# SUNY Excels

## Performance Improvement Plan

September 2015

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<th>Campus:</th>
<th>Columbia-Greene Community College</th>
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<tr>
<td>President:</td>
<td>James R. Campion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Academic Officer:</td>
<td>Phyllis Carito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Financial Officer:</td>
<td>A. Joseph Matties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Student Affairs Officer:</td>
<td>Joseph Watson</td>
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**Introduction: Columbia-Greene and SUNY Excels**

Columbia-Greene Community College, hereinafter referred to as either “Columbia-Greene” or “the College,” is a public two-year undergraduate institution located in Hudson, New York. The College is locally sponsored by two rural counties, Columbia and Greene, which have a combined population of about 112,000. Columbia-Greene is now entering the final year of its five-year Strategic Plan (Columbia-Greene Strategic Plan).

Columbia-Greene’s Strategic Plan is a reflection of the College’s mission statement:

*Columbia-Greene Community College welcomes a geographically and culturally diverse student population, is dedicated to developing and administering high quality post-secondary educational programs that are accessible to the residents of the service area, is responsive to the changing needs of the community, maintains a caring environment that is dedicated to personal attention, and recognizes its responsibilities for providing transfer, vocational, technical, remedial, and lifelong learning for all.*

The primary focus of the Strategic Plan is *student enrollment, retention, and completion*. The Plan contains six institutional goals:

1. Quality Education,
2. Accessibility,
3. Excellent Facilities,
4. Student Centered,
5. Service to the Community, and

The College goals broadly align with the five priority areas of SUNY Excels, and the strategic focus of enrollment, retention, and completion helps concentrate Columbia-Greene’s efforts on student success and the SUNY Completion Agenda (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Alignment of SUNY Excels priorities with Columbia-Greene’s strategic goals**
Columbia-Greene upholds a student-centric model and prioritizes accessibility by maintaining affordable tuition rates and recruiting diverse student populations.

The College offers 33 associate degree programs and five certificate programs – granting students options that either prepare them for transfer to four-year institutions or for immediate entry into the workforce. The College recently launched a new two-year Medical Assisting program which will satisfy student demand and greatly contribute to the growing needs of the local health services sector. Columbia-Greene is nearing the launch of its first fully online degree program, and is currently developing a 10-year Master Plan that will inform the College of future academic programming opportunities.

The College has instituted several evidence-based programs to help improve retention and completion, including the Be a Graduate Program, the Roadway to Academic Success and Completion early intervention program, and the Readmit Mentor program.

Start-Up NY and other economic development initiatives have helped to foster new relationships with local businesses, neighboring institutions, and community partners. These new relationships have contributed to the growth of the College’s student scholarship fund and alumni donor base.

Columbia-Greene plans to submit a full proposal through SUNY’s Expanded Investment and Performance Fund to help support the Information Systems Revitalization Project that has been established to improve student enrollment, retention, and completion by replacing the College’s outdated student information system.

The SUNY Excels priority areas and metrics complement Columbia-Greene’s strategic goals and objectives and reinforce the College’s commitment to student enrollment, retention, completion, and success.

The following pages outline the College’s commitment to the SUNY Excels priority areas by describing current initiatives as well as future plans to maintain or improve those initiatives that are proven contributors to the vision and mission of Columbia-Greene.
**Access**

...provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs...offered through a geographically distributed comprehensive system of diverse campuses which shall have differentiated and designated missions.

**Full Enrollment Picture**

Part-time student enrollment continues to rise due to increased participation in the College in the High School Program – which has more than doubled over the past four years. However, due to the recovering New York State economy and decreasing local high school populations, Columbia-Greene’s full-time student enrollment has declined 17% in two years. To help restore full-time enrollment, Columbia-Greene plans to offer a fully online Business A.A.S. degree program. The proposed program has been approved by SUNY and the New York State Education Department, and it is expected to positively impact full-time enrollment (Figure 2). The program is planned to begin in Spring 2016.

Also expected to positively impact enrollment is Columbia-Greene’s *Information Systems Revitalization Project*, which has been established to support the planning and implementation of an upgraded student information system. More details about this project are provided in the *Total Sponsored Activity* section.

**Figure 2. Projected growth in full-time enrollment**
**New York State Residents Served by SUNY**

Over 99% of students who attend Columbia-Greene are New York State residents. In an effort to reach new audiences within our service area, the College plans to increase enrollment in non-credit programs by improving the efficiency of the course registration process, developing and distributing e-newsletters, and by expanding vocational and avocational non-credit course offerings.

