

Section 4 - Research and Evaluation Project  
July 2000  
Excerpts from  
Educational Contexts, Practices, and Models

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The final area of inquiry in the Research and Evaluation Project aimed to articulate the model of teaching and learning at Cambridge College, both in terms of the philosophy and values held by faculty and staff, and the practices they employ in various contexts of learning. In the research proposal this area was titled, *Educational Contexts, Practices and Pedagogies*. The title was changed to *Educational Contexts, Practices and Models* to increase the focus on “the Cambridge College model of adult learning.” The title recognizes that education takes place in a broad institutional context and that the overall educational experience is influenced by numerous factors both inside and outside the classroom.

**Research Questions**

The questions from the original proposal were modified slightly during the design process, and data will be reported in response to the revised questions.

Research Question 1: *How does Cambridge College describe its mission/values, the context for learning and model of adult education?*

Research Question 2: *What do students, faculty and staff say about how they experience the context, mission/values and adult learning model at Cambridge College?*

Research Question 3: *What does Cambridge College do to put the mission/values and model into practice? As staff? As faculty?*

The following table outlines the research plan, detailing areas of study and data collection methods in each area.

Educational Contexts, Practices and Models: Research Plan

Areas of Study	Data Collection Methods
Document elements of the Cambridge College mission, values and model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review of print and video documents for both internal and external audiences</li> <li>• focus group sessions with faculty, staff and students</li> </ul>
Describe how the model operates in formal learning contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exploration and observation of seminars, colloquia</li> <li>• observation of BA colloquia</li> <li>• focus group sessions with faculty and students</li> <li>• observations in selected seminars</li> </ul>

Areas of Study	Data Collection Methods
Describe how the model operates in academic support of learning contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meetings with staff providers of key services</li> <li>focus group sessions with faculty, staff and students</li> </ul>
Describe how the model operates in logistical support of learning contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with Student Services Sub-committee to gather data on provision and experiences of student services, as these relate to the mission and values of the College</li> <li>documentation/participation with the Mid-level Administrators group</li> <li>focus group sessions with faculty, staff and students</li> </ul>
Describe other practices/factors contributing to changes experienced by students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus group sessions with faculty, staff and students</li> </ul>
All Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extract and integrate relevant data from CAPS transcripts, Education interviews, Alumni surveys and interviews, final writing reflections</li> </ul>

## Research Methods

*Summary.* Using the methods outlined in the table above, data collection focused on:

- Gathering materials and descriptions of various contexts in which learning takes place at Cambridge College;
- Identifying the core values/mission of the institution, as articulated in various types of documents over time, and as understood by current faculty, staff, administrators and students;
- Articulating the model of adult learning and development that guides the work of the College community;
- Documenting how the adult learning model and core values are manifested at Cambridge College through practices in formal learning contexts, academic support and service areas, and logistical support services;

Demographic descriptions of the seminar leaders and focus group participants are provided as an appendix to this summary.

## Results and Implications

This section integrates data across sources in response to each research question. Wherever possible, the voices of research participants are incorporated through the use of extensive quotes<sup>1</sup>. Implications of the lessons learned from the data collection process and results follow the responses to all the questions.

***Research question 1: How does Cambridge College describe its mission/values, the context for learning and model of adult education?***

<sup>1</sup> Focus group discussions are the primary sources of quotes, although quotes are also included from interviews with College founders. Other primary data sources did not include verbatim transcript data.

In order to explore perceptions and experiences of various stakeholder groups with the mission/values and learning model of Cambridge College, it is important to describe what the key concepts are, how they are related and defined. Data from multiple sources suggest that:

- The core values/key elements of the mission of the institution are widely shared and understood.
- These elements have remained consistent over time, although the ways in which they are implemented have changed.
- The learning model is an attempt to put the core values into practice in service of the mission of the institution.

The following table summarizes the values that were prominent in each major category of data, i.e., review of documents, interviews with founders, focus groups with staff, faculty and students and observations in seminar classes.

