Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan rests on the Orange County Community College statement of Mission, Vision and Values, which defines an institution committed to high standards and access for all. The college commits itself to operating in an efficient manner while employing a mutually respectful decision-making process. Realizing the vision of being the best college in the SUNY System and the college of choice for all Orange County citizens sets an ambitious goal for the College.

The Orange County Community College Strategic Plan defines the activities necessary to improve educational quality, increase accessibility and support growth in a cost-effective manner. It identifies strategic priorities that Orange County Community College will need to realize in order to achieve these goals. Progress needs to be measured and adjustments made accordingly.

The Orange County Community College strategic plan has three primary themes.

- Provide opportunity for all citizens by expanding the variety of programs and services. This includes improving geographic accessibility by upgrading current facilities and developing new ones, including a new campus in Newburgh.
- Improve students’ persistence and academic success so that the Orange County Community College experience becomes one of their most richly rewarding personal and professional experiences.
- Increase the effectiveness of all Orange County Community College operations in order to fulfill our promise to “…be the most efficient in shepherding resources.”

Strategic Priorities

The strategic plan identifies five priorities:

I. Implement a collegial approach to an effective planning and review process for all College operations. Such an approach has three components:
   - Expand the scope of responsibility and authority of the Planning Committee
   - Improve the collection, usefulness and availability of planning data
   - Develop and integrate into the operating life of the College the responses to issues raised by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association

II. Develop and implement an Academic Master Plan with four supporting plans:
   - Facilities for both the Middletown campus and a potential campus at Newburgh
   - Technology necessary to support administrative and educational activities
• Resource development, including diversifying revenue sources and realigning current resources
• Enrollment management that includes improving student success rates

III. Provide adequate resources to allow Orange County Community College to realize its strategic goals.
• The college needs to diversify funding sources
• Improve efficiency of existing programs

IV. Review and realign the missions, operations and staffing levels of all Orange County Community College departments in light of the strategic priorities.

V. Provide a clear, consistent and compelling presentation of Orange County Community College.
Introduction

Overview

The purpose of this plan is to identify ways to increase and improve educational opportunity for all citizens of Orange County. Achieving this goal will require the college to optimize the quality and breadth of educational programs provided. A measure of success is realized when Orange County Community College students talk about their education as a thoroughly rewarding experience that led to meaningful outcomes for them personally and professionally.

Orange County Community College will achieve its core goals in the most cost-effective manner possible while enriching the quality of its programs. Part of the mission is to increase the effectiveness of all College operations in order to fulfill our promise to “… be the most efficient in shepherding public resources.”

This plan will be implemented in a collegial manner, and will include an ongoing process of planning that will inspire confidence in every member of the college community regarding the effectiveness of all college operations. In order to achieve this goal, Orange County Community College should expand the scope of responsibility and authority of the Planning Committee and improve the collection, usefulness and availability of planning data. The planning process needs to start by developing and integrating responses to the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association into the operating life of the College.

The college must build on its strengths, not least of which is a positive academic reputation. The faculty and staff have maintained a consistent commitment to students and their education, even during periods when academic leadership was in transition. The college is generally well-received in the community, and by the high schools and colleges in the region.

Working toward the strategic goals will strengthen the commitment to staff and faculty members; they have been, and will continue to be, the backbone of the institution and its success. The planning process and the decisions that flow from it should allow broad participation and provide for a collegial process of involvement. A continuing goal of the institution should be adequate reward for a committed staff and faculty.

The strategic plan defines key decisions and activities that will shape the Orange County Community College character and define the place of the college in the community. Major goals include the refurbishment of the Middletown campus and the development of a new campus in Newburgh. In addition, the College will institute a systematic strategy to improve the success of students. Finally, the College will realign the curriculum to better serve the community, including the development of a more complete offering of certificate programs.
Realizing these goals will require a serious and continuing commitment by everyone on the staff. The strategic plan defines five priorities that will shape the approach that Orange County Community College will take to achieve these goals. Even though the priorities are presented separately, they define an integrated set of activities that complement each other.

