is what makes the department operate successfully.

#### Recommendation 20

**Structure training in the use of the voice mail system as is done for Banner training.**

Secretaries agree that Banner training is good but they need a structure that will provide training in additional technology that will be instituted in the workplace as evidenced in the following comment:

*The voice mail system has created another whole job for us too. Learning how to use it and showing it to others. The whole telephone system, setting up mailboxes and messages and such there's very little training once they plop those phones on our desk. There's very little training and I have asked about having something offered to us during the break—either a refresher or give us the short cuts and tips. And I hate the music! I hate the music! I'm embarrassed. It's a hokey, hoe-down kind of music and it isn't anything that is of any caliber at all. There are definite problems with that voice mail system.*

#### Recommendation 21

**Build into the communication structure for academic secretaries a quick and effective means and mode of communication with administrative entities.**

Secretaries expressed much concern over the existing structure of communication channels as it impeded their ability to fully meet the needs of students. Their suggestions and concerns as expressed in the following comments embody the idea of creating “enabling structures” that would allow secretaries to meet higher end functions, in this case the resolution of student’s needs:

*Trying to get something when you have a student at your desk and it's a pressing question. Try to call Admissions, the Registrar's office. Let me try to call Financial*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Arts and Sciences

*Aid. Let me pretty much try to call anybody over in that Miller Building. And you're always going to get a message, voice message and it always amazes me. This is ridiculous. It's like let's have a hot line that the secretaries can use.*

and

*We're expected to be at our desks answering the phone so that people can get information. I think one time it was six minutes to the Registrar's office. And Admissions is a nightmare. And Financial Aid, forget it. I've walked over there—because I mean you just can't get through. And, it's as simple as you know, I'm gonna send a student over and then just please, because she's upset because something happened.*

LIBRARIANS



**Recommendation 1**

**Communicate in every possible way the nature of Memorial Library as a “building for service.”**

Librarians have raised a very significant, multi-layered issue that they feel is not understood across campus, namely, the focus on a building as well as the inhabitants and users of that building.

*For a lot of building administrators, the building is not part of the service, so whoever is the building administrator for Van Hoesen, you know, they may need to know that the water is off, but it's not going to affect everybody that walks in the door. Whereas, our building is part of the service. That's a whole different animal. We're open an enormous number of hours which puts the building in a service orientation.*

and

*It was very, very clear that the students looked at us as a physical space to come and study or use computers, or use printers. They were very concerned about the physical space.*

**Recommendation 2**

**Structurally create a vehicle to encourage and enhance dialogue between librarians and other faculty, deans and administrators. Lessen the “ivory tower” effect.**

*I don't like the idea of just being in the building. Sometimes people say, 'Ah, they let you out of the library'? Or something like that. I sometimes walk over to Old Main to see some of the faculty that I deal with as a bibliographer. I think this is all a community. Our role, our teaching role is to provide a lot of materials that the students need, but if we don't work with other faculty to get students in here, or you know, show them that we have things that they can use, then what's the point? They're probably not going to find us on their own.*

and

*I've noticed that the deans don't really know what some of our problems are. And even more than that—the chairs and even faculty don't even know what some of their problems are. So we hear faculty complaining about why don't we have these resources. And they think we are not trying to do anything about it. YES, please communicate, tell your chairs so that they'll tell the deans so that they'll tell the Provost so that it won't be somebody other than our bosses' boss telling the Provost that we have a resource issue.*

#### **Recommendation 3**

**Communicate the status of librarians as members of the academic community.**

Librarian's perspectives on how they were perceived within the academy was one of ambiguity at best and non-faculty at worst.

*We aren't perceived as faculty. I feel like I am sort of out of the loop on certain things. Nobody knows that we're faculty because last semester I had several Education professors nominate me for a service award. But it was a professional award and I was ineligible. Some people just don't see us as professors and I don't understand that.*

and

*And also, you know, some of it's structural. It's so funny because there's these service awards—there's one for faculty, there's one for professionals. There isn't one for librarians.*

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Examine DSI criteria and categories for librarians so that they are not disadvantaged.**

A faculty administrator at Memorial Library makes the following comment:

*With regard to DSI this past year, librarians were at a significant disadvantage because of the pool into which they were put. It reflects the 'partition thinking' from above and makes them feel marginalized. It affects recruitment and retention of librarians.*

#### Recommendation 5

**Improve the reporting structure for communicating the needs of Memorial Library and include the Director on the Chairs' Councils.**

Librarians see the inclusion of the Director of Memorial Library on the Chairs' Council as singularly appropriate to not only vocalize their needs within an official public arena, but also to cultivate relationships with faculty. Clearly, access to decision-makers, from the perspective of librarians, is impeded within the communication/reporting structure for Memorial Library at SUNY Cortland. The deeper latent meaning expressed here and throughout the discussions, however, is the lack of *effective integration structurally* into the system and the resultant consequences. The perspective of librarians participating in the focus groups was that Memorial Library is structurally like a department with no chair and no dean to report to.

*The Director kind of acts as the chair, and her boss kind of acts as the dean but because they aren't privy to the normal chair and dean things, how are they supposed to advise you about certain processes?*

The foregoing comments speak to a vital distinction in the work life of librarians: the difference in running the library as a business and the needs and demands of librarians as faculty. One respondent, in an administrative position at Memorial Library, offers the following perspective on a quandary of the often opposing expectations for librarians:

*Operating a library involves economic, procedural, policy and program issues plus the running of the library itself. The library is unique and some librarians are concerned with research but not concerned with procedures while others are concerned with service and procedures but not with research. Yet, they are expected to do all and offer the service. They are part of a weird evaluation process. With regard to DSI this past year, librarians were at a significant disadvantage because of the pool into which they were put. It reflects the 'partition thinking' from above and makes them feel marginalized. It affects recruitment and retention of librarians. How do they balance research with being a librarian? Promotion criteria for*

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### Recommendations - Librarians

*faculty and librarians is very different. The reality is that you cannot run a library with a ten- month schedule. We would lose continuity so they have to be there twelve months. And we don't get any adjunct money for summer jobs. It is a rare librarian who can be devoted to scholarship and to the functions they have in the library.*

We can conclude there is a clear structural lag between the vision and advancement of the library itself as a service (which is beginning to happen) and the recognition and status of librarians with little relief from their persistent role conflict.

**EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES: FACULTY**



**Recommendation 1**

**Clarify the ways in which the multiple sets of goals that affect faculty relate, and make the priorities clear and manageable that are passed down to faculty.**

Create a clearer, more concise set of College and division goals and create a basis of understanding and expectations across departments

*There needs to be a way to be updated on the goals. A way to communicate these in a way that makes sense and isn't overwhelming. In order to have that work there needs some similarity in how we look at these. There needs to be some common criteria to look at these goals and how our work relates to these. Maybe they aren't as fragmented as they seem, but there seems to be a stream of goals that continue to keep coming and coming. (Professional Studies faculty)*

When a new initiative is approached, carefully look at existing workload and priorities before committing to the initiative. This would allow faculty to understanding the top priorities and organize their work in respect to those priorities. In addition, this would allow for a sense of closure and achievement on initiatives that would make work overall more rewarding and motivating. There is a sense that no one project is ever completed before new work is added and that is overwhelming. Allow for some initiatives to be tabled and worked into longer-range goals in order to complete current initiatives

*Just let me finish one thing before you give me three more to do. (Professional Studies faculty)*

Reconsider the long range planning process in terms of it's effectiveness, efficiency, and relationship to other goals. The amount of work put into the process may not justify the outcomes. In addition, two years is not necessarily a long-range process and we should consider longer timeframes for legitimate long range planning.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Education and Professional Studies

#### Recommendation 2

**Identify where decisions are made and create processes that keep people engaged and informed in the academic decisions of the School and College.**

A consistent recommendation was that the location of final decisions—who has the “final say” be easily understood. Although collaborative dialogues are respected and needed, there is also a need to delineate who makes the final decision. At times, faculty felt that the authority was unclear. This included clarifying the decision-making authority of faculty senate, chairs, program coordinators, graduate studies, and the Provost.

For regular processes, provide an outline of the process, relative timelines, and who makes the final decision for that particular issue. Although we have the Handbook, it was not always clear what the steps of particular decision processes were for a given issue. The Handbook could be reviewed for clarity or there could be a website under the Provost’s and Deans’ areas that provides fact sheets or how-to sheets for curricula, program development, and other areas.

*I would like to know when I could expect a response, at least a timeframe, instead of having to just keep asking my Dean, who can only respond that he sent it forward. For the hiring process at the least, that would be a huge help. (Professional Studies faculty)*

Faculty would find it helpful to have a sense of timeframes for decision-making, particularly with personnel issues. They could then relay this to their departments and utilize this in their planning overall.

This information could then be used in orienting new faculty and new chairs to their schools, roles, and encouraging faculty to see opportunities for participation in decision-making.

*Clearly identify the location of final decision-making responsibility and the appropriate path for presenting and resolving issues. Yes, there are handbooks and guidelines, but we need a working protocol to assist faculty and chairs that is hands on—how things are really done. (Education faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Education and Professional Studies

#### Recommendation 3

**Provide justification for decision making and provide information on decisions directly to the faculty involved.**

Building upon the clarification of decision-making structures and authority, there was an equally strong recommendation that, when a decision is made, that justification for the decision be presented in meaningful ways to those involved. This would enhance the function and climate of Academic Affairs by illustrating that there is rationale behind decisions, that their information was fully considered, how the information was processed, and how the final conclusion was formulated. This would provide a more open communication and sense of understanding of the rationale and values of the “administration” whether that is the chair, dean, Provost, or President. For those who may not receive the decision they were seeking, it would provide insight on how the decision fits into the overall institutional (or departmental or divisional) goals. It would also provide feedback that would allow them to better understand how to advocate for their programs and initiatives.

*If decisions are data-driven, then we should have access to all of the data, not just our own. We should have access to the same information, to a reasonable level, that the decision maker has. How do I know how to work the system and improve my ability to gain resources if I don't have a point of reference? (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*Maybe there is a rationale, but where is it? If it's part of some strategic plan, let us see it and see when we are in the master plan. (Professional Studies faculty)*

A more open communication and information process would positively affect the sense of trust, shared understanding, and common goals. The information culture of the division would improve and there would be a greater understanding of our individual roles and the roles of others in the greater divisional and institutional goals and priorities.

#### Recommendation 4

**Assess the equity of staffing in relation to the number of faculty and students including looking at departmental structure, staffing, and deans' office staffing.**

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Education and Professional Studies

The inequities in staffing is an issue in relation to the quality of teaching and advising, ability to conduct scholarship, ability to participate in committee work at department, school, division and college level, access to support, and ability to advocate for needs. It also addresses a basic need to make work reasonable and enjoyable, and to give faculty an opportunity to feel more of a part of the college. One of the sources of marginalization was literally the amount of work that needs to be done with students and within programs and departments. Addressing the workload, with this perspective in mind, could improve participation and level of inclusiveness.

Consider program and departmental structures that are appropriate or not appropriate to the delivery of programs, development of curricula, and management of departments. Looking at the relationship of disciplines, program demands, student enrollment, and collaboration among faculty, departmental structure should be assessed. For example the Sports Management Program should be fully considered for departmental status, given the distinct nature of the discipline, curricula, student goals, and experience.

*Sports Management is a great example. There is a curriculum that has very little in relation with the other programs in the department. We have needs for teaching, advising, and program delivery that cannot be met by faculty in the other departments. In fact, we have needs to work with some Arts and Science departments even more. [Sports Management] has to be able to advocate and operate as a department. (Professional Studies faculty)*

<b>Recommendation 5</b>	<b>Clarify the role of the Academic Affairs Council.</b>
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*I'm on the Academic Affairs Council and to be really honest, there are days I see that on my calendar and just—I sit in the meetings and have little to contribute to a lot of the discussions. I just wonder if I really need to be there because my dean or associate dean could just tell me what's going on. I have other things I could be doing—I'm just not an administrator and I'm not sure if I need to be at that table. (Education faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Education and Professional Studies

#### Recommendation 6

**Establish standards of priorities and performance for department chairs and deans.**

There needs to be a sense of common expectations for what a chair should do, what they should be expected to take on, and how their workload can be equitable with other chairs on campus. Clarification of the chair role and support for people taking on the role of chair was highly recommended.

*Is there a handbook for chairs? Maybe a boot camp. I don't know if they always know what they are getting into. Some of that depends on their department. But there must be a common set of job tasks as chair. What's the most important thing to do? How to handle tricky situations. You learn a lot on the job I think, but is there a mentor program maybe? I haven't been a chair, but it seems like a ton of work that you learn as you go. (Professional Studies faculty)*

In addition, faculty in Education were particularly interested in the expectations they can have of their dean's office in terms of communication, access, and information. Faculty had varying perspectives on what a dean's role is ranging from an internal support to external advocate for the school. Although the nature of collaboration with the dean and faculty cannot be completely quantified, a clear set of expectations would provide a framework for building stronger communication and trust.

#### Recommendation 7

**Find ways to make messages more clear and consistent and ways to encourage the sharing of data.**

Support the deans and chairs in finding ways to better share information with their constituents in meaningful and timely ways. In addition, find ways to assist chairs and faculty in communicating outward.

*It might be that we don't always listen. There is a difference in how quickly and how clearly messages are sent from one level to another. At times, I don't know what someone else knows because we just haven't had a chairs meeting yet. But we could improve on that communication—downward and upward. (Education faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Education and Professional Studies

#### **Recommendation 8**

**Create an accessible archive of reports, minutes, and related communications and post meetings minutes on-line.**

*It takes weeks to see the minutes from Academic Affairs and by the time you get them the issues are not relevant. (Education faculty)*

#### **Recommendation 9**

**Encourage greater sharing of data and information across departments to assist in understanding the overall needs of the division and in understanding department data relative to peers.**

Faculty noted that there used to be a much more open culture of data and information. Over time, individuals and departments are less likely to openly share data--such as assessment, Student Opinion Survey, enrollment numbers, etc. The concern is that this territoriality reduces what we know about campus, open dialogues about goals, and the ability for department to understand their own data and information in the context of the institution.