Educational Contexts, Practices and Models: Values Identified by Data Sources

Values	Doc Review	Founder Interviews	Staff Focus Groups	Faculty Focus Groups	Student Focus Groups	Seminar Observations
Diversity	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
Access/acceptance	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
Respect (for students, needs & experience)	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
Peer support	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
Collaborative learning	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x
Theory-practice interplay	x	x	x	xx	xx	x
Student focus (individualized, pers/prof relevant)	x	x	x	xx	xx	x
Community	x	x	x	xx	xx	x
Academic support	x		x	x	xx	
Acceptance of prior learning/knowledge	x	x		xx	xx	x
Flexibility			x	xx	xx	
Innovation	x			xx		
Excellence	x			x		

These key concepts are broad, and at times, overlapping. The following sections articulate some of the dimensions of each concept, as gleaned from the data sources above. Insights from work with the Student Services Committee and the ad hoc meetings on Academic Support Services and Undergraduate Advising, as well as the observations of BA colloquia and Completion of Academic Program Seminars were also incorporated in appropriate sections.

***Diversity.*** The College uses the acronym IDEA to represent an emphasis on Innovation, Diversity, Excellence and Access. Faculty, staff, students and the founders all stressed the value that Cambridge College places on diversity, and the importance of this value to

the mission and learning model. Cambridge College documents express the commitment to diversity explicitly in the text and implicitly through photographs of diverse students, faculty and staff working together in various learning contexts. In these data, diversity has many dimensions, including: gender, race/ethnicity, age, physical ability, first language, sexual orientation, family/parenting responsibilities, employment status/responsibilities, place of birth or residence, learning styles, educational background and experiences. Seminar instructors were observed to draw on resources from different cultures when delivering their lessons. The founders emphasized the importance of creating a diverse learning community that mirrors the diversity in society, and of engaging in diversity issues in the larger community. Although diversity is perceived to have multiple facets, as listed above, the most frequent references are to race/ethnicity, gender and age. In addition, some faculty and staff expressed the need for a broader definition of diversity in practice and increased attention to issues of diversity in internal College operations and communications.

***Access/acceptance.*** Emphasized in the IDEA acronym, stressed by faculty, staff, students and founders, and addressed in documents, access also had several dimensions. Access was connected to diversity in so far as it related to admission of students irrespective of age, gender, race/ethnicity, prior educational background, learning style, or physical ability. Access through nonrestrictive admissions was also viewed as an important part of the social action mission of the College, a means for increasing equity in education, by providing opportunities to traditionally underserved populations, including those with limited educational backgrounds, time and financial resources. However, in focus groups some faculty and staff expressed concern that this “mission population” may be receiving less attention now than in the past.

Seminar observations suggested that another dimension of access involves making the learning and academic requirements accessible by accommodating and supporting students’ needs once they have been admitted. Faculty were observed to demonstrate personal accessibility by making themselves available to students before and/or after class and during breaks, creating time during class to respond to questions, and in some cases, making home phone numbers and e-mail addresses known to students. Student service offices use extended hours, especially at peak periods, and are developing strategies to reduce the need for students to come to these offices in person. Academic support services are available on Saturdays, during the evening hours when classes are in session, and at other times by appointment. In special circumstances, these services have actually been provided off site, in a student’s home or at an area library.

***Respect (for students, needs & experience).*** Respect was strongly emphasized by all data sources. Many examples were provided of the ways in which the staff and faculty demonstrate respect for, and value the prior learning, diverse backgrounds and experiences of students. In addition, this concept relates to ways in which the hours of operation and structure of programs acknowledge and respect the personal and professional commitments of their adult learners.

***Peer Support.*** All data sources stress the critical importance of peer support in the Cambridge College teaching/learning model. Peer support is encouraged by individual

faculty members and facilitated through the use of cooperative learning tasks/assignments. At the same time, the seminar structure that groups students who are at similar points in their educational programs creates a cohort for peer support, especially at the graduate level. Seminar observers saw students demonstrate peer support through their conduct in class, in the way they spoke to each other, and the content of their interactions. They observed formal collaboration in small group discussions and presentations, and informal support through socialization and celebrations, including food prepared to share with classmates. Students shared College-related information and “tips”, as well as details of their personal lives, which enabled their classmates to know and relate to them beyond the formal classroom setting.

***Collaborative Learning.*** The concept of collaborative learning was also emphasized across data sources. Faculty provided examples of how they structure assignments and sometimes assign students to work together in anticipation of the potential for them to learn together and from each other. Faculty also emphasized that much of the important content is not explicitly taught—instead, they create a context in which learning can take place, and facilitate that learning. Students expressed surprise at the extent to which they learned from other students, an unanticipated benefit for many.