The Community Context

Population and demographics

All signs point to a substantial increase in the number of students attending Orange County Community College. The current campus is approaching capacity and the Newburgh satellite campus is nearly at capacity in its rented space. Orange County Community College needs to plan for this continuing increase in enrollment by reaching out to underserved regions of Orange County, while upgrading the Middletown campus.

Orange County has had healthy population growth; it is one of the fastest-growing counties in New York State. Among the contiguous counties, it is first in population growth. It is on the outer circle of New York City community growth and is attracting an increasing number of commuters. The number of Hispanics, Asians and African-Americans is growing faster than the White, non-Hispanic population. Orange County Community College needs a plan to meet the needs of this growing and more diverse population. (See Appendix B: External Environment)

The growth in the county is pushing the existing Middletown campus to its capacity. The number of full-time students attending Orange County Community College increased by 17 percent between 1998 and 2003, and that growth is continuing. Based on previous growth patterns, the Orange County population could increase by 10 to 20 percent (35,000 to 70,000 people) over the next 10 years. Another indicator of potential enrollment growth is the fact that Orange County loses annually more than 1,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students to other counties; this is over twice as many as the county imports from other counties. Improving accessibility and increasing the breadth of offerings will help reverse this loss.

New capital projects funded by economic developers, public officials and private sector leaders in the region provide a leading edge indicator of future employment and growth. Newburgh leads on this indicator at $26.8 million, followed by Middletown at $16.6 million and Port Jervis at $1.8 million.

The largest growth area in Orange County is Newburgh, which is home to the largest Orange County Community College branch. The economic picture is not good for Newburgh, but in spite of this, the city continues to grow at a steady pace. Newburgh has a higher concentration of racial and minority residents than the rest of the county, and Orange County Community College will need to integrate these growing population groups into the campus community. (See Appendix I: Newburgh Environment)
Commuting is an important consideration for students in Orange County because of the limited public transportation and the fact that so many students work while attending college. Providing the option to attend Orange County Community College in different parts of the county will increase opportunity for students who cannot now attend the Middletown campus. (See Appendix J: Newburgh Extension Center)

Employers

Orange County Community College needs to develop and promote programs that meet Orange County employer needs, and also inform potential students/employees of the opportunities.

Employers in Orange County have a positive image of the college, but feel that Orange County Community College needs to work more closely with the business community to develop programs that serve employers’ needs. Their suggestions identify a need for Orange County Community College to develop a more complete offering of shorter certificate programs. Examples of high-demand jobs that were identified include: auto service technicians, carpenters, emergency medical technicians, sales managers and accountants & auditors. (See Appendix K: Interviews with Orange County Government Representatives and Area Business Leaders)

The problem in meeting this need is that 98 percent of all private sector businesses in Orange County have less than 100 employees, which makes it difficult to define a common curriculum or develop effective contract educational opportunities for the employers. Orange County Community College will need to find intermediate employer organizations with which to work.

Other schools, colleges and universities

Generally, representatives from other colleges have a favorable impression of Orange County Community College and report that transfer students do well. They suggest that more systematic coordination could improve the transfer process and help Orange County Community College students make the transition to the new campus more easily.

Colleges and universities in the region include Dominican College, Marist College, Mt. Saint Mary College, Pace University, St. Thomas Aquinas College and SUNY New Paltz. (See Appendix G: Interviews with College Representatives)

Orange County Community College should set up a systematic way to communicate with high schools about their programs. This would provide an opportunity to improve alignment of high school programs with college requirements. It will also provide a feedback loop about how high school graduates are doing at Orange County Community College. Finally, open communication with high schools will provide a means to help improve student support services for incoming students. (See Appendix F: Interviews with High School Representatives)
The Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) is an educational partner in the community. Orange County Community College should work with BOCES to identify programs that the college could provide to complement training provided by BOCES. (See Appendix H: Newburgh Group Interviews and Appendix K: Interviews with Orange County Government Representatives and Area Business Leaders)