**Diversity**

Columbia-Greene’s Academic Philosophy encompasses five key skills that are considered essential to students’ academic and professional success. One of these skills is to “recognize and respect individual and group diversity and alternate points of view;” in a recent graduate follow-up survey, 72% of respondents indicated that the College contributed largely or very largely to their development of this skill.

According to the U.S. Census, 90% of Columbia and Greene County residents are white and non-Hispanic, which is 20% greater than the state average of 70%. Given the low racial diversity within the College’s service area, Columbia-Greene actively participates in local events that specifically target minority populations, such as the Hudson Black Arts and Cultural Festival and the Hudson Bangladeshi Festival.

The policy of Columbia-Greene is to provide equal opportunity in admission, employment, and all College activities for all qualified persons, to prohibit discrimination, and to promote the full realization of equal opportunity. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to everyone, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, creed, age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, familial status, pregnancy, predisposing genetic characteristics, military status, domestic violence victim status, or criminal conviction in the administration of all college programs including employment.

Columbia-Greene is committed to actively engaging minority populations to help strengthen the diversity of the College faculty, staff, and overall student body.

**Capacity**

Columbia-Greene is currently developing a Facilities Master Plan that will include an analysis of classroom space needs, course demand, and new academic programming opportunities. Columbia-Greene is expanding its distance learning footprint and plans to offer its very first fully online degree program, Business A.A.S., in the Spring 2016 term. This new online degree program will provide access to students who lack adequate transportation to the College and will allow Columbia-Greene to participate in and benefit from the resources of the Open SUNY initiative.
COMPLETION

...recognizes the fundamental role of its responsibilities in undergraduate education and provides a full range of graduate and professional education that reflects the opportunity for individual choice and the needs of society; promotes appropriate program articulation between its state-operated institutions and its community colleges; increases degree/award production, non-degree completion and services that support student completion; and enable those we serve to achieve their goals.

Completions

In Spring 2015, the College piloted a reverse transfer project, the Be a Graduate Program, which was developed in an effort to reconnect with former Columbia-Greene students who had accumulated a significant number of credits but had not yet earned their degree. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, those who complete an associate degree will, on average, increase their annual earnings by as much as 27%. Participants in the program are connected with a Completion Advisor who assess their academic standing, discusses potential transfer credits or credit-for-life experiences that may now apply to their degree, and develops their personalized completion plan.

About 130 students who earned 45 or more credits from Columbia-Greene were sent a letter inviting them to enroll in the program; 19% of students responded and 6% have now earned an associate degree (Figure 3). The College continues to receive interest in the program – which is expected to contribute to the SUNY Completion Agenda by increasing the total number of degrees and certificates granted over the next five years.

Figure 3. Be a Graduate Program outcomes

- Did not Respond, 106, 81%
- Responded, 25, 19%
- Graduated, 8, 6%
- Re-Enrolled, 5, 4%
- Pending, 12, 9%
**Student Achievement and Success**

The percentage of degree or certificate seeking students who complete their program and subsequently enroll at another institution is a direct measure of student achievement and success. The Student Achievement Measure (SAM) is a nationally recognized peer benchmarking tool that tracks student transfer and completion over six years. Columbia-Greene's Offices of Academic Advising and Counseling, Career, and Transfer Services provide students with the resources necessary for successful transfer to both public and private institutions. Columbia-Greene performs highly in this area compared to its SUNY peers; about half (49%) of first-time, degree-seeking students continue their education at a four-year institution, and 27% transfer with a degree from Columbia-Greene (Figure 4). The College actively seeks out new partnerships and articulation agreements with four-year institutions to continuously expand the transfer opportunities for students.

**Figure 4. Peer comparison of six-year transfer and completion rates**

![Bar chart showing transfer and completion rates across different institutions.]

- **Transferred to another institution within 6 years**
- **With degree or certificate from original institution**

Source: Student Achievement Measure (www.studentachievementmeasure.org)

Cohort: First-time students who entered in Fall 2008 and earned 12 or more credits by the end of their second year
Graduation Rates

Columbia-Greene’s current five-year strategic plan focuses heavily on enrollment, retention, and completion. In an effort to provide an optimal learning environment that promotes student success, the College routinely explores new and innovative ways to decrease the average time-to-degree and lead more students on a path to completion.

The College has instituted programs to help improve completion rates, specifically for high-risk students and underrepresented minorities, including:

- the Be a Graduate Program for non-completers,
- the Roadway to Academic Success and Completion (RASC) early intervention program for high-need transitional students, and
- the Successful Outreach to Achieve Retention Program for students returning from academic dismissal.