***Theory-Practice Interplay.*** The integration of theory and practice is another key feature of the learning model found in all data sources. Students emphasized both the relevance of their learning to their current and/or anticipated professional work, and the significance they place on having faculty who are experienced practitioners in the areas in which they are teaching. This is an example of how the College, through its selection of personnel, models the concept it aims to teach. In the early years of the College, program structure also facilitated the link between theory and practice, as faculty supervised students at their work sites. Currently, the theory-practice connection is emphasized structurally in the supervised practicum, internship and student teaching requirements, and the expectation that NITE students complete an applied project based on their course work. Seminar observers reported on student demonstrations that illustrated their understanding of how to best transform theory into practice. They also observed that students are expected to draw examples from their personal experiences, especially in their work/professional lives, to illustrate theories in practice.

***Student Focus (individualized, personally/professionally relevant).*** The focus on understanding each student, in an effort to meet their needs and support them in realizing their goals was found across data sources. Academic support services are specifically tailored to the individual, their situation and needs. Providers of academic support services emphasized the importance of their relationships with students, characterized variously as “hand holding,” “listening to/hearing complaints,” and “cheer leading.” Staff reported that they work hard to make themselves approachable and to personalize the College. In several of the seminars observed, students were expected to practice and develop presentation skills appropriate to their professions. In some cases, students were given responsibility for class facilitation, and in one seminar, time was devoted to “strategizing career,” a process in which students drew on knowledge and experience from past careers to help shape the one for which they are preparing. Graduate faculty, in particular, judged program quality on the extent to which students were able to meet their

professional goals. Faculty cited the accommodation of students with special needs and diverse learning styles as another example of individualized support for students.

**Community.** “Community” was the last of the elements identified in all sources of data. References to community pertained to two distinct, but somewhat related situations, 1) the creation and maintenance of a sense of community within the College, and 2) the engagement of the College community, individually and collectively, in the larger community. Faculty aim to create a collaborative, supportive learning community in the classroom, and to inspire students to replicate this sense of community in personal and professional areas of their lives. Implicit in the cohort learning model and promotion of peer support is the sense that the community created functions not only inside the classroom, but also creates a supportive personal and professional network outside the classroom. Some faculty members also described their own engagement with community organizations and issues in their personal and professional lives outside the College. The BA Colloquium served as a structural attempt to create an internal community, and to engage with issues of relevance beyond the College community<sup>2</sup>. From the outset of the program, the founders of the College were concerned about issues of diversity not only among their students, but also in the larger community, e.g., desegregation in the Boston Public Schools. Recent efforts to institutionalize community engagement through establishment of a Center for Community Collaboration suggest the continuing importance of this concept, which was specifically referred to in data from all sources, although not elaborated extensively.

**Academic Support.** The role of academic support in the learning model was highlighted in documents and discussed by staff, faculty and students. The ad hoc group on Academic Support Services provided data on specific types of support provided, as well as the values that guide, and are reflected in these services. The services are designed to be accessible, flexible, and responsive to the needs of individual students. The facilities and services offered by the Writing, Math and Computer Labs, as well as online library resources are viewed as critical to the supportive learning model, and to the retention and academic success of many students. The fact that services and support to students are available to students on an “as needed” basis is noteworthy. No restrictions are placed on the number of consultations, or the type of assignments or projects that will be supported.

**Acceptance of Prior Learning.** Acceptance of prior learning is related to respect for the students and their experiences, and the individualized approach to students. Acceptance of prior learning, as it was addressed in documents, founder interviews, faculty and student focus groups, and observations, has both formal and informal components. Typically, it is discussed with reference to documenting and obtaining credit for learning from experience, and transfer of credits from other institutions. In the BA program, students are encouraged to formally document, and earn credit for their prior learning by completing external or internal challenge exams or developing learning portfolios. Informally, in all programs, students are encouraged to reflect on their prior learning not only in formal educational settings, but also learning derived from work and life

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<sup>2</sup> BA faculty are currently discussing the role of the Colloquium within the new structure of the BA program.

experiences. Seminar leaders were observed to demonstrate their respect for the prior learning and experience of students by soliciting these contributions, and creating space for students to share their experiences and expertise.

***Flexibility.*** Mentioned by staff, students and faculty in focus groups, this concept related to scheduling, as well as to ways in which the College programs, faculty and staff consider the multiple commitments of Cambridge College students.