*We used to share data very freely like ten years ago, but not there is a much more protective sense. Maybe people are over-assessed, but data isn't something that we all look at across the board anymore. It makes you wonder how we are using it and why people feel the need to protect themselves, or what they think will happen if they share their assessment information or enrollment numbers or whatever. (Professional Studies faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Administrators and Professionals

#### ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSIONALS

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##### Recommendation 1

**Address the ways in which communication is delivered, could be more consistent, and encourage greater responsibility in the dissemination of information.**

*What people are saying needs to keep the same message. How do we find out what different people think—how do we clarify this? How is the communication flowing upward and across areas so that ideas are developed?*

##### Recommendation 2

**Increase participation in the creation and refinement of objectives, not just the attainment of objectives.**

Focus on the ways to enhance input and understanding at the point of creation of objectives. How can people across the division understand when there are opportunities for dialogue and take advantage of those opportunities?

*It's not just communicating objectives, but our ability to design objectives collaboratively will be the way to strengthen the structure and the achievement of goals.*

Specifically, redesign the long-range planning process to be more efficient. In theory, it is a collaborative and positive approach, but in actuality it is not effective. Communication is not always complete and does not recognize the existing expertise and planning of offices. Often, the long-range planning group will come up with objectives that are well intended, but not the most useful or effective approach. The objectives are created in vacuums at times, not related fully to what has been done, is being done, or is planned.

*It is a ton of work and sometimes isn't on target. If people could spend the time explaining how their individual and departmental goals support the greater institu-*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Administrators and Professionals

*tional goals we probably wouldn't need this whole planning process. We could have advisory groups making sure that we are fully addressing issues, but not groups prescribing what should be done.*

#### Recommendation 3

**Consider the cost effectiveness of initiatives and fully consider alternatives before making a commitment.**

*Although not everything can be put into a financial formula, it seems like we need some measure of how much something costs in terms of time, staff, and money, and what the benefits will be to students, faculty, the College.*

#### Recommendation 4

**Provide greater education and support in helping everyone across the division understand the institutional goals and how their work supports these goals. Provide greater support in creation of departmental and office objectives.**

*I come up with objectives based on conversations and there are goals specific to my area. That's where the long-range planning starts. You can see where the goals run parallel and where they conflict. That's where the planning happens.*

Continue to support campus-wide initiatives that address institutional goals. This includes continuing to find ways to clarify that responsibility for programs such as open house and orientation that are campus-wide. There are offices responsible for directing and organizing, but they are based upon the needs of the whole college and need full participation to succeed.

*I don't know if it's easy to see, but we design and run programs to meet the needs of a number of people and goals. Orientation is about students, parents, faculty, offices and to make it all happen we need to look at the bigger picture. Sometimes others don't see that and they don't have to, that's why we're here! But I wish they would consider that.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Administrators and Professionals

#### Recommendation 5

**Examine the structure and responsibilities within Academic Affairs that are disjointed, unclear, or could be more efficient.**

*Graduate enrollment and undergraduate enrollment are tightly linked and there is one office responsible for enrollment overall. So they need more ability to make decisions about graduate enrollment-related decisions, or they shouldn't be responsible for those numbers.*

The number of constituents may be too great for meaningful dialogue and possibly may not be relevant to the conversations. Clarify the Council's decision-making authority. Complete an audit of all committees and responsibilities and try to utilize existing committees before creating new ones or task forces.

#### Recommendation 6

**Hold people accountable for their responsibilities and for behaving in respectful and civilized ways.**

*At what point can we say that some work is not being done and that it is not acceptable? Whether it is an inability to do the work, or lack of understanding...I don't think people just don't care...but everyone needs to be accountable for doing what they are paid to do—and it doesn't seem like there is always a way to hold people accountable.*

and

*The chairs are in a very tough place with this idea of administration and supervision. Some do a great job, some cajole, but what is the structure that supports their work and authority?*

and

*There is no need to be combative or uncivil. But at times I feel like supervisors allow this. That some people have just been allowed to act out in ways that aren't civil and we shouldn't accept that. It makes you not want to work at all with that office. It's the same ones over and over.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Administrators and Professionals

#### Recommendation 7

**Acknowledge administrators' roles in fulfilling the academic goals of the division and ways to enhance the workplace.**

The quality of work life for administrators could be improved by a greater understanding of the differences in administration and the ways in which administration is congruent with, not opposed to the academic endeavor.

*First of all, it's just not right to say administration describes all of the non-teaching people in Academic Affairs. I'm really a peon here compared to a dean or an associate vice president.*

and

*I don't think there is a clear sense that we can contribute to meeting goals; that we do contribute on a daily basis to meeting goals. There is this oppositional feeling you get from faculty. Cowboys and indians. I wish there could be an understanding that we are all on the same team, just taking on different positions—which are all necessary.*

A clearer understanding of the roles of administrators may help alleviate some of the tension.

*Maybe everyone should be chair for a day, or associate dean for a day, or dean for a day and we'd all have a better sense that maybe oppression isn't the primary job of an administrator.*

and

*I don't think there is always full appreciation for our education and expertise in education fields. We have master's and doctoral degrees in education, many of us. But we aren't seen as educators or even intellectuals at times.*

Creation of greater career development and career advancement opportunities for professionals could also enhance motivation and investment in the College.

*There is no new professional orientation. You meet with Human Resources to go over benefits, but there is no welcome in the division. Your department might do something, but that's very different from a broader orientation to the division and college.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #1 - Communication

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### Recommendations - Administrators and Professionals

and

*Where do you go if you're doing well? To advance, you need to leave and that's a shame.*

#### Recommendation 8

**As people take on new positions or come to the College, be sure that they have a way of understanding the context of how things are done—the history, the players, and the information that is involved.**

*There is one thing. We do have administrative turnover, so new people need to figure out what has happened to their coming into the position. There are good points and work that has been done. We risk alienating faculty and staff by dismissing the work done before. People lose interest in new things if they feel unvalued. There is an institutional memory, there needs to be some way or a way for people to do the homework to understanding how and why things happen and who was involved.*

# Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

## Issue #2

Enhancing the structure and determining the nature and purpose of interdisciplinary programs and centers at SUNY Cortland.

### WOMEN'S STUDIES



As a prelude to consideration of the survival of Women's Studies at Cortland, consider the following quotes from two faculty:

*Women's Studies has always been a problem at SUNY Cortland because of the masculinist nature of the general curriculum and the institutional structure as well as the students.*

and

*Obviously, a lot of energy went into creating Women's Studies as a minor and the fact that, you know we have had only one person keeping it alive last year and to be quite honest, I didn't really want to do it this year. All I know is that I feel very strongly about whether Women's Studies is going to exist on this campus. I think we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our students, first and foremost, and to those who will come after us.*

### Historical Context of Women's Studies

The participants in the Women's Studies focus groups ranged from the early founders, those active in the middle years, to new faculty who are seeking an understanding of the program and their position within the academy as female faculty. These women spoke from their perspective with a combination of intellectual insight about, and impassioned dedication to the struggles for an institutional recognition of Women's Studies at SUNY Cortland.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

***“Knowing the History of Struggle on Campus Would Create a Different Climate for Meetings with the Provost and President.”***

A few group members felt that we are having the focus groups specifically on Women's Studies because of the historical struggles. As one faculty member put it, “So much strife has happened and so many personality conflicts that it is a study in teaching about oppressions and it ends up with the little people fighting each other.”

One participant's early experiences with the Cortland climate for women is captured in the following:

*In the 1970s there was not even any discussion about Women's Studies at the time. There was a Faculty Wives Club. I made one visit and I remember walking away and I never came back. Then when I came back in a different capacity in 1998 and seeing the talk about important issues among faculty and students I thought that was really exhilarating.*

Women's Studies at SUNY Cortland began seriously in the mid 1980s, somewhat late in terms of other SUNY Colleges and Universities and other institutions regionally and nationally. People realized there needed to be something done about “the incredible sexism on campus.”

It was started by a few women and men. Interestingly enough, those women familiar with the origins of Women's Studies at Cortland comment that the need for a women's studies “presence” at SUNY Cortland did not grow out of a struggle on this campus such as the demands of students. In 1985, a Minority and Women's Studies Council was established. From the perspective of the respondents it seems that the creation of the Council came from United University Professions (UUP) and was “sort of like a band-aid” to respond to the growing sexism on campus.

The Council continued to grow out of discussion among administrators and a member of the Political Science Department and it was decided to have a category in the General Education program and study racism and sexism. One member comments:

*We created the minor and looked at lots of different models. We created this minor so that Minority and Women's Studies was a center run by a council. We had a particular philosophy of a center which should be sort of like a coalition, a left of center coalition in terms of political activism because there were mostly liberals and leftists involved. It came out of discussion among the administrators and a*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

*faculty member and others. It was decided to have a category in the General Education program and study racism and sexism and have people from Minority and Women's Studies Council. We ended up calling it "Prejudice and Discrimination" which exists to this day. So we built that category and the Women's Studies minor.*

### Early Structure

It was never a department, however, but was a Minority and Women's Studies Council with a Steering Committee. A former male faculty member was mandated to give fifty percent of his time to provide administrative support for the center. There were regular meetings with about nine or ten people. The climate at the time was potentially threatening and there were lots of cutbacks in the early '80s and fear about what was going to happen to people's jobs and departments. An idea came up in 1982, '83 and '84 that Black Studies should be cut but what emerged was an umbrella organization not a department which included Women's Studies, Black Studies, Jewish Studies, Native American Studies, and Gay and Lesbian Concerns. The organization was called Multicultural and Gender Studies (MGS). The first courses were taught in 1988.

The only course Women's Studies ever got was the introductory course. The "Introduction to Women's Studies" was first taught by adjuncts and then a faculty member taught it as an overload for several years. MGS did some programming—a lecture in the fall and a lecture in the spring and a few more things for Women's History Month.

There were difficulties because Black Studies had been a Department at one time. A participant elaborates in the following from her perspective:

*There was a feeling among Black Studies people that they felt diminished by being linked with several others. These other groups didn't know anything about Black Studies so why should they have anything to say about that? Why should Women's Studies have anything to say about Black Studies and the curriculum much less vote on it? There was a quarrel about what it was going to be called—finally ended up with Multicultural and Gender Studies. The unification seemed to work during the 1980s because there was a common goal to struggle for: Get the Category "10", Prejudice and Discrimination" category which ended up being passed by the faculty. It would have a dual focus: racism and sexism. Then after that was accomplished we seemed to lack purpose and energy was defused because we didn't have a struggle.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

#### The late 1980s and '90s

In the late 1980s, faculty and students at SUNY Cortland involved with Women's Studies did more "radical things." The second wave of feminism in the larger society in the '90s precipitated a shift toward cultural issues on most campuses throughout the United States and Cortland was no exception in that regard. As a faculty member put it:

*There was more interest in doing wonderful things with Barbie Dolls and I just didn't feel like it was a home because my radical politics were sort of irrelevant and they weren't interested in that.*

Even faculty members in the focus groups who might not identify with "radical politics" expressed adamant concern over the "cultural turn" in Women's Studies in so far as it focused on "frivolous" issues rather than promoting and showcasing feminist scholarship and political issues at the College.

One very important point to understand in the early years is that SUNY Cortland had a diversity of voices within Women's Studies, ranging from conservative to radical. Yet, these divergent voices were able to realize common objectives. Founding members of Women's Studies sought to provide more opportunities and sites for furthering the connection between women, inequality, ethics, and policy on campus. The result was the course, Values 140, which originally had more of a Marxist perspective in terms of inequalities. At the same time there were women involved with the push for DSI to help bring about equity in salaries.

In the interim after that it was "a hodge-podge," according to faculty. Several faculty have tried to "get it back on track" but few people want to chair that committee or be a coordinator. According to one member, "After that period, people just seemed to go their own way." By the end of the '90s, Women's Studies, according to another respondent, "kind of fell apart. Some of it may have been personality issues and also people's commitments to other things."

Currently, there is a Council of which Women's Studies is a part, structurally. As one participant pointed out:

*There is a coordinator who gets a meager, you know, has a bone thrown at her and is expected to do all the academic coordination with course work and all the work with minors making sure there's information and representing a myriad number of things like fairs and things like that.*

### The Historical Tension about Purpose

At SUNY Cortland there has always been a tension surrounding the purpose of a Women's Studies Program (Center). Whether Women's Studies is an academic discipline or whether it is geared toward working on the climate of women on campus or whether it combines both continues to be debated. Some see Women's Studies as an academic endeavor that is separate from a Center for Women's Studies as the following statement emphasizes:

*I do think that the academic side has been lessened or it hasn't been the focus or certainly the kind of public face as much as I think it might be. The History Department doesn't think it is women's history because we are not having women historians in. They feel women's history in history has gotten short shrift. This is their perspective whether legitimate or not.*

Others warn against this separatist perspective and claim that:

*The problem with separating them is that nobody is the advocacy group if Women's Studies isn't the advocacy group. You have to be the watch dog for the campus. It was the only way we could get the attention of the administration. There has always been a struggle between cultural and activist feminism.*

Recognizing another aspect of this debate is the following statement from a focus group participant:

*But, there's a real tension here because of the patriarchal climate on this campus and the value of what we do. Academics is valued and you must publish or be doing academics otherwise the things that you do which are important issues are not valid.*

Other participants sought to think of Women's Studies on a broader plane within the academic world of SUNY Cortland. The following statement is evidence of that position:

*I've been listening to this and maybe there isn't as much of a divide as we think: I haven't been particularly connected with MGS but I'm doing Women's Studies all the time, It's integrated in everything that I do. I've presented at Women's History Month. I wonder if it might be a task for all of us to really think more carefully about all of the many things that do constitute women's studies and whether we're just focusing on one aspect as a more visible public aspect and bring things together and acknowledge our common purpose.*

The marginalized status of women's studies scholarship is also another factor as commented

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

upon in the following:

*Gender Studies on any campus are not valued. My advisor used to do gender studies and we would want to do stuff on gender and she would argue we were not going to get tenure and get a lot of publications. With the record on this campus it is not important. You get criticized when you separate things out.*

and

*The University doesn't take any of this seriously, including Multicultural and Gender Studies. They just keep coming up with excuses. Women's Studies is not viewed as a solid academic discipline. People don't take it seriously.*

In response to these statements, other faculty took the position that there were larger outside factors impinging on the viability of programs such as Women's Studies. The cutbacks in the larger society, the militarization of our society, and the increasing corporatization of the University were offered as root contributors to obtaining the funds to support such programs and make them a priority. A participant who has been active in trying to sustain Women's Studies at SUNY Cortland since the 1980s argues that:

*There has always been a keen interest among key administrators to support and have a good women's studies community that is functioning well. I do not see the administration as the enemy. I really don't. I never have. Maybe that is the hidden conservative in me but I just don't.*

### The Present Situation on Campus

The consensus from the focus groups is that there is not a very strong Women's Studies Committee on campus. There are very few minors and it seems as though people today are saying that they are glad that "you are doing that and isn't that nice but I'm not interested." Several of the reasons offered as to why there is such low participation include the following:

*People think it's infused. People have been trained and I am doing it in my classes. I don't really need to support a committee because it's another meeting to go to. Student apathy—students came in here and we have Title IX. They've been able to take that for granted. This is a sports school. Things are so much better now. We have a sports culture here and this kind of assumption that everything is equal now. We know it's not—but...*

and

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

*There is no institutional structure. There has been individual negotiation to get money for Women's Studies but it is not institutionalized in that sense. When I was doing it as an overload for many years I never had access to CTEs, never had access to blue books, and so forth as Coordinator. I never had a secretary that could deal with drop/add.*

and

*We have less money than we did when we started. It's deteriorated along with other things on campus. Originally we had \$1,000 and now have \$725 which comes from Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC). We've never been supported with State money.*

The idea that there was not a project to rally around now like the "transformation of the curriculum which occurred in the 1980s," was offered as another reason for the lethargic climate surrounding Women's Studies.