Orange County Community College loses annually over 1,000 students who are Orange County residents, but attend community colleges in other counties. An analysis of educational offerings at those colleges reveals programs that may be drawing students from Orange County Community College. Some may be leaving because other campuses are more convenient than Middletown. (See Appendix B: External Environment and Appendix M: Functional Area Profile)

**Strategic Priorities**

1. **Implement a collegial process for an effective planning and review process for all College operations**

   *Expand the scope of responsibility and authority of the Planning Committee*

The Planning Committee will provide the link between the strategic plan and the shorter-term planning cycles, including the budget process. This committee will have responsibility for annually evaluating priorities, measuring progress toward goals and allocating funds toward achieving strategic priorities.

Two issues need to be addressed if Orange County Community College is to implement an effective planning process. The first is an improvement of planning data, and the second is the use of systematic program evaluation.

2. **Improve the collection, usefulness and availability of planning data**

In order to improve planning and implement an ongoing program evaluation, Orange County Community College needs to improve the use and availability of planning data and information. Currently the college faces three problems:

1) Offices within the college have developed their own planning and management databases that are not available to any centralized planning process.
2) Tools to allow the IR office to produce needed management reports are not available. This limits the usefulness of data for planning, assessment and management.
3) Some key data are not collected or reported in a systematic way.

The first step toward developing a master planning data system is to survey administrative and academic offices to identify important data that are not in the central
management information system and develop a plan for conversion to the central system. One component of improving the master planning data system is the installation of appropriate software tools to help access existing administrative data and convert it to management information. This needs to be included in the technical plan.

When completed, the master planning data system will provide an annual state-of-the-campus report to help track progress toward strategic goals. In addition, the system should allow institutional research staff to provide responses to requests from the Planning Committee.

**Systematic evaluation**

Key objectives need to be identified in a way that allows institutional progress to be measured. The indicators of progress toward achieving strategic goals should be clear and be provided on a regular basis. The measures of progress should be used by the Planning Committee in their decision making process. Indicators should include qualitative evaluations of progress that will complement the regular quantitative measures. Examples of indicators include student persistence rates, percent of county high school graduates that attend Orange County Community College or the percent increase in students enrolled in new certificate classes.

**Develop and integrate into the operating life of the College the responses to the issues raised by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association**

As Orange County Community College sets its strategic direction, it must take into account two external review and planning documents resulting from the Middle States Accreditation review and the SUNY System Mission Review I and accompanying Memorandum of Understanding, along with preparation for SUNY System Mission Review II.

The Middle States Accreditation Review identified several areas of concern that date back to the previous accreditation process completed in 1993. The four major areas of concern are:

- Outcomes data
- Communication and teamwork
- Faculty and staff development
- Advising

The accrediting team noted the “shortage of clearly organized data, which could be analyzed to demonstrate that the college is doing what it says it does.” Orange County Community College is in the process of addressing these issues.

In December 2000, the college signed a Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the SUNY System Mission Review process. Goals were established to:
• Ensure open access for high school graduates and individuals recently released from military service
• Define student outcomes, including the documentation of student educational and career goals and the strategies for helping students achieve their goals with links to improving educational and support programs
• Develop plans to foster faculty development and scholarship
• Continue intercampus collaboration, particularly with major transfer institutions
• Set clear academic program directions, including the development of new and revised programs to meet regional needs and distance education
• Improve infrastructure and technology

In addition to advancing the goals of Mission Review I, the college must also prepare for the SUNY system’s Mission Review II, *Rethinking SUNY*. The System has established the context for this process, and institutions will be asked to develop plans to:

• Encourage improvements in the quality and diversity of the student body
• Give emphasis to the quality, diversity and reputation of faculty
• Strengthen the value and reputation of academic programs
• Improve student outcomes/success
• Ensure that technology infrastructure supports academic excellence
• Make certain that facilities support academic excellence
• Establish academic excellence through administrative and resource support
• Provide a vibrant environment to support academic excellence through community contributions

(See Appendix A: Accreditation and Mission Reviews)

**II. Develop and implement an Academic Master Plan and four supporting plans**

A primary strategic component is the development and implementation of an Academic Master Plan that sets priorities and aligns programs with student and community needs. Orange County Community College needs to evaluate its existing program offerings to determine if they are serving community needs in a cost effective manner at the highest level of quality possible. In part, this can be done by evaluating the cost of providing the program, tracking student enrollment trends and assessing community needs.