***Innovation.*** Innovation, another component of the IDEA acronym was only explicitly addressed in the documents reviewed, and by the founders. The initial program itself was an innovation—the first and only graduate school at Newton College at that time. Without using the term innovation, faculty, in their focus groups, expressed enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunity they have to be creative in their teaching. In fact, they suggested that meeting the needs of an adult population in a rapidly changing work environment demands continual renewal and reinvention of content and methods—lifelong learning.

***Excellence.*** Although the concept of excellence is part of the IDEA acronym used by the College, explicit mention in relation to the mission of Cambridge College was found only in the documents using the acronym, and in one focus group discussion. Faculty raised the concept of excellence during a discussion of standards and appropriate criteria for determining program quality. Considerable discussion in a staff focus group that included several former or current students focused on concerns about the lack of consistent standards for course work and completion, although the word “excellence” was not used.

Detailed responses to remaining research questions, including quotes are presented in the full document. Following are implications and summary of data in the area of contexts, practices and model.

### ***What are the implications of these data for policy and practice?***

***Publications.*** The process of collecting documents for review proved quite challenging. In the absence of a formal College archive, documents were solicited from key administrators. A number of documents lacked dates, and more than 80% of the dated documents were 1995 or later, which made it difficult to insure a longitudinal perspective. The document review process suggests that institutional memory is currently embodied in an ever-decreasing number of long time faculty, staff and administrators. An archive could be useful for purposes of development, to provide background for proposals, and document growth and change over time. Historical documents might also inform current practice, as well as efforts to disseminate and replicate the model. For an archive to be used and useful, the College will need to clarify the purposes and anticipated users/uses, which will inform subsequent decisions regarding procedures, contents and location.

In addition, the internal documents reviewed did not always reflect stated learning outcomes concerning writing, and the institutional emphasis on *excellence*. Although students are advised that they will be held to a standard for writing that includes the

ability to produce grammatically correct prose, the handbooks themselves were not always well-edited. In July 1998, a publications policy was developed and distributed that attempted to specify and standardize the production and printing processes for College publications. However, it did not provide style guidelines to facilitate consistent use of the logo, dates, etc. Since the departure of the Director of Communications, implementation of these policies has been the responsibility of an Editor/Publications Coordinator, who reports to the Vice President for Enrollment Management. She is implementing a standardized process, including consistent style guidelines. However, to date, her work has focused only on external public information and marketing publications.

A copy editor, with in-depth knowledge of the programs and practices of the College, could facilitate increasing clarity, consistency and quality of internal publications that outline academic policies and practices. These publications play an important role in representing the values and model to current students, and describing implications for implementation of these by faculty and academic support service providers.

***Student Recruitment.*** The Cambridge College model of teaching/learning is *student-focused*, and relies heavily on student engagement and individual and collective student contributions to the teaching/learning process. Students are expected to *build on their prior experiences*, to bring *practical examples to integrate with the theories* presented in class, to provide *support for their peers*, and to participate in a *collaborative learning* process. The model assumes that CC students are adults, older than students in traditional institutions, and that they have significant life and work experience. Marketing and recruitment efforts should continue to target this population, as they appear best positioned participate in and benefit from the CC teaching/learning model. Continued attention to the diversity within the CC community at all levels makes a strong statement about the institutional commitment to diversity, and supports recruitment efforts among students from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, several data sources call for the College to expand the diversity emphasis beyond race, age and gender to more explicitly include disabilities, sexual orientation, etc.

***Faculty Recruitment and Orientation.*** Faculty, in particular, seminar leaders, are crucial to the implementation of the model, which places demands on them unique to this context. Participants in student focus group discussions expressed concerns about faculty members who they described as “not following the model.” To implement the CC teaching/learning model successfully requires more than subject content and teaching methods. Faculty members need to understand the characteristics of adult learners. They need to be skilled practitioners who integrate theory and practice in their own work, and facilitators who demonstrate *collaborative learning* through the group process. They need to model the lifelong learning they promote among their students. In the early days of the College, all faculty participated in a retreat at the beginning of each year. Current faculty members report learning about the model informally from colleagues, and from their own experiences with students. However, in view of the rapid growth of the College and increasing proportion of senior and adjunct faculty, an informal introduction may no longer be adequate. Recruitment of faculty with demonstrated skills in group process and adult education and practical professional experience, combined with more

systematic orientation and/or mentoring by faculty members skilled in the model, might increase the chances of success for individual faculty and lead to more consistent implementation of the model.