The image of Women's Studies on campus is a combination of minimal public visibility and a weak image as an academic discipline. The former is reinforced by the comment from a new faculty member that although when she came to apply, "everyone told me that there was a Women's Studies program here because I was looking for schools that had programs," she has not been aware of such a program since she arrived. New faculty have never heard of Women's Studies and these focus groups were this participant's introduction along with teaching a Women's Studies course. One untenured faculty member said that there is "not a single Women's Studies student in my classroom. I thought there would at least be a presence."

It becomes important to understand the consequences "of not being perceived as a solid academic discipline" on campus. As one faculty member powerfully put it, "most probably women can't get actively involved before tenure. You know, if you're in a department that doesn't value it, you better watch your economic base."

### Discussing Strategies

Discussion within the focus groups eventually turned to analyzing the current picture as a means to take action for the survival and enhancement of Women's Studies at SUNY Cortland. The dominance of a masculine (male) culture operating on campus can be juxtaposed against the fact that over fifty percent of the students are female. The following exchange in one focus group demonstrates the issues:

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

**Faculty 1:** *Our focus needs to be more open and upward throttled and thinking about research and other activities. Bring more support to the women in Professional Studies who feel incredibly isolated. The old phobia is there and I think we need to really move in that direction as well and present a wish list of how we make that possible.*

**Faculty 2:** *But we do this because we believe in it.*

**Faculty 1:** *I feel that unless we 'talk the talk'—the male talk, we won't get anywhere. We have to get ourselves a place, a department, some resources, a head. Otherwise we are just doing volunteer work.*

**Faculty 3:** *Yes, but no matter what we do, someone "up there" has to say, 'This is important and we want it done.'*

**Faculty 4:** *One of the problems is structural. Anything that isn't a department suffers from begging. If we want an identity, we need to have a department face. If we want structure, in this patriarchal institution, we need to be a department with a chairperson who knows how to cut through the s....*

**Faculty 5:** *Well, I would agree to some extent, except being a department doesn't guarantee anything. There's hierarchy in the department.*

**Faculty 1:** *I just came from my Prejudice and Discrimination class and I'm teaching Listen Up, New Voices of Feminist Youth and we were talking and this guy said that another guy on campus wanted to pick a fight with him because he had on a pink shirt. So he tried to avoid a fight with this guy. And the way he put it was: 'There's a lot of testosterone on this campus. And the students all nodded and smiled. They agreed. Now is the time we have to have a department. We have to have a really active program.*

**Faculty 6:** *Let's don't forget that fifty percent of Assistant Professors are women. They're young women and they are coming out of all kinds of disciplines. We ought to figure out a way to capitalize on that and maybe connecting more with our colleagues.*

## Perspectives on Institutional Support

A lively discussion occurred, steeped in the perspectives of faculty about the years of effort to gain what they felt was serious institutional support for Women's Studies which most felt

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

had yet to be seen. Senior women faculty were able to provide perspectives on the 1980s and support from a former Dean who made it structurally financially possible for faculty members to devote part of their time to coordinating and organizing a Women's Studies Program at SUNY Cortland. As some pointed out, however, that has been over twenty years ago. The need for creating a more women-friendly environment was echoed throughout the groups. Participants pointed to the efforts of the Provost and the Executive Assistant to the President as promising. Others were a bit skeptical. Note the following narratives:

*I'm going to defend the Provost because I think she and the Executive Assistant to the President in terms of women's programs and stuff, are genuinely trying to do something positive. So perhaps there is a disjuncture in how they construct it. And, I think, a lot of things that are happening are very positive and whatever but that may unwittingly contribute to the illusion that we've gotten further than we have. For example, I have to do this workshop on balancing work and family. Then we can talk about how you have to get your cooked dinner in the crock pot before you go to work and you will have a hot meal when you get home.*

and

*Or on your lowly women's salary, you're willing to shell out the big bucks for a babysitter, so you don't lose time with your kids and spend the money on the babysitter.*

and

*I don't think we should eliminate the possibility of working with administrators like the Executive Assistant to the President and the Provost, in particular, because there is a lot of good intention there and maybe they haven't seen the forest for the trees. I don't know if that is the right analogy, but we're not clearly enough articulating to them what the real substantive problems are.*

But on the other hand, a bit of suspicion creeps in as evidenced from another participant's comments:

*Or, is the Initiatives for Women just another construction of reality. That is to say, that's just another creation of an illusion for things that are really happening.*

Then the rejoinder:

*I agree with you. I think they do care. The fact that they are going to bring the Access to College Education (ACE) Conference here. That's a major thing.*

The following represents the dilemma of having new leadership by administrators, but be-

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

ing burned out personally. In particular, all participants urged that the history of Women's Studies be communicated to those in positions of power. Note the following:

*Well, the Provost does respond and I think she has good intentions, but that illusion should not take the place of other things. For example, when they decided to have that big conversation about ethnic studies, and there was nothing about gender studies. And I wanted to say, 'Where is gender studies in all of this?' They need the history of what has happened. They haven't been in on that when we all got burned out, burned out and it came in cycles. So maybe they don't have the benefit of that. And maybe things would be just a little bit different if we could say at least, 'Yes, we'd really like to but we don't have the money so it's not going to change.'*

Context becomes very important, both past and present, as indicated in the following:

*Well, the Provost and the Executive Assistant to the President are in very important positions in terms of signaling a culture on this campus and if they can somehow be brought into creating a more, you know, women-friendly environment with a genuine understanding. I think they could make a real difference. I'm sure in their minds having these forums is a start and I enjoyed. I went to a luncheon and there were women there it's like (sigh) you can tell I appreciate that. Usually for years I'm running, you know, you're running from one meeting to the next, to a student, to a class, to pick up your kids, and you know. The reason a woman can't be at this thing to talk about what women and family does, because of the list of things she had to do during the time of the meeting. I just think that the Provost and the Executive Assistant to the President are key people but I don't know how to...*

and

*The Executive Assistant to the President doesn't like to lead a sham. It may be that the "Chilly Climate" Committee is cleaned up now in terms of membership. It's been appointed by the President and there have been times when people on there have impeded progress big time. They made that "bad" survey the way it was.*

### What We Have

Voices of conciliation and guarded optimism were also a part of the vigorous discussions as evidenced in these comments:

*POWER has been regenerated on campus and has about thirty members. There's also a solid academic research program where people are studying and investigating different aspects of the experience of women in all different cultures and envi-*

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*ronments and classes and backgrounds and societies. So part of it is sharing that information in classrooms and in forums and going out and finding out about it – out in the world and then sharing about it and helping reinforce our own experiences and furthering them in that direction.*

and

*I've been listening and maybe there isn't as much of a divide as we think. I haven't been particularly connected with MGS but I'm doing Women's Studies all the time. It's integrated in everything I do. I've presented at Women's History Month. I wonder if it might be a task for all of us to really think more carefully about all of the many things that do constitute Women's Studies and whether we're focusing on one aspect as a more viable aspect and bring things together and acknowledge our common purpose.*

### What We Need

Faculty in the focus groups feel we are losing the creativity of women who are coming to this campus. They are recruited and *being led to believe* that we have a viable, institutionalized Women's Studies program with substantial support from the administration when in fact the opportunity is there, but it is all voluntary, above load, with little or no compensation. It is not pulling the considerable resources and talents of women across the academy together. A faculty member discusses the dilemma as follows:

*One of the things that came out of the Women's Initiatives Committee on Home and Work Balance, which came from the grass roots was the wonderful idea to provide day care at major College events. And the Provost and the Executive Assistant to the President facilitated us in developing that idea. Guess what? We did the survey, we found out what the needs were, the buck stopped there and I didn't have time. I simply could not follow through on it. It all fell apart because of my time constraints with my family and work. Now, if there were a real Women's Center or a person who was a full-time coordinator when ideas like this come up, you need people in positions who are paid, who could then implement those ideas. So, there's the support for the administrative level for it. The Executive Assistant to the President facilitated, she helped us, she gave us whatever support we needed as did the Provost to do the survey, to do whatever needed to be done, but it's the implementation part of it that's the problem. I suspect that that will happen with a lot of these women's studies initiatives because you can't add them to the zillion other things women have to do as part of their normal job.*

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### Overarching Themes - Specific: Women's Studies

The distinctions made in the preceding narrative are crucial in understanding some of the present inherent impediments as well as the possible solutions to creating social change for women at SUNY Cortland. Participants spoke of the great need to *consolidate* groups working on behalf of women as summed up in the following:

*Energy is being wasted... You've got Chilly Climate Committee, Provost's Initiatives for Women, Women's Studies, POWER, Committee on the Status of Women, writing groups... My point is that we've got to find a way to bring that energy together because I think the issue of people being burned out and factoring in new faculty and they are working for tenure, they're not tenured. There's got to be a way to stop the redundancy.*

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**Overarching Themes - Specific: Center for Aging and Human Services**

### **CENTER FOR AGING AND HUMAN SERVICES**



#### **Short Background**

The Center for Aging and Human Services has a multidisciplinary focus and plays a central role in initiating, coordinating, and facilitating gerontological activities at the College. The Center effectively began in 2000 from a directive of the former Dean of Arts and Sciences. The addition of Human Services to the Center for Aging occurred later that year based on an arbitrary decision by the former Dean because he did not want to create another structure on campus to house the Human Services Studies program. In practice, the Human Services Program has operated as a completely autonomous program with a coordinator since its inception.

The four elements of the vision of the Center are as follows:

- To be a leader in, and promoter of creative teaching and an academically sound, theoretically strong gerontology curriculum.
- To be an innovator in responding to substantive directions of change in the gerontological field in research and research-related activities.
- To develop and cultivate dynamic sites, physically and socially, where a community of thinkers and doers recognize older adults as partners and truly learn about, as well as from older persons.
- To be an active and steadfast advocate, in word and in deed, politically and socially, for the aging population and disenfranchised, oppressed persons in general.

The Center has a Director and Council members who were recruited from all parts of the Cortland campus, the Cortland community, and the student body. The Council acts as a governing body and a think tank. Major strategic planning was accomplished in the first year as well as the implementation of the first major priority of making the field of aging visible on the Cortland campus and in the region and to implement an initiative that would bring major national and international scholars from diverse fields to present an Age Concerns Lecture/Conference series. Four committees were developed: Research and Grants, Teaching and Curriculum, Campus-Community Initiatives, and Advocacy.

The following are examples of a sample of the work of the Center over the past four years: there have been three Age Concerns Lecture series with major national and international scholars in aging; an Ethics Workshop for twenty-five regional leaders in long-term care

## **Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary**

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### **Overarching Themes - Specific: Center for Aging and Human Services**

conducted by an ethicist from the Park Ridge Center in Chicago; creation of a website for the Center, publicity materials in the form of posters and brochures; creation of an Age Studies Consortium with SUNY Oswego and SUNY Upstate Medical Center to offer a master's certificate in gerontology; Open House and recruitment efforts for the minor in gerontology and the concentration in social gerontology located in the Sociology Department; coordination of undergraduate research projects at Brewster House and Walden Place Assisted Living; collaboration with the Center for International Education and Women's Studies/History Month to present speakers on aging; collaboration with Cortland County Area Agency on Aging on workshops, presentations by the Director on care work and ethics in aging; writing and receiving grants from CALS and the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute for scholarly interdisciplinary lectures on aging and the life course; advocating for public policy issues including social security, medicare, a living wage for Certified Nursing Assistants in long-term care and Alzheimer's disease research; coordination and mentoring of students for presentations at Scholar's Day, State Society on Aging, and the State Society on Aging Student conferences; and, assisting in environmental advocacy efforts with local political activist organizations such as CAPE as it affects the well-being of the aged in Cortland. Currently, the Center Director with support from the Council developed a pre-proposal for a Masters of Gerontology and will develop the full proposal this fall to be submitted to the Deans of Arts and Sciences and Professional Studies for their recommendations to the Provost.

### **Human Services Program**

The Human Services Studies program is a 2+2 capping program for transfer students leading to a B.S. in Human Services. The program is designed for transfer students with the A.S., A.A., or A.A.S. degree in human services for articulating colleges. SUNY Cortland accepts the course work satisfactorily completed that is specified in the articulation agreements between the College and two-year SUNY community colleges. The interdisciplinary program provides students with a body of knowledge and a perspective building upon prior professional educational experiences. Courses include offerings from across the curriculum.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS/CENTERS



*Question: What is the major problem with the university today?*

*Respondent: The problem of separate disciplines in the academy.*

—Dr. Uri Bronfenbrenner (93 years old)

Founder of The Bronfenbrenner Center for Life Course Studies at Cornell

### A Short History of Interdisciplinary Efforts at SUNY Cortland

While not explicitly, some SUNY Cortland faculty participants in the focus groups might agree *implicitly* with the words of Dr. Uri Bronfenbrenner. Across almost all focus groups in Arts and Sciences, faculty interest in the subject of interdisciplinary studies, discussion of its demise from earlier days on the Cortland campus, and the current lack of institutional support for such programs was apparent. Importantly, interest was not limited to those participants who are directly involved in delivering interdisciplinary majors and minors.