Columbia-Greene currently maintains one of the highest four-year graduation rates among its SUNY and non-SUNY peers (Figure 5). Since Fall 2009, the College has improved its three-year completion rate from 27% to 31%, and, over the next five years, plans to improve this rate further to 35%.

Figure 5. Peer comparison of two-year, three-year, and four-year completion rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduated within 4 Years</th>
<th>Graduated within 3 Years</th>
<th>Graduated within 2 Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peer 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia-Greene</td>
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<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer 2</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer 10</td>
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</table>

Source: IPEDS Graduation Rates Component
Cohort: First-time, full-time, degree or certificate seeking students who entered in Fall 2009
**Time to Degree**

Columbia-Greene is committed to decreasing the amount of time required to complete a degree and also recognizes its responsibility to prepare academically challenged students for college-level coursework and success. The College is dedicated to developing targeted intervention programs for high-risk populations; in Fall 2013, the *Roadway to Academic Success and Completion* (RASC) early intervention program was piloted for students who were required to complete at least three transitional courses prior to beginning college-level coursework. Participating students meet with a faculty mentor to discuss academic goals, college readiness, and other non-cognitive factors that might impact their success at Columbia-Greene. The program has shown outstanding results with regard to retention – the one-year retention rate for students who required three or more transitional courses improved 24% after implementation of the RASC program (Figure 6).

Though Columbia-Greene does not have a finish-in-2 guarantee program, the College plans to reduce time to degree for high-risk as well as low-risk student populations by modeling other early intervention initiatives on the success of the RASC program.

**Figure 6. One-year retention rate for students requiring three or more transitional courses**

![Figure 6](image-url)

*Source: Columbia-Greene registration data and RASC Program Report*

*Cohort*: First-time, full-time, degree or certificate seeking students
SUCCESS

...encourages regional networks and cooperative relationships with other educational and cultural institutions for the purpose of better fulfilling its mission of education, research and service; robust system and campus supports for student success; and students are prepared for the most successful possible launch into further education, career and citizenship.

SUNY Advantage

Columbia-Greene has long understood the value of engaged learning as it relates to a student’s career decision-making, post-graduation employment, and successful college transfer. Students benefit from a variety of applied learning choices both on and off campus, ranging from formal internships to custom-designed experiences geared toward specific career goals. All academic programs at Columbia-Greene offer required or optional applied learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

Columbia-Greene is committed to the growth and improvement of the applied learning program. The College recently launched two new degree programs with required applied learning components: the Medial Assisting A.A.S. program and the Automotive Technology Technical-Training and Education Network (T-TEN) A.O.S. program will offer students invaluable applied learning experiences outside the classroom. A Campus Advisory Board for Applied Learning was recently formed in an effort to provide a more consistent applied learning program for all students.

The College plans to actively participate in and contribute to the success of New York State’s Next Generation Job Linkage Program by leveraging the resources provided by the on-campus Workforce Development Board, a one-stop center for job-seeking students and community members.

Financial Literacy

Columbia-Greene is committed to providing its students with an affordable, high quality education; many of the College’s students borrow federal loans to support tuition and other necessary expenses. Columbia-Greene currently maintains a low three-year federal loan default rate of 13.2% (7% lower than the national average for all two-year public institutions), placing the College in the top five among SUNY community colleges. Over the past three years, Columbia-Greene has increased the annual amount of scholarships awarded to students by 28% in an effort to alleviate financial burdens and decrease student default rates. In an effort to improve Columbia-Greene’s full-time retention rate from 64% to 70% by Fall 2020, the College plans to implement a new financial aid text alert program that has been proven to increase student persistence.

(http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/single_study_reviews/wwc_castleman_121614.pdf)
INQUIRY

Total Sponsored Activity
Columbia-Greene is currently requesting grant funds to support the revitalization of the College’s outdated student information system. The Information Systems Revitalization Project has been established to support the planning and implementation of Banner, the SUNY-preferred student information system solution.

Columbia-Greene plans to submit a full proposal through SUNY’s Expanded Investment and Performance Fund to help support the project.

If awarded, the College plans to report the impact of the project on student enrollment, retention, and completion.

Student Hands-on Research and Entrepreneurship
Columbia-Greene is committed to the growth and improvement of the applied learning program (see SUNY Advantage section).

The College will ensure that courses with applied learning opportunities are accurately captured and subsequently reported through SIRIS. This will be accomplished through discussions with division chairs and other faculty members to assess which courses contain hands-on research, entrepreneurship, and other applied learning experiences.

Scholarship, Discovery, and Innovation
Columbia-Greene considers scholarship, discovery, and innovation to be invaluable contributors to the College’s unique character. Although this is not currently measured quantitatively, the College is open to alternative methods to measure this important component of institutional inquiry.