***Staff Orientation and Professional Development.*** The model can be fully realized only through the efforts of all members of the Cambridge College community. Data suggest that staff members who are not students have only a partial or superficial understanding of the model. These data highlight the importance of the role played by enrollment services staff in communicating the values and model of the College through words and actions. Most students first encounter the College in the person of their admissions representative, and often maintain contact with this person throughout their enrollment at the College. Therefore, it is particularly important that these staff members have a clear understanding of the values and model, and the importance of their role in communicating and implementing them. Students interact with staff in student services offices from their initial enrollment through requests for transcripts years after graduation. These interactions are critical to the overall student experience, and require a focus on the needs of individual students, at the same time that the number of students who need to be served is continually increasing.

Participants in faculty, staff and student focus groups all perceived important discrepancies between the implementation of the model in academic contexts, and their experiences with the operational functions of the College. As part of an orientation to the College, new staff might work with experienced staff to understand the values/mission and model guiding the work of the College, and to explore the implications of this for their role and work in the College. This type of *collaborative learning* and *peer support* is consistent with the model, and could allow new staff to develop understanding through experience. Staff focus group participants recommended increased emphasis on team-building and staff professional development, another opportunity for the College to model and promote lifelong learning. Staffing levels must also keep pace with the increases in enrollments if the College is to maintain an *individualized focus on students* and *excellence* in services provided.

***Student Assessment and Support.*** These data suggest that Academic Support Services are critical if the College is to achieve both *access* and *excellence*. These services provide an *individualized focus on students*, and contribute to the sense of a *caring community* committed to the success of each student. Many students who are admitted need intensive advice and support to persist and succeed. In particular, faculty identified the need for additional support for students speaking English as a second language, and for students with inadequate test taking skills, as many aspire to professional certification and licensure. Most faculty members stressed the need for additional resources directed to writing skill development, and some suggested a need for psychological and career counseling services. Faculty recommended further role clarification and training of undergraduate academic advisors<sup>3</sup>, and increased human and information resources to support academic advising.

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<sup>3</sup> A training seminar for potential undergraduate student advisors was conducted in April, subsequent to our data collection activities.

Some classroom formats assume that students bring a certain level of presentation skills and/or computer experience. When this is not the case, it is extremely difficult to meet the divergent needs of students, and students with higher level skills may feel that their time is not well spent. Assessing the skills of entering students in key areas, clarifying course expectations vis-à-vis proficiency with computers and/or presentations, and providing workshops targeted to develop the necessary skills, might improve the quality of experiences for all students.

As noted above, students entering the College have widely varied backgrounds and experiences with computer technology. The College has developed an ambitious Strategic Plan for Academic Technology<sup>4</sup> that explores the potential fit of new technology initiatives with the core values and model. Online communication and learning can be a tremendous advantage and increase *access* for students who have technology resources and experience, by reducing travel time, and enabling greater control over schedules and optimal learning time. However, research cited in the strategic plan suggests that access to computer technology continues to be strongly correlated with income and race. Thus, the College is challenged to facilitate access for all students. At the same time, some students expressed concern that the increasing use of technology, and the loss of face-to-face interaction will reduce the opportunities for *peer support* and *collaborative learning*. The College is aware of these challenges, and committed to developing creative strategies to address them. Faculty members with long experience in implementing the model in classrooms, and strong interest in new technologies will need resources and support to successfully adapt the model to continue to meet the ever changing and diverse needs of their students.

***Equitable Support and Access.*** Student Services Committee members expressed concerns about the challenges inherent in providing accurate, timely information and full service to students taking most of their courses at remote sites<sup>5</sup>. These students may also have limited access to Academic Support Services and facilities, i.e., the writing, math and computer labs and tutors, and the Center for Learning and Assessment (including the online library), which were cited as important by student focus group participants. In response to the needs and location of students, and space limitations in Cambridge and Springfield, the College anticipates continued growth through addition of remote sites.

These data suggest that support services (logistical and academic) are important contributors to the quality of student experiences. Academic Support Services may also be essential to the retention and ultimate success of some students, and, as discussed in the preceding section, these services are also central to maintaining the values of *access* and *excellence*. Writing faculty have begun to pilot options for online tutoring and support of student writing at remote sites<sup>6</sup>. Given the important role support services play in the teaching/learning model, and the fact that many of these services have been based in Cambridge or Springfield, the increasing number of students receiving

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<sup>4</sup> Cambridge College: A “High-Touch/High-Tech” Learning Model, submitted to the Board of Trustees February 16, 2000.

instruction in other locations represents both a challenge and an opportunity for innovation and adaptation of the model.