In the 1980s there was a time when a Title IV grant provided the necessary financial resources for the long-term development of a sound interdisciplinary studies initiative at SUNY Cortland. A senior faculty participant, however, laments what he feels was an unfortunate decision during this time as follows:

*There was money on the table, but nobody could be freed up to teach. We got a consultant from Cornell and we had a Fulbright Scholar here in residence who really liked it and wanted to stay. He was a world-class scholar. Went to the President. You have a chance of a lifetime—do it. But he said, ‘Well you know if they do it for us, SUNY will have to do it for everyone.’ Yes, that’s the idea! But he was shortsighted and we didn’t do it.*

Lack of foresight with regard to what one faculty member spoke of as “the paragon interdisciplinary course” introduced in the 1980s, *Modern Western Thought*, resulted in the death of “one of the best things this College ever did in my lifetime. It gave students grounding in the foundational ideas of our age.” There was a palpable nostalgia about an earlier time when interdisciplinary classes existed and faculty from different departments knew each other and talked “shop.” Participants spoke of a number of team-taught classes and commented that “students gained a wonderful breadth of understanding.”

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### Defining Interdisciplinary

When faculty were asked the open-ended question of how they would define interdisciplinary within higher education they responded with the following:

*I would rather say multidisciplinary—you have many disciplines involved in making a product that is going to come out as one even though those who contributed to the product are from all sorts of disciplines.*

and

*Interdisciplinary means that people from different disciplines actually interact in the creation and in the delivery of a course or research. What we have (at Cortland) is a situation where students may have to take courses from different disciplines but it really isn't necessary for much interaction between departments.*

and

*People coming together because they realize that they have something to offer each other. And that occurs in those intellectual moments that they have in a cross-disciplinary context.*

and

*Theoretically, General Education (GE) program is interdisciplinary. But, do they ever talk to each other? No!*

and


*That hasn't happened for a number of years—used to be a number of team-taught courses. Gives students a wonderful breadth of understanding.*

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OVERARCHING THEMES AND NARRATIVE  
Arts and Sciences Faculty  
and  
Faculty Directly involved in Interdisciplinary Programs

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### I. "ORPHANS IN THE STORM"

The above metaphor used by one faculty member captures what those involved with interdisciplinary programs in Arts and Sciences feel almost down to the person. Participants in centers and interdisciplinary programs feel adrift without a rudder and without institutional support from the College. Faculty members expressed their concern over the state of interdisciplinary initiatives or more appropriately, the lack of such initiatives. There is, however, a conundrum; on the one hand there is genuine interest among faculty for a serious commitment by the College to interdisciplinary programs of high caliber and to their potential for enhancing the intellectual climate of the College. On the other hand note the distinct feeling of marginalization in the following comments from faculty:

*Faculty who support the idea and realization of an interdisciplinary climate are marginalized in their own disciplinary department.*

and

*One example is the perception with regard to Women's Studies as an academic field of study. Women faculty do not want to focus on research in this area because of fear of not getting tenure due to the patriarchal climate.*

and

*I'm stuck in between two worlds.*

and

*We talk a lot about interdisciplinary work. Are people rewarded for that? In my experience, no. In fact, they are probably punished for that in some ways. That is astounding to me that we, on the one hand, talk a good game, but if you don't value it, you're not gonna get it.*

and

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*There is structural resistance to teaching interdisciplinary courses.*

Several faculty members in the focus groups lament the demise of *Modern Western Thought*. As one faculty stated:

*I spent a hell of a lot of time learning how to do that work. Where is it now? It disappeared off the face of the earth. Why? Because nobody claimed it. There was nobody who said, 'We want to have it.' It was a brilliant course. We now have all narrow disciplines.*

#### A. Structural Problems

One of the perpetually vexing problems which can set faculty and chairs in an adversarial relationship over interdisciplinary teaching is captured in the following analysis by faculty:

*Faculty from one department is teaching an interdisciplinary course, thus he is released from his course in the department and the department has to hire an adjunct. This has two consequences: 1) flooding the school with adjuncts, and 2) departments losing their coherence. Of course the 'hidden issue' is the need for a couple of full-time lines! It's not the question of adjuncts. It's the absence of a couple of full-time lines. To run a department costs money.*

and

*It's a matter of freeing up faculty from departments to teach these courses. Hasn't worked well in the past. Never know if they are going to be able to deliver the program. We literally have to beg department chairs to get release time to teach an interdisciplinary course.*

As it currently stands, interdisciplinary courses in Arts and Sciences drain resources from other programs, heighten tension on the *departmental level* thus adding anxiety to parts of the system because of the under-functioning of the upper levels. As Bowen Theory (1947) argues, the top of the hierarchy is under-functioning (because money is not available to hire a person/persons to meet teaching needs). Because there is a desire and interest from the administration and faculty to teach interdisciplinary programs this level absorbs an elevated level of anxiety in order to try to deliver the programs. As faculty point out, "It is a zero-sum game."

*One thing is for the administration to be honest with us. It's like telling one of us to go out and buy yourself a Rolls Royce for your next car. It's not possible. But they never say that. But you take it on and then they come back and say, well you haven't*

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*grown or...they can't come back and say that when we have only limited amount to work with.*

#### B. Structural Solutions

There was no majority view to create a Department of Interdisciplinary Studies or develop an alternative structure that would allow a strong and viable program to emerge. The view expressed below is representative of the tenor of discourse surrounding the creation of a department:

*I personally do not see an interdisciplinary department as the best case scenario. The best case would be you have people throughout different departments across campus that have a structure in place that would help them come together to collaborate. I don't know of an alternative model. A separate interdisciplinary program/department in certain cases may make sense. I am just speaking generally.*

## II. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE A CENTER?

Discussion over the purpose, place and structure of centers at SUNY Cortland included several ideas of what centers could be. One model doesn't fit all. On other campuses, centers can be sites of scholarly research, delivery of curricular programs, advocacy and co-curricular activities. Some very large centers with endowments accomplish all functions. Several faculty offered their ideas in the following:

*As a structure I envision centers as higher end structures to be working with people from different departments. Centers could organize and professors could have a load in one department and a load in another department. A structure independent from departments.*

and

*There are different models of centers than what you have here. Those centers are focused on research and publication and that is not our idea of our centers here. For example Multicultural and Gender Studies are very much into co-curricular activities like Women's History Month, Black History Month, etc... and writing grants to get money from ASC. That is where we put all of our energy and where we have majors and minors and they tend to suffer because the center is entrapped in doing other things.*

and

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*It's nice to have centers. It sort of implies something else. That there's a curriculum going on, but there's also interdisciplinary work going on. There are things we are doing with a team council, grants, whatever.*

and

*The Provost is not in favor of keeping curricular programs in centers. I believe she would like to move these programs into a department. Would you put African American Studies and MGS programs in one department? Do you create an Interdisciplinary Studies Department? Three different departments, including one in gerontology?*

In order to grasp the general activities of additional interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary groups and centers, brief descriptions follow on the next four pages. Included in this group are: African American Studies, Asian Studies, Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies, Lesbian and Gay Concerns Committee, Native American Studies, James M. Clark Center for International Education, International Studies, and Jewish Studies.

### AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES



The African American Studies Program is the oldest of the ethnic studies programs at SUNY Cortland, dating back to 1975 when it was founded as the Department of Black Studies. Students who major in African American Studies may choose a concentration in African and Black American history or in Black sociological, political, and community development. Thirty-six hours are required for the major. Students may also minor in African American Studies, an 18-hour program. Majors may combine courses in African American Studies with a professional sequence to qualify for provisional certification as social studies teachers for grades 7-12.

Special features of the program include two professors who have won distinguished awards in teaching, Fulbright awardees, nationally and internationally recognized faculty, credit-bearing internships, adolescence education—social studies and African American Studies career in high school teaching, scholarship support in African American Chorale, and research with faculty, conferences, and publication.

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#### **ASIAN STUDIES**



Members of the Center of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies come from different departments of the Cortland campus, such as Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Department of History and Department of Economics. Student representatives from the Center of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies minor regularly attend committee meetings and assist in major activities. The Center of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies intends to stay current with present-day global trends, increase the diversity education on the campus, and better serve the needs of the students' global interest. Major activities include annual panel discussion and multi-cultural diversity education. For instance, during the past years, the Center brought in national scholars to discuss issues such as the September 11th event, globalization and Asian women, and war across the Asian continent in round-table conferences. Annual "A Taste of Asia" events featured Asian Cuisine, Indian dancing, Chinese singing and dancing, Tai Chi Demonstration, and Teszia Belly Dance Troupe, etc. The Center also co-sponsored events such as "Film Screening for Diversity Education," "A Celebration of Chinese Art and Culture," and "Chinese Documentary Series."

#### **CENTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AND GENDER STUDIES**



During the 1983 budget crisis, when the Black Studies department was targeted to be cut, the Dean of Arts & Sciences formed a committee "...to examine Cortland's record on race, ethnic and gender-studies" (Francis & Russell, 1993). The committee's recommendation lead to the establishment of a Center for Minority and Women's Studies to acknowledge the intellectual, scientific, and artistic contributions and cultural experiences of historically oppressed groups that have experienced prejudice and discrimination by virtue of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. At that time, academic programs in African American Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies and Women's Studies came under the umbrella of the Center and were each administered by a coordinator and a subcommittee. Asian Studies and Native American Studies minors were added to the Center in the 1990s. African American Studies offers a major and a minor; the other academic programs offer a minor. All programs are multidisciplinary and comprised of courses offered by academic departments across the college, primarily in the School of Arts and Sciences. In the spring of 2005, the Council approved a program revision that would modify the Asian Studies minor to create a minor in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES).

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In addition to curriculum, the Center is responsible for "...research, faculty development, cultural events, student support and other activities related to multicultural and gender studies." The Center offers co-curricular programs throughout the school year. In the fall, the Center highlights Latin American, Native American and Asian heritage. In the spring, the Center offers extensive programming for Black History Month and Women's History Month as well as organizes an annual holocaust commemoration. During the past two summers, the chair of African American Studies has organized curricular restructuring workshops that assist faculty to infuse diversity content into their courses. In November 2000, the Center held a conference, *Living, Learning and Teaching Diversity* to which presenters came from around the country as well as locally.

Governance of the Center is the responsibility of a steering committee and council. The steering committee is comprised of coordinators of standing committees: African American Studies, Asian Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, Native American Studies, Women's Studies, student support, and Lesbian and Gay Concerns. The following are major goals of the Center for the next two years: to advocate for housing curricular programs within a department; to develop strategies for improving the community and campus climate to attract and retain underrepresented populations; to develop a protocol that support students more effectively; to evaluate several of the curricular programs; and to initiate a campus-community celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday at the Center for the Arts.

### LESBIAN AND GAY CONCERNS COMMITTEE



Lesbian and Gay Concerns Committee (LGCC) is one of the components of Multicultural and Gender Studies (MGS) and there has been a visible decline in the support of activities for this group. Respondents point to an unwillingness on the part of faculty to head LGCC and the "lack of interest" of the "administration" as contributing to the decline. Efforts to reinvigorate the group could come with the current funding allocation from Multicultural and Gender Studies Council but there is a reticence on the part of potential Co-Chairs of the Committee to sit on the MGS Council because, as one participant put it, "nothing ever happens except people talking." The faculty member goes on to say:

*In general I don't think it's a good idea for LGCC to be out there by themselves but on the other hand the worse evil is not having any type of faculty/administration programming to show students and faculty there is support for 'people like us.'*

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### **Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers**

With regard to what the next steps are for LGCC, the respondent suggests that:

*There is a need for an accurate assessment of what both the President and Provost think/feel about supporting a positive LGCC environment. In the context of MGS they should let someone do LGCC programming with the current allocation from MGS funds. In addition to doing programming, it might be possible to get people who are interested in trying to make LGCC a support for faculty/staff.*

### **NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES**



The Native American Studies Minor Program members hold meetings throughout the academic year and communicate frequently with a variety of New York State Native American groups concerning issues of interest and concern. Shared programming among the Central New York Native American Studies Consortium's members groups has been one significant emphasis. In addition to overseeing the Minor, a major function undertaken by the Native American Studies Program is to educate faculty, students, and the public about Native American culture and diversity issues through film, and nationally recognized speakers such as Peter Bratt. Over several years, the Native American Studies Committee co-sponsored its events with a number of groups on campus including Multicultural and Gender Studies, the Office of Migrant Outreach, the Interfaith Center, the College Foundation, Student Activities Board, the Division of Student Affairs, the Provost's Office, and the Office of Multicultural Life. Grant writing to obtain supporting funds from Auxiliary Services Corporation is an ongoing function of the Committee. In addition to the foregoing, the Committee advocates for Cortland educational offerings on Native American issues such as the course taught by Dr. Stephanie Waterman, Onondaga, in Summer 2005, entitled Foundation and Social Advocacy on U.S. Education Policy and Native American Education. Co-chairs' participation in the New York State Archaeological Association and the New York Archaeological Council are ongoing and contribute to the quality of the program.

### **JAMES M. CLARK CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**



The Clark Center provides an integrated framework for the College's many international

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

activities and programs. It serves as a clearinghouse for proposals, scheduling, activities and the like. It serves as a “think tank” in promoting discussion of and exploration into new ideas. It keeps colleagues, offices, departments and other units in touch with one another. It’s mission is to promote, coordinate and initiate programs and events to further international education within the campus environment and in the Cortland community. It maintains contact and liaison with the Office of International Program at SUNY System Administration and with several international partner institutions. It currently reports to the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Currently, the Center is preparing a long-range plan for international education and activities at SUNY Cortland. One can expect that the plan will recommend significant restructuring and reorganization as a way of providing more structure, coherence, and focus to the College’s robust, growing, and sprawling international activities.