...encourages and facilitates basic and applied research for the purpose of the creation and dissemination of knowledge vital for continued human, scientific, technological and economic advancement; increase external investment in SUNY research; and continue to increase the level of confidence external entities have in SUNY System, institutions, faculty, and programs.
Start-Up New York and Beyond

As of September 2015, the College is finalizing a formal Start-Up NY partnership with a local agricultural food production company in an effort to expand internship and employment opportunities for students, particularly those matriculated in the College’s Environmental Studies A.S. and Math/Science A.S. degree programs. These internship opportunities will directly align with the College’s mission of providing transfer, vocational, and technical learning opportunities for students, and will lead to new articulation agreements with nearby institutions. This partnership will also stimulate entrepreneurship, provide jobs for graduates as technicians, managers, sales staff, and office administrators, and will energize the local economy by necessitating the establishment of new agreements among local businesses.

Columbia-Greene actively participates in economic development initiatives and voices the community college perspective by regularly attending meetings of the Capital Region Economic Development Council.

The College recently hosted a town hall meeting organized by the Columbia and Greene County Chambers of Commerce to showcase the Capital Region’s plans and developments for Governor Cuomo’s Upstate Revitalization Initiative.

Alumni and Philanthropic Support

In September 2014, Columbia-Greene hosted its first annual gala – which was attended by more than 200 guests, including business, philanthropic, and other leaders from the local community. As a result of this new event, the College has strengthened its donor base and has established new community partnerships – which, together, will increase scholarship opportunities for hundreds of Columbia-Greene students, especially for those demonstrating high economic need.

The event was a financial success, netting almost twice as much as expected; the second annual gala is planned for September 2015 and will continue to serve as an attractive means for engaging alumni supporters and local philanthropists (Figure 8). The College plans to increase its annual fundraising from $191,000 to $490,000 by the year 2020.
Civic Engagement

Columbia-Greene values the participation of its students, faculty, and staff in community service and volunteerism. Although this is not currently measured quantitatively, the College is open to alternative methods to measure civic engagement.

Economic Impact

Columbia-Greene conducted an economic impact study in February 2011. The study indicated that the College has a total economic impact of $88,472,000 and a 19% return on investment for a student tuition dollar. In February 2015, SUNY sent out a Community College Budget Advocacy Data Collection Sheet that included information pertaining to economic impact. The College would suggest streamlining and refining this data collection sheet so that only the most applicable indicators of economic impact are requested. In addition, Columbia-Greene is open to ideas about how to measure, in a concise manner, the annual economic impact of an institution.
**Conclusion: Expected Impact on Columbia-Greene**

Columbia-Greene’s goals and priorities for each of the SUNY Excels metrics as outlined in this Performance Improvement Plan have been summarized below (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Goals and priorities of Columbia-Greene’s Performance Improvement Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Full Enrollment Picture</th>
<th>Increase full-time enrollment to 1,000 students by 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NYS Residents Served by SUNY</td>
<td>Increase enrollment in non-credit programs to 2,000 by 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Continue attendance at local cultural events and adherence to affirmative action policies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Implement Business A.A.S. online degree program</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion</th>
<th>Completions</th>
<th>Expand the <em>Be a Graduate Program</em> Increase degrees/certificates awarded 7% by 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Achievement and Success</td>
<td>Maintain high six-year transfer and completion rates Increase one-year retention rate to 70% by 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduation Rates</td>
<td>Increase three-year completion rate to 35% by 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time to Degree</td>
<td>Reduce time to degree to 3.4 years by 2020</td>
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<th>Success</th>
<th>SUNY Advantage</th>
<th>Provide applied learning opportunities for all students</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Literacy</td>
<td>Maintain low three-year federal loan default rates</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>Total Sponsored Activity</th>
<th>Receive funding to support the <em>Information Systems Revitalization Project</em></th>
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<td>Student Hands-on Research and Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Ensure accurate reporting of applied learning criteria for courses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scholarship, Discovery, and Innovation</td>
<td>Maintain a campus climate that fosters innovation and academic excellence</td>
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<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Start-Up New York and Beyond</th>
<th>Finalize a contracted Start-Up NY partnership with a local business</th>
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<td>Alumni and Philanthropic Support</td>
<td>Increase annual fundraising to $490,000 by 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Encourage student and employee participation in community service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Impact</td>
<td>Improve the economic impact of Columbia-Greene on its sponsor counties, NYS, and beyond</td>
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Meeting the goals as outlined herein will enable Columbia-Greene to better serve its students, faculty, staff, and local community, and more broadly, will contribute to the growth of New York State’s educational pipeline.