***Specification and Implementation of Policies.*** Work with the Student Services Committee illuminated a number of issues related, at times, to lack of policy, but more often to lack of timely communication and consistent enforcement of existing policies. Students and faculty focus group discussions further highlighted the need for specification of policy and clearer communication of existing policies<sup>7</sup>. Inconsistent enforcement of existing policy in the following areas was deemed to have a negative impact on student services: registration and add/drop deadlines, course maximums, and time limits for completion of incompletes and grade changes. Student focus group participants were confused about the grading policies, and procedures for obtaining grade equivalencies. Student services personnel perceived a need for procedures to support students returning from a leave of absence or other interruption of their studies. Senior and adjunct faculty members expressed the desire for a faculty handbook that clearly spells out expectations, compensation and procedures for part-time faculty.

***Summary.*** Research into the Educational Contexts, Practices and Models explored the way in which Cambridge College communicates its mission, values and models in print, in practice, and in policies and structures. It examined the ways in which the mission, values and models are experienced by students, faculty and alumni; and what the institution, and individuals who currently comprise it, do to put them into practice. Data were collected from multiple sources, including the founders of the College, current students, faculty and staff, and print documents, using individual and focus group interviews, document reviews, observations of seminars and colloquia, and engagement with key providers of academic and logistical student services in the College.

Data from multiple sources suggest that:

- The core values/key elements of the mission of the institution are widely shared and understood.
- These elements have remained consistent over time, although the ways in which they are implemented have changed.
- The learning model is an attempt to put the core values into practice in service of the mission of the institution.

However, two components of the IDEA acronym, Innovation and Excellence, were each explicitly addressed in only two sources of data, suggesting that these values currently receive less emphasis than others. In fact, considerable discussion in student and staff focus groups focused on the lack of consistent standards for course work and completion, a concern that is supported by alumni data on “areas for improvement.”

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<sup>5</sup> Although students taking courses at remote sites were invited to participate in focus groups, distance prevented their participation.

<sup>6</sup> This summer a task force is being formed to focus on alternative strategies for providing academic support to students.

<sup>7</sup> The establishment and regular meetings of the Administrative Council have improved communications in this area; however, much work remains to be done.

With respect to the communication of values, the following observations can be made:

- Succinct sayings used by the current president, quoted by faculty, staff and administrators, and referenced in focus group discussion, are an important vehicle for expression and transmission of key values within the institution.
- The contexts in which the values are most strongly communicated, and the model most clearly implemented are academic. In fact, all stakeholder groups emphasized the discrepancy between practices in the academic affairs of the College as compared to internal administration, operations and communications.
- Faculty and staff learn about the values and model informally, from colleagues and students. As a result, although staff may be aware of the stated mission, those who have not been students, have a limited understanding of its implications for their practice.

The following were key points regarding how the values and model were experienced by students:

- The classroom was most frequently cited by students as the context in which they experience the model and values.
- A number of students described the important role of the admissions representatives. For many students, these individuals are not only their initial point of contact with the College, but they continue to serve as a point of contact and support throughout their enrollment.
- The importance of the support provided by academic support services was addressed by students, and confirmed by staff and faculty, who provided examples of impacts on academic skill and success, on retention/persistence, and personal and career development.
- Students also emphasized the importance of the mix of students at the College, and the acceptance and support they experienced in the presence of other students of the same race/ethnicity, age, gender, and/or life experience.

Student mix also had implications for process and content in a setting that relies on collaborative learning, and the interplay between theory and practice. The assumption that students come with considerable work/life experience, and in some cases, with a basic level of skills (e.g., computer, presentation) has important implications for recruitment, assessment, and support needed to insure that the values of access and excellence can be maintained simultaneously. The student mix, in particular, differences between undergraduate and graduate programs, among programs and program concentrations, also has important implications for advising.

Several key factors were noted in terms of the faculty experience with the model and values:

- Faculty members explained their experience of the mission and values in terms of the diversity among their students and colleagues, and the freedom they enjoy to innovate and put the values into practice in their classrooms.
- Their focus group discussions confirmed that the implementation of the model is thoughtful and intentional, informing instructional process and content in an on-going fashion.