It is useful to think about the Center functions as follows. The Center:

- Helps develop and enhance the College’s existing curricular offerings and programs with an international focus.
- Works closely with the College’s Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, the International Studies Program, the International Communications and Culture Department, the Project for Eastern and Central Europe, the TransAfrica Project, the International Programs Office, Whitaker Hall, and other offices, departments, units and programs.
- Develops new international programs for the College and seeks funding proposals for that purpose.
- Currently administers various dual diploma programs with partner institutions in Turkey and Poland.
- Works with faculty and staff to encourage and facilitate faculty and staff exchanges, visiting international faculty and research, teaching and service abroad by SUNY Cortland faculty. In general, it makes its resources available to the College for the purpose of further internationalizing the campus.
- Works with the Admissions Office and the Enrollment Management Office to attract and retain students involved in the College’s international course offerings and programs.
- Assists the International Student Association, the International Student Advisor, and the Director of Whitaker Hall in enriching the educational experience of the College’s international students.
- Initiates, promotes, and coordinates international events and activities of interest to the campus as well as to Cortland and the surrounding community.

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- Works with and maintains a liaison with the Office of International Programs at SUNY System Administration.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



The International Studies (IST) major is a unique, global studies approach to understanding the international world in the context of a liberal arts education and a bachelor of arts degree. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, the IST major allows students to choose from a variety of course offerings to create a program structured to meet their post-graduate goals. Students may choose to concentrate their studies with a particular disciplinary focus, or in a geographical region. Alternatively, majors may also build their own individualized concentration that best suits their career interests. Students may also minor in International Studies.

A major in the International Studies program can lead to careers in International Business, Peace and Conflict studies, Global Development, International Public Policy, myriad graduate programs, U.S. Government Careers, and International Aid and Relief positions. The IST major prepares its graduates to engage the complex world of the twenty-first century with a confident understanding of the myriad political, economic and social systems that constitute the modern world.

### JEWISH STUDIES



The Jewish Studies Minor is an interdisciplinary program focusing on the study of the Jewish people, their history, religion, literature, and culture. The JST core courses and related electives aim to enhance the student's understanding of Judaism and the variety of Jewish Cultural experience. They also foster SUNY Cortland's mission to study and combat prejudice and discrimination. The Minor is designed to complement a number of academic majors—history, political science, sociology, English, philosophy, among others. Elementary education has a concentration in Jewish Studies.

The Jewish Studies Minor offers diverse courses that Cortland students have deemed meaningful additions to their education. In fact, students are invited to explore their own particu-

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lar interests by developing topics for Independent Studies. Both the Jewish Studies Minor and individual courses are helpful in preparing for careers, whether specialized, such as Jewish education, or wide reaching, such as community relations. The Jewish Studies Committee of the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies also sponsors cultural events throughout the academic year. Working together with students of Hillel, these groups seek to engage and educate the entire Cortland community in diverse aspects of the Jewish experience.

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#### OVERARCHING THEMES AND NARRATIVE Education and Professional Studies



The faculty all echoed strong support for interdisciplinary study. In fact, they often described themselves as interdisciplinary scholars. When the conversation moved to the majors and centers, there was confusion about the identity and purpose of these programs. Interdisciplinary study will be examined under three overarching themes: 1) the meaning of interdisciplinarity, 2) collaborating on interdisciplinary initiatives, and 3) effectiveness of centers.

#### What does it mean to be interdisciplinary at SUNY Cortland?

Discussion on interdisciplinary study for faculty in Education and Professional Study often began with a clarification that much of their work, many of their departments, and majors are inherently interdisciplinary as evidenced in the following:

*I really look at a lot of the current talk about interdisciplinary as outdated. And the people who are trying to catch up. But the reality is, many of us have been interdisciplinary for years. Decades. (Education faculty)*

and

*Interdisciplinary study is an intellectual endeavor; a dialogue and exploration. It doesn't need an office or home, it needs time and open-mindedness to happen. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*People in Arts and Sciences don't see us as interdisciplinary, they really don't understand the nature of our work or our curriculum. But on the other hand, we are looked down upon because we are interdisciplinary and not a true, classical discipline. We collaborate all the time. (Education faculty)*

While there was support for interdisciplinary centers, there were suggestions that more interdisciplinary work could be done within existing majors if curricula were more flexible.

*The problem with interdisciplinary majors is managing them and then we have another person, another coordinator. There should be enough flexibility within major*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

*programs to allow for some individualized some variation. People shouldn't have to be so programmed into one sequence. If there was enough flexibility in the curriculum, we might not need the interdisciplinary. (Professional Studies faculty)*

### Collaborating on Interdisciplinary Initiatives

The discussions on interdisciplinary study brought up concerns about territoriality and limited resources and how these make it difficult to collaborate. The College and faculty need to realize that there are limited funds and that decisions on use of resources need to be considered. As one faculty member put it:

*Yes, they look at other faculty, at other institutions and think, that's something I'd like to do. 'Over there they fund this, why can't we?' Why? We got enough on our plates." (Professional Studies faculty)*

There were also concerns that not all departments are willing to or able to collaborate on interdisciplinary programs. As an example, Sport Management faculty described the challenge of being dependent upon the Economics Department to supply their courses. In this case, the perception was that Sport Management was a field of study and if it were a department, they would be able to supply the appropriate coursework for students, and develop their curricula, without taxing other departments.

Faculty who do try to bridge disciplines and departments are not always supported in these efforts, although faculty could not identify why this resistance existed. Most speculations were that departments are protective of resources and of FTEs as stated in the following:

*We have had people asking for interdisciplinary appointments and people are disappointed with our current structure to handle that. When you have someone that wants to work across departments or schools, that's an out-of-the-box kind of thing. I'm not sure that that is really welcomed. (Professional Studies faculty)*

### Perspectives on Majors and Centers

Beyond the conceptual discussion of interdisciplinary nature, there were conversations on the ways in which we deliver interdisciplinary work. The idea of the Centers and Interdisciplinary majors can be presented in three categories: awareness, effectiveness, and ownership.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### Awareness of the Centers and Their Purposes

The general outlook was that people felt that they did not know all of the centers and did not understand the purpose of the centers on our campus. On a basic level, some faculty asked what centers existed currently and needed clarification on whether some initiatives were centers. For example, Multicultural and Gender Studies was often confusing. There was also confusion about the purpose of the Centers—how and why we justified having them and what the expectations were for the Centers. The role of the Centers, why they existed, and what they produced were all questions that faculty had throughout the interviews. One faculty member put it this way:

*I don't know what the real purpose of the interdisciplinary centers are. I really don't. If it's an opportunity for students to interact, then we need to get our student union functioning for that. Space is a problem, more and more centers take up space. I don't see how putting people in little offices is going to bring about interaction. We need to be more open to let people interact. Then they would truly be mingling, and the true interdisciplinary discussions can happen. I don't see how having more centers, and pigeon holing the centers is going to help. Again, I don't know what the purpose is. (Education faculty)*

#### Ownership and Collaboration

The Centers were seen as primarily Arts and Sciences initiatives and not described as centers for the College as a whole.

*The Centers have been largely located in Arts and Sciences. I feel like this is something Arts and Sciences has got to figure out. Do they want to maintain their current disciplines or keep going in these different directions, because they are spreading themselves thinner and thinner to meet all the individual needs. What is the School's overall goal? I don't really care what they do or don't. I think the Centers are largely an Arts and Sciences problem and the departments in Arts and Sciences don't want to relinquish any resources meaningful to Centers or faculty. Unless they are willing to do that, centers are a lost cause. It's up to Arts and Sciences. (Education faculty)*

and

*If you look at a lot of the initiatives going on, most of them are in Arts and Sciences. We are asked to join learning communities. Arts and Sciences are not asked to join us. In fact we started the Center on Obesity and we've asked people to come to this*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

*end of campus, but they've never shown up. That's just one example. (Professional Studies faculty)*

There was also a concern that the Centers were exclusive and center faculty had access and influence that was inequitable with departments. Consider the following comment:

*Here's another issue, those coordinators, those center directors, have access. They are on the Academic Affairs Council and so those who don't like us or what we're doing have a voice. We have no voice. So, there's a source of negativism. (Education faculty)*

and

*Do we have them? [Laughing]...again, maybe it's just my bias. Folks on my end, in my school are very skeptical of all of this. The perception is that we get the short end when it comes to centers. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*It's like you make a center if you want to put some sort of emphasis on an area no one else will own. That's my assessment. OK, you want to make something important and want everyone on the outside to know that your campus is doing this and so then you pay someone extra money to run that...because it really isn't generally something faculty can or would do. So you have to pull a faculty member out to do it. I see it as one of the most exclusive things on our campus. (Education faculty)*

### Effectiveness of the Centers and Majors

Perspectives of the Centers' effectiveness were often related to a lack of information or a lack of awareness of their goals and outcomes. If the faculty do not understand the goals of a center or purpose, they will not be able to see the outcomes and how those relate to our purpose as an institution. There was limited knowledge about the achievements or progress of any of the Centers. A strong concern was that we, as a campus, were spreading our resources out too thinly to really have efficient interdisciplinary programs. A discussion among faculty from both schools illustrates this:

*And we're getting spread too thin with all of these specialized programs which are interdisciplinary.*

*Yeah.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

*One of the biggest issues I see with it...you can create a program for every student on campus, but we can't possible manage 7,000 majors.*

*Yes, we can't deliver, we can't manage.*

*So there's got to be someway. I've often said, and I'm half serious...any program that has more pages in the catalog than majors should be disbanded.*

*But it is true in a way, it's a good point. They are really stretching themselves.*

An additional concern was the ability of the Centers to illustrate their relationship to the goals of the College—a question of accountability. If the Centers could better articulate their achievements or progress, then they would be more appreciated and garner more support across campus.

*Why can't they explain what their relationship is to the academic programs? I'm not trying to be critical, I'm asking that realistically. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*So we have an abroad program that's run for fifteen years and every year it's screwed up. And the students tell us this all the time, yet there is no accountability. (Education faculty)*

It is clear that there are many definitions of interdisciplinary study, the role of the Centers, and the effectiveness of the Centers at SUNY Cortland.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Overarching Themes - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### OVERARCHING THEMES AND NARRATIVE Administrators and Professionals



When asked about their perceptions of interdisciplinary programs, people talked about interdisciplinary study as a general concept and then discussed their understanding of the interdisciplinary centers on our campus. There was clear support for interdisciplinary study and a desire to find effective ways to deliver this kind of program to students.

#### Interdisciplinary Centers

The centers were seen as having the potential to create and deliver innovative curricula and not yet having reached that potential.

*In principle, they are great.*

and

*There are phenomenal efforts being made. But the burnout and energy is going in different directions. If we can channel or focus, then we could achieve more in our interdisciplinary work.*

Areas for improvement included: clarifying the mission of the centers and their functional purpose; identifying a structural home for the centers and stronger support, and considering stronger overall coordination of the centers and all interdisciplinary work. This will be elaborated upon in the Recommendations of this section.

*I don't think these are...there is great potential with interdisciplinary. A lot comes down to faculty. How they are housed, the curriculum, who is really in charge? That's the mess. Not well defined and awkward. For example, we have a program that's gone through three curriculum committees, one for each school—I think. But I'm not sure. Something's just not working here.*

and

*I'm not sure of the functionality of the centers. The intent or the scope of what they do. Who are these people, who do they report to and what level of communication takes place and how do they get support?*

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# **Recommendations: Issue #2**

WOMEN'S STUDIES



OVERARCHING THEME I

*"Create a different climate"* for women at SUNY Cortland.

How?

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

Recommendation 1

**Hire a coordinator and institutionalize Women's Studies.**

*We need to institutionalize the Women's Studies program and hire a coordinator. Someone who is a real community builder, experienced and mature and knows how to work with people and is not focused on self promotion. Someone who has the title and is recognized. Part of her job would be to hold meetings and build this community up again because I believe it has been destroyed. Not destroyed—just fallen apart.*

and

*You need secretarial support and money and you need a person if you are going in the direction of a Center—you need people who can influence whatever.*

and

*People could teach Women's Studies courses and it would count for their careers in their department. Female faculty get credit, get recognized for being on the Women's Studies Committee. Their tenure path is structured so that they feel that they can do what is their life blood. They are building their career in both Women's Studies and in their discipline. They could be united.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - Specific: Women's Studies

<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<b>Create a space for women.</b>
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The necessity for a permanent place on campus for women to come together was a keen concern for members of the focus groups. Such a space would symbolize the legitimacy of women's concerns, the beginnings of a women's center, and a place to discuss scholarship, teaching, and grant concerns. Note the following comments:

*A major thing is a/the space where women, young women, women who are part of the campus, can come together and discuss issues that are relevant to their every-day experience.*

and

*It's a long shot but I mean, Bitterbaum has acknowledged how poorly paid we are as faculty. We are among the lowest paid. There are issues of faculty morale and even recruitment and retention here. I mean you are bringing people here and they think there is a Women's Studies program or if you are doing serious academic work or an activist in terms of gender issues and you know it makes one pretty damn unhappy. I think there has to be some way for the argument to resonate.*

<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Implement the following recommendations from Bernice Sandler's "Recommendations for Campus Administrators" from <i>An Action Agenda for Improving Equity for Women: Chilly Climate Issues</i>.</b>
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- Develop a Center for Women and support it with words, institutional funds and staffing.
- Support women's studies programs with words and institutional funds and staffing.
- Foster mentoring activities for women at all levels. Include mentoring of students as part of faculty job descriptions.
- Publish an annual report that evaluates progress and problems concerning women as faculty, staff, and students and that contains recommendations for improvement. This could be a mandate of the "Chilly Climate Committee."
- Provide institutional support for warming up the chilly climate through staff support for programs, money for research, release time for work on the issue.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - Specific: Women's Studies

#### Recommendation 4

**Create a consolidated women's studies/research community that includes a strong emphasis on scholarship.**

Reach a feasible and meaningful **consolidation** of groups with interest in and for women such as Provost's Initiatives on Women, POWER, Committee on the Status of Women, Chilly Climate Committee, Women's Studies. Consider the following suggestions by faculty:

*Why can't we find a way to bring all this energy together because I think the issue of people being burned out, and factoring in new faculty and they are working for tenure.*

and

*Have affiliates of a Women's Center to respond to the issue of those that are doing things quietly in their departments but are not publicly in the public light.*

#### Recommendation 5

**Create a structure that rewards female faculty for participation in women's studies activities.**

De-marginalize Women's Studies participation by creating recognition of its legitimacy within the reappointment, tenure, and promotion structure at SUNY Cortland.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

Recommendations - Specific: Center for Aging and Human Services

### CENTER FOR AGING AND HUMAN SERVICES



#### **Recommendation 6**

**Structurally change the Center so that it becomes a Center for Aging minus the Human Services component.**

We recommend that the Center for Aging become an entity unto itself and that Human Services Studies be separated from the Center for the coherence and purpose of the Center. Nationally, Centers on Aging are just that, focused on aging because of the enormity of that field. The following comments from faculty associated with both programs support this recommendation as follows:

*Aging and Human Services are two separate kinds of things. You can't manage both.*

and

*Not together. We have different purposes and my suggestion is that they be separated into separate, independent entities.*

and

*I agree and since I have been here we haven't worked with them so far...with just this discussion today, we have plenty to do as an independent center for aging.*

#### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that talks resume immediately with the Health Department at SUNY Cortland to consider housing the Human Services Studies Program and providing the all-important oversight function for the program.**

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - Specific: Center for Aging and Human Services

*My idea had always been that Human Services in and of itself would be better off as a separate, not even as a center, but as part of possibly the Health Department. I think that it fits in better seeing what a lot of other schools do. It's always health and human services. I just think it could be a really, really good program as part of them. I've said that to the Dean and the Provost and everybody else. That's not to take away from sociology or aging or anything else. But it stands on its own. The thing that is so unique about Human Services right now is that it is the most multidisciplinary program on campus right now. It could stay that way if it were in Health. I think what they ought to be thinking about is what they want to do with the program. What if I were to retire tomorrow. Who would take it over? I mean, no one knows how it operates. Literally, I think it ought to be linked with a department. It should be linked with Health to be a better program.*

#### Recommendation 8

**We recommend that the Human Services major *not* become a four-year major but *remain* a 2+2 capping program only.**

Faculty members who know about the Program have strong concerns about the organization of the 2+2 Human Services major in terms of program coherence as well as it ever becoming a four-year major as mentioned in the following:

*I would have real problems if it were made into a four year program because it would directly compete with the parent discipline, sociology, and offer a much less rigorous curriculum. Students have a lot of choices in terms of courses and I have a concern about the coherence of it.*

and

*We don't need another separate four-year major to prepare students for careers in Human Services. We are doing that already in sociology. Many of our students basically are taking the same courses that the Human Services Program allows their students to choose from—courses in health, recreation, political science, psychology. That is what we advise our sociology students who are going into human services to take.*

A contrasting view, however, is represented in the following quote from a faculty member involved with the Program:

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - Specific: Center for Aging and Human Services

*Human Services is standing on its own right now. It has about 35 majors right now which is more than a quarter of the departments in Arts and Sciences. We turn people away. I have to limit students. Do I think it's the best it could be? No. Could it be a better kind of program? Yes. Should it be its own department? No. If it went to a four-year program, I don't think it would take away from sociology and psychology. People that I get are from Education that are already here. I don't think that programs have to be located someplace because they become part of that and that's what makes this kinda unique because it's not part of anything but part of everything. When it becomes a part of something, it becomes "mish-moshy" and everyone tries to get their fingers in it and stuff like that. It's worked out really well because you've got all these courses from all these departments and students have all these choices. It works out really well.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

Arts and Sciences Faculty  
and  
Faculty Directly involved in Interdisciplinary Programs

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### Recommendation Commentary

*In short, the discipline rather than the institution tends to become the dominant force in the working lives of academics. To stress the primacy of the discipline is to change our perception of enterprises and systems: we see the university or College as a collection of local chapters of national and international disciplines, chapters that import and implant the orientations to knowledge, the norms, and the customs of larger fields. The control of work shifts toward the internal controls of the disciplines, whatever their nature.*

*Burton Clark, 1983*

Interdisciplinarity is not a new idea. What is relatively new is its culmination throughout the last 100 years in what Klein (1996:209) calls “a complex set of claims, activities, and structures. It is now a part of academic consciousness and is even regarded as essential to the vitality of work inside and outside the academy.” Yet impediments to its implementation are omnipresent. In the academic arena we hear the argument that knowledge is interdisciplinary while we witness the reality of financial curtailment of existing programs. Unfortunately, we dismiss and dissolve interdisciplinary programs through facile generalizations, preconceived notions, and inaccurate information. Interdisciplinary programming and centers are on the minds of faculty at SUNY Cortland, though faculty have different ideas of what is meant by interdisciplinarity.

### OVERARCHING THEME I

**Make an institutional commitment to interdisciplinary centers and programs that provides resources to get the job done. “*Make it possible for us to deliver our programs*”**

### How?

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally:

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### Recommendation 9

**Provide the necessary resources for delivery of interdisciplinary programs and the stabilizing of centers.**

Make it possible for us to deliver our programs because we're the ones who are going to work hard to make interdisciplinary education on campus a going concern. So start with your strengths, but they have to be strengthened to be *strengths*.

Major problems are expressed by faculty in the following:

*Faculty from one department is teaching an interdisciplinary course, thus he is released from his course in the department and the department has to hire an adjunct. This has two consequences: 1) flooding the school with adjuncts and 2) departments losing their coherence. Of course the "hidden issue" is the need for a couple of full-time lines! It's not the question of adjuncts. It's the absence of a couple of full-time lines. To run a department costs money.*

and

*It's a matter of freeing up faculty from departments to teach these courses. Hasn't worked well in the past. Never know if they are going to be able to deliver the program. Literally begging department chairs to get release time to teach an interdisciplinary course.*

#### Recommendation 10

**Institutionalize structures and channels of communication.**

*In terms of communication it is very important for the Dean and the Provost to get information down to us that is going to affect our curriculum. We have majors and minors and when things happen at the Provost's meeting, then we must know. It is very, very important for them to know. What is going to affect your curriculum. I don't want to learn it from a student who comes to me for advisement that something has changed. So many of these meetings where many of the changes take place, we must be identified with or be involved with. There should be regular communication materials from the Dean's office.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

and

*Make sure that the Coordinators are put on the Dean's list serve to Chairs and Directors*

and

*We need to have a voice on the Chairs Council so that Chairs will have a better sense of Interdisciplinary Education.*

#### **Recommendation 11** Create a Center Council.

The Interdisciplinary Centers at SUNY Cortland are providing a range of services which were detailed on pages 116-117 and 121-126 in this document. Structurally the Interdisciplinary Centers will benefit from a Center Council that will provide for collaboration, coordination of activities, and serve as a think tank.

*I would argue for a Center Council. And what we have here is the first meeting of the Center Council. We are cutting away the brush trying to see a path.*

and

*I am a great believer in Centers. A great believer.*

## **OVERARCHING THEME II**

**Create more of an "interdisciplinary mindset across departments."**

### **How?**

Through particular structural changes that *communicate* that message symbolically and functionally.

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

#### Recommendation 12

**At this time we do not recommend a separate Department of Interdisciplinary Studies.**

There was no clear majority view on whether to create a Department of Interdisciplinary Studies or develop an alternative structure that would allow a strong and viable program to emerge. Consider the view expressed below:

*I personally do not see that as the best case scenario. The best case would be you have people throughout different departments across campus that have a structure in place that would help them come together to collaborate. I don't know of an alternative model. A separate interdisciplinary program/department in certain cases may make sense. I am just speaking generally.*

#### **Establish an Office of Interdisciplinary Studies**

The goal is to have a structure (a person and a process) in place that would assist people from different departments involved in interdisciplinary concerns to come together to collaborate as well as make program delivery possible.

As part of that goal we recommend a modification of the existing structure of the present Interdisciplinary Centers' Office: maintain the secretarial position and ideally make it full time, and hire a person to coordinate interdisciplinary concerns across campus. The coordinator will not be hierarchically over the center and program directors/coordinators but will coordinate the office of Interdisciplinary Studies; however it may be possible to hire someone with the expertise to also teach an interdisciplinary course.

Suggested functions/activities of the Office may consist of the following (Klein 1996:226-228):

- Establish the meaning and purpose of interdisciplinary studies at SUNY Cortland.
- Initially do an inventory of all interdisciplinary activities and interests on campus.
- Assess existing facilities and equipment to ascertain the potential for sharing space and instrumentation.
- Based on the inventory compile a directory of information available in both print and electronic form. This becomes a valuable data reserve for later projects. An example would be individual faculty members at different sites, such as so-

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

ciology and biology, might be engaged in research or teaching on the subject of hunger, for instance. Without the inventory their common interest and potential for hunger-related coursework and research might go unrecognized.

- As a result of the inventory standard organizational charts should be amended to include all activities and track faculty participation.
- The central office can also serve as an information clearing-house to publish a print newsletter and main an electronic bulletin board. In this way the Office can keep the campus informed about pertinent funding sources and legislation, local curricula research projects, activities, and national models. In addition, existing campus-wide publications can add regular or periodic columns featuring important information.
- Coordinate a speaker's forum.
- Scrutinize College materials to see where and how interdisciplinary is represented.
- Establish an advisory committee for the Office to include library personnel who serve the information needs of the campus and members of the Faculty Development Center and Sponsored Programs Office who identify and coordinate funding. Also consider government/industry as well as local, regional, national, and international communities.

Other thoughts on this issue do not involve just structure, but involve the legitimate recognition of and support for interdisciplinary studies and centers as noted below:

*If we are committed to awarding those degrees like International Studies on campus or African American Studies or Latin Studies or Native American Studies on campus I think there should be administrative support closer to what we've been giving to our primary disciplines.*

and

*Don't marginalize the students going through these programs.*

As one solution to the difficulty of freeing up faculty from other departments to teach interdisciplinary courses the following is offered as a recommendation from faculty:

*So, one solution would be to hire a single person with the expertise to teach those courses would be a solution. Then you could house them. Co-appointments in two departments is not an easy thing.*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - General: Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers

<b>Recommendation 13</b>	<b>Connect Interdisciplinary Programs/Centers to the President's mandate/initiative on making this campus an international campus.</b>
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In thinking creatively, interdisciplinary programs would seem to have an affinity with international education and the internationalizing of the campus. We currently have an example of the combination of international and interdisciplinary goals embodied in the James A. Clark Center for International Education with the potential of a connection with another interdisciplinary center, the Center for Again and Human Services. Innovative thinking can imagine a complementary contribution from other interdisciplinary programs to the international initiatives of the campus.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES: FACULTY



**OVERARCHING THEME I**

**Create a campus-wide understanding of interdisciplinary study, the range of activities that address this and the role of the interdisciplinary centers.**

Identify ways that interdisciplinary study and appointments are encouraged and feasible. Currently, there is perceived resistance to interdisciplinary work and limited ability to create dual appointments. The ability to foster greater cross-departmental work could be an efficient way to create and deliver interdisciplinary courses and programs.

*It seems like dual appointments aren't encouraged and faculty aren't always supported when they step outside of the boundaries of a department. The chairs should be less territorial, less concerned with FTEs. Also, when it makes sense, departments could be encouraged to be more collaborative. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*One of the problems is simply every department is working to just deliver their own coursework for their own programs—or for all the students that need a certain course. It is hard to picture letting someone go work on something new when you are stretched. (Education faculty)*

**Recommendation 1**

**Create a common group that oversees or advises the development of interdisciplinary study on campus, in all of its forms.**

*We need to step back and look at this as a holistic issue. A group that determined goals, advised on initiatives, and made sure that support was available. We could then share ideas and resources and just learn about what is happening so things aren't so isolated. We really don't have something campus-wide right now, do we, that would look at all kinds of interdisciplinary issues? (Professional Studies faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

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### Recommendations - General: Education and Professional Studies

#### Recommendation 2

**Look for ways to increase broader representation on the centers and encourage faculty from across all schools to participate when relevant.**

*There just needs to be greater representation on the centers from Professional Studies and Education. I'm not sure if it's feasible or welcomed but that might help people feel more positive. (Professional Studies faculty)*

and

*When there was talk of a center of obesity based in Professional Studies, we really couldn't get other people [Arts and Sciences] interested. Even though there were a lot of ways their disciplines could contribute. (Professional Studies faculty)*

## Analysis & Narrative: Issue #2 - Interdisciplinary

### Recommendations - General: Administrators and Professionals

#### ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSIONALS



##### Recommendation 1

**Create and articulate clear mission statements of the interdisciplinary centers including: mission and how it relates to the larger institutional goals. In addition, clarify the relationship of these centers to academic departments, accountability for outcomes, and encourage greater cross campus participation.**

*People step up with individual interests. But whether that is the to the benefit of the institution needs to come up. The same with international, how does that center relate to the overall goals and progress of the institution? Can we really see how those fulfill these roles? It's like communication, no one is really sure.*

Consider the creation of a working committee modeled after the TEC, which will include the deans for leadership.

*During the NCATE process you had a teacher education council where the dean's played a role. It's now a standing committee now that looks at issues, curriculum and ongoing governance. It's interdisciplinary and doesn't have to direct report to provost because the deans were involved. It was one of the most productive experiences. The centers should have the same kind of support; have administrative involvement that could help move some of the objectives forward.*

##### Recommendation 2

**Identify ways to express the goals and work of the centers so that people have better understanding of what they do. Increasing the basic understanding could help eliminate some of the confusion and increase involvement by faculty across all schools.**

*If you look at Jack and outdoor education. He is visible, has a newsletter, you know what is going on to some degree.*

**DOCUMENT READING GROUP**

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**Introduction**

The Document Reading Group was charged with examining pertinent historical and restructuring documents from 1966 to 2005. The following is the list of documents reviewed followed by a brief synopsis of the most significant historical documents affecting the organizational structure of Academic Affairs. Emergent themes and recommendations complementing the research design of the task force conclude the work of the document reading subcommittee of the larger restructuring committee. Please note that an institutional archive that serves as a primary comprehensive source for all significant historical documents of the College does not exist. As such, the Document Reading Group relied on recommendations of readings from restructuring committee members and other referrals.