- Faculty members also described their roles in nurturing and coaching students as crucial to the model.
- Data from multiple sources focused on the critical importance of recruiting and retaining faculty who serve as models of the lifelong learning they promote, and the integration of theory and practice they use in teaching.
- To implement this model successfully, demands faculty with expertise not only in content and practice, but also in group process and facilitation, since the creation of an environment that allows learning and change to take place is fundamental to the model.

In addition to the efforts of faculty members in their classrooms, examples of explicit attempts to implement the mission/value and model were identified in other contexts.

- Institutional structures such as the entry of students through the Academic Planning Seminar, and opportunities for students to enter graduate study through the Graduate Studies Program were seen as concrete manifestations of the model.
- Program structures such as the Professional Seminar, and the ways in which all programs accommodate student needs and honor different learning styles were also identified as expressions of the mission/values and model.
- The development of programs like NITE and the new CAGS, the expansion of offerings at remote sites, and the initiation of the Center for Community Collaboration, and the Hampton Student Center and Scholarships are seen as direct responses to the values of diversity, access and engagement/impact in the wider community.

Staff recognized the importance of their roles in putting the values/mission into practice, and the possibility for a single negative experience to impact the overall student experience.

- They are aware that student experiences are mixed, in part due to internal problems with communication and inconsistent policy implementation with respect to key operational functions within the College.
- They expressed sincere commitment to the values and mission, and suggest increased attention to employee satisfaction and team building as a means to improving service and customer, i.e., student satisfaction.

Faculty members cited logistical constraints as factors inhibiting their ability to serve students and implement the model, as they envision it. Senior and adjunct faculty provided a number of specific examples, and suggested that a faculty handbook would constitute an important first step in communications and clarification of expectations, compensation and procedures. Students also provided a number of specific suggestions for more consistent implementation of the model, and improvements in instructional and service delivery across contexts.

Inherent in the mission and values of the College are several tensions that need to be addressed through policy and/or in the implementation of the model. To remain innovative, the model must adapt to the changing society and the changing needs of the population it serves.

- Data from multiple sources pointed to the tension between the value on open access, diversity and the value of excellence. Resolving this tension will require additional attention to clarity and consistency in academic standards, clarification of exit standards, and increased resources for assessing, advising and supporting the diverse group of students being admitted.
- Attention to the value of excellence will also assist the College in responding to increasing external pressure from licensure and certification exams, while maintaining the core values of excellence and diversity.

## Appendix Characteristics of Participants in Observations and ProSem

Professional Seminar Observations:

Characteristics of Leaders and Seminars Selected for Observation

Criteria		
Years of employment <sup>8</sup>	Range= 1-27 years	Average = 11.8 years
Category of employment	Core faculty = 6	Senior faculty = 7
Gender	Female = 7	Male = 6
Race/Ethnicity	White, not Hispanic = 8	African-American, Asian = 5
Seminar location <sup>9</sup>	Cambridge = 11	Remote site = 2
Duration of seminar	Initial = 7	Concluding = 6

Focus Group Participants:

- Staff were selected to represent both mid-level and union staff, graduates and/or current students at the College, and diversity in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, length of employment, and department.

Characteristics of Staff Focus Group Participants

Criteria		
Years of employment	Range= 1-14 years	Average = 6.1 years
Category of employment	Mid-level = 8	Union = 8
Gender	Female = 10	Male = 6
Race/Ethnicity	White, not Hispanic = 9	African-American, Hispanic = 7
Current or former students	Yes = 9	No = 7

- Students were selected to represent diversity in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, program of study, and length of time enrolled at the College.

Characteristics of Student Focus Group Participants

Criteria		
Semesters of enrollment	Range= 1-8 semesters	n/a
Gender	Female = 6	Male = 4
Age	Range = 27-56	Average = 41.6
Race/Ethnicity	White, not Hispanic = 6	African-American, Hispanic = 4

- Faculty were selected to represent diversity in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, program, tenure at Cambridge College, and members of key committees. In an effort to encourage wider participation in the research, faculty who had been observed as seminar leaders were not invited to participate in focus groups.

<sup>8</sup> Although an effort was made to select only experienced faculty, this was not possible in all programs.

<sup>9</sup> Most seminars are conducted on the Cambridge campus.

### Characteristics of Faculty Focus Group Participants

Criteria		
Years of employment	Range= 5-23 years	Average = 9.9 years
Category of employment	Core = 6	Senior =4; Adjunct = 2
Gender	Female = 8	Male = 4
Race/Ethnicity	White, not Hispanic = 7	African-American, Asian = 5
Former students	Yes = 3	No = 9