**Documents Reviewed**

**Internal Documents (*chronological order*)**

- A College Charts Its Course: A Long-Range Academic Plan for The State University College at Cortland, September 1966
- Middle States Report, 1987
- *Cortland College: An Illustrated History* by Leonard F. Ralston, 1991
- Final Report: The Review and Restructuring Process (RRP), July 1996
- Academic Reorganization Committee Report, November 15, 1996
- SUNY Cortland Master Plan Update, December 1996
- All SUNY Cortland academic departments' and college units' assessment reports from February 2001 – December 2001
- The Provost's Ad Hoc Committee on Multicultural Initiatives: Infusing Diversity into the Curriculum, December 2002
- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Report to SUNY Cortland After Study of the Institution's Self-Report and Visit to Campus, March 24 – 27, 2002
- Long Range Plan 2002 – 2004
- Report of the Provost's Task Force for Creating an Ethnic and Gender Studies Department, March 2004
- SUNY Cortland Organizational Chart, updated July 27, 2004
- Mission Review II, November 2004

## Significant Historical Documents Reviewed (1966 – 2005)

### *A College Charts It's Course: A Long-Range Academic Plan for SUNY Cortland (September 1966)*

**Purpose:** This significant report was written in response to the SUNY Board of Trustees mandate that all teacher preparation colleges would become arts and sciences colleges.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** Much of the College's existing structure was created in this report. Substantively, secondary and graduate education programs were placed in individual departments. Organizationally, SUNY Cortland committed itself to a vision of a "relatively flat structure" rather than a hierarchical one to support autonomy and individuality of academic programs. To administer the new arts and sciences programs, many directors were promoted to vice presidents and deans. There were four deans with four divisions: Dean of Arts & Sciences, Dean of Education, Dean of HPER (Health, Physical Education and Recreation), and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

### *Final Report: The Review and Restructuring Process (July 1996)*

**Purpose:** President Judson H. Taylor led the campus through a campus-wide review and restructuring process to arrive at structural/program recommendations in response to anticipated budgetary reductions of \$1.1M - \$1.8M and a period of enrollment decline.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** All campus departments, offices, and programs were reviewed using quantitative and qualitative information to assess quality and CASA data elements. The methods used designated budgetary actions. *Administrative* restructuring sought to streamline services and increase efficiencies based on service functions including the creation of: an Enrollment Management unit, Outreach Services unit, Office of Institutional Advancement and Information Resources. Several changes occurred in *Student Affairs* as well. *Academic* department restructuring went largely unrealized even though the report recommended possible mergers of smaller disciplines into larger divisional units assuring preservation of the autonomy and integrity of the smaller disciplines. On the one hand the report suggested that "A diverse choice of majors will continue to be important to future competitiveness but responsiveness to societal needs and student demand will be increasingly important" (p. 7), while on the other hand, "We cannot continue to offer low enrollment, upper-level courses in programs that have few majors unless the faculty in those programs are offer-

ing counterbalancing high enrollment courses” (p. 8). The report strongly emphasized infusing technology within existing curricula and developing new attractive programs. Moreover, the report articulated SUNY Cortland’s motto of “Where Students Come First” and called for the development of forward thinking goals and objectives through a long range planning process. Financial solvency was anticipated through salary savings, resignations, retirements or reduced temporary service hiring, rather than elimination of positions.

### *Academic Reorganization Committee Report (November 1996)*

**Purpose:** President Judson H. Taylor commissioned a committee to review and evaluate three models of organizational structures within Academic Affairs to evaluate recommendations within the July 1996 *Final Report: The Review and Restructuring Process*.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** The Committee recommended not merging academic departments in order to retain the integrity and identity of individual disciplines. Four models for reorganization were reviewed for their advantages and disadvantages without advocacy for a particular model. The Committee concluded that **“Our most significant assumption is that academic reorganization in and of itself will not solve the problems that SUNY Cortland faces.”**

### *SUNY Cortland Master Plan Update (December 1996)*

**Purpose:** To develop a comprehensive campus plan for campus space usage and facility development.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** The Master Plan Committee provided a comprehensive set of directions and priorities for the college’s facilities. The Plan envisions a “core concept” that attempts to attract all parts of the campus to the core to promote academic and social unity. Additionally, there are explicit *attempts to address the transportation and circulation issues which would unite all into a tighter paradigm* (p. 2). A special note states that “the two parts of the campus (upper and lower campuses) continue to be somewhat removed from each other physically and socially.

*Middle States (2002)*

**Purpose:** Five-year comprehensive planning document used to merge Middle States accreditation goals and standards with SUNY Cortland's own assessment of its strengths and challenges and corresponding recommendations to address improvements in areas of need.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** The February 2002 Institutional Self-Study made several recommendations for all areas of the campus with special emphasis in the areas of planning and assessment, equity, access and diversity, intellectual climate, technology and infrastructure. Recommendation #5 under Academic Programs – “The Provost should establish a task force to address the issue of possible restructuring within the college or at least within Professional Studies to better manage program enrollments as well as faculty, administrative, and advisement workloads” (p. 205) resulted in the commission of the Provost's Task Force for Restructuring of Academic Affairs in 2004-05.

*Statement on Provost's Ad Hoc Committee on Multicultural Initiatives: Infusing Diversity into the Curriculum (December 2002)*

**Purpose:** The charge of the Committee was twofold: to generate initiatives to make SUNY Cortland more diverse and inclusive and to restructure the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** Two recommendations resulted from the Committee's efforts: one, more campus-wide infusion of diversity and multiculturalism into the curricula, and two, create an Ethnic Studies Department to enhance cultural competence at SUNY Cortland. The Committee reviewed several models and provided a series of strong rationale for the creation of a new department including academic, programmatic, social and intellectual contributions for a diverse college community at Cortland.

*Statement on Provost's Task Force for Creating an Ethnic and Gender Studies Department (March 2004)*

**Purpose:** The charge of the Task Force was to explore the feasibility of creating an Ethnic Studies Department that would incorporate African American Studies, Native American Studies, Latin American Studies, Asian Studies and Jewish Studies.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** The final recommendation of the

Task Force was to create a Department of African Studies with its own physical space, faculty, staff, majors and minors instead of the Ethnic And Gender Studies Department. The reasoning behind this recommendation was that there was already a strong program in African American Studies with courses that focus on Africa and the African Diaspora.

### *Mission Review II (2005)*

**Purpose:** SUNY Cortland stays close to elements that are central to its mission: strength in teacher education, high quality programs in the arts, humanities and sciences, excellence in teaching scholarship and service to the community, committed to international education and producing good citizens with a strong social conscience who seek to “make a difference” in the world. Plans to level out the overall college growth to 7,327 by 2010. The College expects improvements in undergraduate retention and a shift to more full-time graduate enrollment that will slightly increase the Academic Affairs FTEs. Over the next five years there is a continued emphasis on diversity among students with an increase in international and out-of-state students attracted by new programs.

**Recommendations for Organizational Structure:** None. Rather there is an emphasis on strengthening existing programs and developing graduate programs. For example, the undergraduate programs of criminology, new communication media, biomedical science and potential graduate programs in sports management, non-certification ESL, speech pathology and audiology, and physical education with a coaching minor. Throughout the curricula there is a strong emphasis on community service, internships, and civic engagement. The use of technology in teaching is highly supported.

### **Emergent themes throughout historical documents**

1. The College has stayed true to its mission in offering diverse programs of high academic quality and integrity.
2. Faculty have input into important planning processes that set the direction of the College such as the Long Range Planning and Mission Review process.
3. The past two decades of restructuring at SUNY Cortland have been largely due to financial influences and have resulted in solving one problem only to create a different one.
4. Change to solve an immediate need has not looked at the ramifications of decisions over a period of time.
5. Collaborations between administration and faculty vary in documents.
6. New program development is strongly supported as is reflected by the establish-

ment of centers and new programs both in undergraduate and graduate education. There appears, however, to be a pattern of inadequate planning and resources to support the infrastructure of new programs and centers (i.e. Faculty participation in centers affects departmental workloads and often relies on the good will of faculty and department chairs for course offerings, which then increases the reliance on adjunct faculty to teach core courses within majors).

7. For several years there have been no mergers of the smaller disciplines into larger divisional units given a strong commitment to preserve discipline autonomy (even though some programs and majors have been downsized or eliminated).

### Recommendations

The Document Reading Group did not find a research study at SUNY Cortland that focused on the livelihood of the College as it affected individuals within the overall organizational structure. The Document Reading Group did, however, find a commitment throughout each of the College's Long Range Planning processes to an underlying philosophy that each President incorporated in setting the direction for the College. Each philosophy has had a blend of market conditions, trends, and psychological interplay (Keller, 1983)<sup>1</sup> that connects how the internal and external forces work together, understanding that there is controversy in every strategic planning process.

### Specific Recommendations of the Document Reading Group

1. Re-establish an institutional archive for the College that collects all significant historical documents and other materials developed at SUNY Cortland. Provide adequate funding, support, space, and staffing for this effort. This recommendation does not include records management. Historically, the library served as the official archives of the College with funding and staffing (an archivist/librarian and a clerical staff). Those positions and funding were eliminated in the 1980s, at which time the library stated that it could no longer serve as the official archives of the College. Since that time, the library has informally collected documents, yearbooks, college newspapers, and programs to major events supported by a part-time (three hours per week) volunteer and a tiny amount of supplies, librarian time, and clerical time.
2. When projects or special committees decisions and recommendations have overarching institutional ramifications, historical documents should be routinely reviewed to identify past recommendations for institutional change. The recom-

recommendations are recognized as those completed, those to be accomplished, and those not accepted. These are then used in making further recommendations or decisions. The purpose is that each committee or special project not re-invent the wheel and that there is some monitoring of recommendations for change. For any future reorganization efforts and proposed changes in institutional policies, include a “ramifications” section to understand the long-term impact of decisions on the organization and the individuals within it. (Footnotes)

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<sup>1</sup> George Keller, *Academic Strategy*, John Hopkins University Press, 1983. As quoted in the March 12, 1993 draft number 6 of the College Long Range Plan.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix A

### **SAMPLE LETTER SENT TO: DEPARTMENT CHAIRS, DIRECTORS, SUPERVISORS**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

In Spring Semester 2004, Provost Elizabeth Davis-Russell appointed the Academic Affairs Restructuring Task Force composed of a representative groups of faculty across the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Professional Studies, and Education.

The purpose of the Task Force is to address a specific goal set forth by the Provost based on the Middle States Recommendations Report as follows: “To obtain a structure that provides effective, efficient, and cost effective functioning.” In short, our charge addresses the question, how do we make our workplace a more effective environment in which to work on a daily basis? Focusing on two major elements that can contribute to the realization of that goal at SUNY-Cortland, the Task Force will investigate the following issues:

1. Improving communication (in the multiple ways in which that may be defined) with and among departments, schools and administration at SUNY-Cortland.
2. Enhancing and determining the place and purpose of interdisciplinary programs at SUNY-Cortland.

The Task Force requests your assistance in identifying persons from your department who might be interested in participating in a one-hour group focused primarily on issue #1. We will personally contact these persons and determine their willingness to participate. Our approach is to segment faculty (and staff where appropriate) from each department into three groups based on their number of years at SUNY-Cortland: Group I: 1-5 years; Group II: 6-14 years; Group III: 15 years and over. Thus, we would hope to have one faculty for each of the groups plus, if appropriate, your most recent hire, totaling 4 people from your department.

The Task Force is charged with conducting focus groups and interviews with faculty, staff and administrators: compiling and reviewing major external and internal documents pertaining to academic affairs; and preparing a final report that will describe findings, activities, and ideas for action. The Task Force will base its inquiry on qualitative methods protocol and will seek, to the extent possible, a representative group from faculty, staff and administration in Academic Affairs.

For purposes of accuracy and analysis, we would like to tape the group session. Participants will be provided with a consent form for granting permission to tape and to assure them of confidentiality. If a participant objects to the taping, the focus group leader will gladly do a separate interview with that person.

The Task Force believes this project to be an important one with the goal of obtaining frank appraisals and insights from participants across the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of Education. We will be most appreciative of your helping in identifying faculty and hope to hear from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Anne Vittoria and Carol Van Der Karr

Co-Chairs, Provost's Task Force on Academic Restructuring

(Slightly different letters were sent directly to participants in interdisciplinary programs, segmented faculty, women's studies participants, librarians and secretaries in Arts and Sciences)

CONSENT FORM - ADULTS

State University of New York-College at Cortland

We request your informed consent to be a participant in the project described below. Please feel free to ask about the project, its procedures, or objectives. At any time during the course of the project you may, without prejudice, withdraw this consent and discontinue your participation in the project or activity. The privacy of each participant will be protected, and all information will be treated with appropriate confidentiality.

The faculty member responsible for this project is Dr. Anne Vittoria, Department of Sociology/ Anthropology. Dr. Vittoria may be reached at (607) 753-4708. The contact person for any questions regarding the rights of human subjects is Amy Henderson-Harr, Designee, Human Subjects Committee at SUNY Cortland, (607) 753-2511.

The purpose of this project is to gather perspectives from faculty, staff, and administrators to determine the need for restructuring of Academic Affairs and address specific goals set forth in the Middle States Recommendations report to promote a structure that will improve the Academic Affairs Division's effectiveness, efficiency and operational functioning. You have been invited to participate in a focus group to share your perspective on helping the Academic Affairs Division improve its communications (among departments/units/schools) and support for interdisciplinary programs.

- A) The procedures to be followed, and their purposes, including identification of any procedures which are experimental. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your perspectives on communications and interdisciplinary programs. The focus group sessions will be taped and later transcribed by a person unaffiliated with the group. No names will be used. Rather, the transcription will identify themes of the group. As such, protections are in place to assure the confidentiality of your statements as an individual.
- B) The attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be experienced: None anticipated.
- C) The benefits to be expected for the participants. We hope that your perspective will help SUNY Cortland become a better place in which to work and that we can improve our ability to communicate as a community.
- D) Alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the subject. (If there are other experimental procedures which might be used with less risk or discomfort, please explain.) - None

=====

I have read the description of the activity or project for which this consent is requested, and I consent to participate.

TITLE OF PROJECT: Task Force to Improve the Quality of Work Life and Workplace for Academic Affairs

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**  
**Focus Groups**  
**Segmented Faculty**

Note: What we are aiming for is *their* experience and their interpretation of that experience in their world. How do *they* make sense of their workplace and their work life?

1. How would you describe your work life here at SUNY Cortland?

Possible probes:

——the work environment in your department?

——what are the positives and negatives for you?

For others from your perspective?

——what can be changed to make it better?

Inside and outside your department?

2. How would you define communication, *conceptually* and *practically*? Please talk a bit about what this word means to you.

Ask to get more specific if necessary: Are there different levels? If so, what are they?

Possible probes:

——what can you say (please talk) about communication in your department?  
between your department and other departments?  
between faculty and administration? (Dean, Provost, others)

——from your experience, what are the problems with communication as you define it?

3. What does the word “interdisciplinary” mean to you?

Possible probes:

——what are your views on having interdisciplinary programs on campus?  
purpose and function of such programs?

——what are your views on having interdisciplinary centers on campus?  
purpose and function of such programs?  
where should they be housed?

INTERVIEW GUIDE  
WOMEN'S STUDIES

1. How would you define Women's Studies?  
——what is its purpose?
2. I would like for you to discuss your experience with Women's Studies at Cortland and the changes in the Program. Take me back to when you first came to Cortland—what was it like?  
  
——how and why did you become involved?  
  
——what was your perception of Women's Studies here?  
  
——what is the view across campus on Women's Studies from your perspective?  
  
——how has that view changed over time?  
  
——talk about (what was) the ideology behind Women's Studies at the time that you came here?  
  
——how has that changed over time?
3. Reflect for a moment on any major turning points in the Program since you have been here. Can you describe/discuss those, please?
4. What is the state of Women's Studies on the campus today?  
  
——from your perspective is there a struggle?  
  
——If so, what are the points of struggle?  
  
    Structurally?  
  
    Personally?
5. If you were to envision the best program possible, what would be its: structure and guiding philosophy?
6. What needs to change for this to happen?  
  
——who/what needs to be included?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**  
**Interdisciplinary Focus Group**

1. Tell me about how interdisciplinary centers got started here?

What individuals and groups were involved.?

Talk about how MGS specifically got started and how it has changed/evolved

2. How do you see your involvement in MGS?
3. Where do you see the Centers now? What needs to be changed and on what levels?

**Interim Report to  
Provost Elizabeth Davis-Russell**

**Provost's Task Force on Academic Affairs Restructuring  
October 11, 2004**

**Co-Chairs:** Anne Vittoria and Carol Van Der Karr

**Task Force Members:** David Miller, Bruce Mattingly, Mary Ware, Tom Steele, Maureen Boyd, Amy Henderson-Harr, Regina Grantham, Gale Wood, Lisa Gregory-Mix, Sheila Cohen, Yvonne Murnane.

The purpose of the Task Force is to address a specific goal set forth by the Provost based on the Middle States Recommendations Report as follows: "To obtain a structure that provides effective, efficient, and cost effective functioning." In short, our charge addresses the question, how do we make our workplace a more effective environment in which to work on a daily basis? Focusing on two major elements that can contribute to the realization of that goal at SUNY-Cortland, the Task Force will investigate the following issues:

1. Improving communication (in the multiple ways in which that may be defined) with and among departments, schools and administration at SUNY-Cortland.
2. Enhancing and determining the place and purpose of interdisciplinary centers and programs at SUNY-Cortland.

The Task Force is charged with conducting focus groups and interviews with faculty, staff and administrators: compiling and reviewing major external and internal documents pertaining to academic affairs; and preparing a final report that will describe findings, activities, and ideas for action. The Task Force will base its inquiry on qualitative methods protocol and will seek, to the extent possible, a representative group from faculty, staff and administration in Academic Affairs.

**Guiding Principles of the Qualitative Research Project**

▪ **Inclusion:**

1. We have made, and continue to make, special efforts to reach and involve faculty and staff who may never have had the forum, opportunity or impetus to express their views on the two target issues.

2. A consent form was developed 1) to obtain permission from participants to tape their responses and 2) to guarantee confidentiality, literally, and to communicate to potential participants, symbolically, our desire to obtain frank comments and insights within the focus group.

- **Representative Sample:**

Methodological strategies to maximize the best representation from a purposive sample were considered. We decided on the following:

**For Issue #1:**

1. We are using a “segmented” sample of faculty and staff, dividing them into the following groups based on their longevity at SUNY-Cortland: Group I: 1-5 years; Group II: 6-14 years; Group III: 15 years and above. Our goal is to allow for maximum expression within groups, particularly with untenured faculty and “new” faculty. An hypothesis is that these “cohorts” will have some distinctive inter-group differences as well as intra-group differences with regard to issue #1.
2. Every Department Chair/Director/Supervisor in Arts & Sciences, Education and Professional Studies was sent a letter ( sample included below) explaining the project and requesting the identification of potential participants. This strategy provides standardization across the Schools in the creation of the purposive sample. An additional aspect of standardization and consistency for all participants is to conduct focus groups in the same environment: The Brooks Museum in Cornish Hall.

**For Issue #2:**

1. All faculty involved with Interdisciplinary Centers and programs were sent letters and invited to participate in focus groups, including directors, coordinators, and members of Councils or Boards of Centers and secretaries.

- **Rich Data**

Our approach is not to skim the surface and produce a superficial report but to gain a measure of depth and rich material (within the constraints of time) from which to do our analysis and bring forth ideas and recommendations. As researchers we know that the results are only as good as the methods employed to produce them. Our goal has been to use a method that achieves as much content validity as possible. Toward that end we have employed the following:

1. A purposive sample
2. As is standard in qualitative science, an *interview guide* rather than a structured questionnaire was developed. There are three editions of the Interview Guide with issues for specific constituencies: Interdisciplinary studies/centers participants, women's studies participants, and the large group of segmented faculty/staff. The Interview Guides contain open-ended questions with semi-focused probes to allow for the emergence of both conceptual and concrete thoughts from the group participants. Our goal is to find out how faculty/staff interpret and make sense of their world here at Cortland in their own *terms* within the context of Issues #1 and #2, not impose our template or a series of assumptions to which they respond.
3. Flexibility in the creative, effective and efficient use of time has been a goal. We have set up additional sessions with the same focus group, if warranted, to follow-up on issues that appeared very important. Due to time constraints we cannot have the ideal number of follow-ups but are aiming for the best we can under the circumstances.

### **Summary of Activities - Completed and Anticipated Focus Groups**

#### I. Women's Studies:

- Four (4) focus groups completed to date.
- One (1) final focus groups to be completed by Oct. 22

Every department on campus across the three Schools was contacted to identify a faculty member who would be interested in participating. We aimed for the fullest participation.

- Projected number of participants: 25 women

#### II. Interdisciplinary Programs & Centers:

- Two (2) focus groups completed to date.
- Two (2) final focus groups scheduled for weeks of Oct 11 and Oct. 25

Includes the following participants from: Multicultural & Gender Studies, Center for

International Education, Center for Aging and Human Services (interview), Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, Native American Studies, African-American Studies, International Studies, Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education.

- Projected number of participants: 15 faculty/staff

### III. Librarians:

- One (1) focus group completed on Oct. 7.
- Projected Number of participants: 6 faculty

### IV. Deans of Arts and Sciences, Education, and Professional Studies:

- One (1) focus group completed to date.
- One (1) interview scheduled for week of Oct. 15
- Projected number of participants: 3

### V. Retirees:

- One (1) focus group completed to date (June 2004)
- Projected number of participants: 3 retired faculty

### VI. Segmented Faculty Groups from departments in Arts and Sciences, Education, and Professional Studies:

- One (1) focus group (Arts and Sciences) (Group I: 1-5 years) completed on Oct. 5.
- One (1) focus group (Arts and Sciences) (Group II: 6-14 years) scheduled for Oct 15.
- One (1) focus group (Arts and Sciences) (Group III: 15 years and over) scheduled for week of Oct 18.
- Additional focus groups are presently being set up and we anticipate completion of this large group from Arts and Sciences by Nov. 1.

**Projected number of participants:** If we have four participants from each department in Arts and Sciences we could have as many as 68 participants. A more realistic picture puts the total at between 40-50; however, we could be surprised, either way. We are following this closely in terms of follow-up to the explanatory letter to chairs and “gentle-reminders” to them to identify potential participants. If, in another week, this route is taking too long to

produce focus group members, we will go directly to faculty.

- Focus Groups for Segmented faculty in Professional Studies/Education are set for the next three weeks.
- Projected number of participants: (to come)

Two( 2) Focus Groups in Enrollment Management are being organized for the week of Oct. 11.

VII. Chairs Focus Group for A&S, Professional Studies/Education

Focus groups in formation at present to be completed by Nov 1.

Projected number of participants: Arts and Sciences, 15 Chairs  
Education/Professional Studies (to come)

VIII. Departmental Secretaries in Arts and Sciences

- Focus Groups set for Week of Oct. 18 and 25

Projected number of participants: 15-17

IX. Associate Deans

Focus Groups in formation to be completed by Nov. 1

Projected number of participants: 3

X. President, Provost, and President's Cabinet

- Interviews to be set within next month

**Comments:**

The completed focus groups have produced rich material so far. Participants are invested in the project, are forthcoming and find the focus on 1) improving communication and 2)

enhancing interdisciplinary centers/programs to be a “very good idea.” Tapes are being transcribed by a secretary skilled in transcription.

The preparation for this effort has required time in terms of “encouraging” faculty to participate through crafting an introductory letter, follow-up personal phone calls, and wizardry in manipulating schedules to get the maximum representation for all three schools. We believe that this investment of time is now paying off in the level of interest thus far. We have received positive feedback on the process and the open forum for discussion in the focus groups. All participants are sent a consent form before they come to the focus group assuring them of total confidentiality and gaining their permission to use a tape recorder. You will note in the letter below that we want particularly to convey to faculty that we will provide conditions that foster frank comments and appraisals from participants.

Analysis of transcripts will begin within two weeks and will be done by the Co-Chairs of the Task Force. Our goal is to complete focus groups by November 1. To add historical perspective and context, several Task Force members are responsible for analyzing existing Cortland documents collected last spring.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anne Vittoria and Carol Van Der Karr

**REPORT TO TASK FORCE  
DECEMBER 10, 2004**

From  
Anne Vittoria and Carol Van Der Karr, Co-Chairs

This report is divided into two sections: 1) a summary of the data gathering activity over the last two months since our Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> update and 2) suggestions of where and how we go from here. As we enter the latter stages of the project, we will begin to think creatively about what will be included in a Final Report to the Provost on our ideas and recommendations. The Provost has given us until the end of January to have the final report to her. We begin with a summary of data gathering by Schools.

**I. DATA GATHERING: WHERE WE STAND**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
And All-College  
(includes Librarians & Interdisciplinary Centers/Programs)**



- A. Total participants to date: 41 faculty  
4 librarians  
5 secretaries  
50
- B. Additional participants to come: 6-8 faculty (2 focus groups scheduled)  
5-7 department chairs (pending)
- C. Focus Groups completed to date: 13
- D. Individual Interviews: 4
- E. 15 out of 17 departments in Arts and Sciences had at least one participant in focus groups/interviews:

Art and Art History	English	ICC Philosophy	Psychology
Biological Sciences	Geography	Mathematics	Political Science
Communication Studies	Geology	Philosophy	Sociology/Anthro.
Economics	History	Physics	

- F. Interdisciplinary Programs/ Centers' Participation  
Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies: 1 (Director)  
Women's Studies: 17 participants including Coordinator  
African American Studies: 1 (Coordinator)  
Asian Studies: 1 (Coordinator)  
Jewish Studies: 1 (Coordinator)  
Native American Studies: 2 participants including Coordinator  
International Studies: 1 (Coordinator)  
Center for Aging and Human Services: 2 participants  
4 participants pending  
1 Director pending

**SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**  
**And All-College**  
**(Deans of 3 Schools & Administrative Directors)**

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- I. 17 faculty from Professional Studies & Education have shown interest  
13 are organized into 3 groups
- II. Total participants to date:  
2 Deans  
6 Administrative Directors  
8
- III. Additional Participants to come:  
13 faculty (pending)  
1 Dean (pending)  
3 Associate Deans (pending)  
2 Associate Provosts (pending)  
1 Provost  
20  
(Pending focus groups/interviews are scheduled over the next two weeks)
- IV. Focus Groups completed to date: 1
- V. Individual Interviews: 4

## II. WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Tapes are being transcribed and we have hard copies of transcripts coming in from the transcriber on a weekly basis.

- A. Immersion in the tapes to produce:
  - themes from the transcripts
  - preliminary analysis of congruence and divergence in perspectives
- B. Full Task-Force discussion of the themes/analysis
- C. Discussion of Recommendations from previous reports/document analysis (the working group)
- D. Final Report and Recommendations/Ideas for action to the Provost

**APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF PROJECTS USING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

1. **Brief Description of the Project:** The purpose of this project to be conducted by the Provost's Task Force on Academic Restructuring is to gather perspectives from faculty, staff and administrators to determine the need for restructuring of Academic Affairs and address specific goals set forth in the Middle States Recommendations Report to promote a structure that will improve the Academic Affairs division's effectiveness, efficiency and operational functioning. Focus groups and interviews will be conducted with faculty and professional staff and administrators. Participants will be asked a series of questions regarding their perspectives on communications and interdisciplinary programs. The focus groups will be taped and later transcribed by a person unaffiliated with the group. No names will be used. Rather, the transcription will identify themes of the group. As such, protections are in place to assure the confidentiality of statements made by individuals.
2. **Number and relevant characteristics of subjects:** A representative group of faculty, administrators and staff from the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of Education will be invited to participate in either a focus group or an individual interview.
3. **Describe how subjects will be selected for participation in this project and any remuneration to be received by the subjects:** The sample will be a purposive sample and there will be no remuneration to participants. Focus groups will be segmented according to length of tenure at the college with attention given to accurate representation of participants based on gender and race/ethnicity.
4. **Status and qualifications of research assistants, if any:** Faculty/ staff focus group leaders were selected based on their knowledge, training and experience in conducting qualitative research projects and/or leading focus groups. The faculty member responsible for the project is a Ph.D. researcher in qualitative science.
5. **Source of funding for the project:** Non-Funded
6. **Expected starting and completion dates for the project:** The project will begins in May 2004 and ends in July 2005.
7. **Attach copies of all questionnaires, testing instruments or interview protocol; include any cover letters or instructions to subject. (included)**