*Academic transfer*

Orange County Community College should develop and implement articulation agreements with other colleges in the region, such as SUNY College at New Paltz and Mount St. Mary College, to make sure specialized courses offered by Orange County Community College are transferring with full credit toward a major. Specific recommendations are included in the appendices to the strategic plan.

The review process should assure that:
• Existing programs are relevant to discipline and industry requirements
• New programs are considered to either complement existing efforts or address community needs
• Instructional delivery technologies and laboratories meet current instructional requirements and emerging discipline needs

(See Appendix E: Financial Indicators and Appendix H: Newburgh Group Interviews)

Certificate programs

Orange County Community College has emphasized the academic transfer program and training in the health and business fields, but has placed much less emphasis on certificates and more specific job training programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Orange County Community College awarded nine certificates of less than two years out of 649 degrees awarded. Enrollment in certificate programs has been declining. (See Appendix C: Orange County Community College Enrollment Figures)

Meeting community needs for trained employees should be a core commitment of the college. Orange County Community College should provide educational programs that prepare students with the job skills that are needed in the region. An investigation of current employer needs, analysis of successful courses provided by other colleges and an assessment of faculty resources should provide a plan for expanding the offerings available from Orange County Community College.

The Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE) office should continue to develop programs to rectify this problem. CAPE provides the flexibility and entrepreneurial attitude necessary to succeed at this type of training. The initial success of the program will depend on an effective marketing plan and outreach program to help launch the effort. Initially, the CAPE effort will need adequate support to develop and market new offerings throughout the county.

In the long run, the certificate programs should be self-supporting, and where possible, provide a surplus. CAPE should prepare a business plan that defines the costs and revenue potential of the proposed programs to anticipate when the operation will be self-supporting. An evaluation process should be designed to assure the quality and effectiveness of the courses.

This effort will require close involvement of local business and government leaders in the planning and development of the new programs. They can serve on curriculum planning committees, advise the job placement office and evaluate existing programs for currency and appropriateness of offerings aimed at preparing students for employment. The initial step should be the appointment of a community advisory board to help plan certificate programs in the Continuing and Professional Education division. The advisory board should include representatives of the faculty. (See Appendix H: Newburgh Group Interviews)
**Facilities**

Orange County Community College needs to initiate a facilities master planning process to identify priorities for upgrading and expanding existing campus facilities and determine which requirements will be met with a new campus in Newburgh. The process should start with an investigation of utilization rates on the Middletown campus to see how they compare with SUNY standards. A new campus in Newburgh would provide room for growth and extend education to a large part of Orange County that is distant from the current campus. (See Appendix C: Orange County Community College Enrollment Figures)

The planning process for a new campus needs to start early with preliminary decisions about the educational and staffing needs of the new facility. Decisions need to be made about which programs will be delivered on the Newburgh campus. This will help reduce anxiety about which programs and faculty members will be moved to the new campus, and also provide a staff nucleus to engage in the planning process over the next few years. Consideration must also be given to the potential decrease in the number of current students at the Middletown campus who currently commute from the Newburgh area.

In planning for the new campus at Newburgh, intermediate goals need to be defined (estimation of enrollment, approval by SUNY, fundraising commitments, site selection, academic plan, etc.) so progress can be measured and corrections can be made if the intermediate objectives are not met. Throughout the process, systematic inclusion of community voices will assure that the new campus will serve the diverse community interests in Newburgh.

Any plan to extend Orange County Community College must identify the annual costs of developing the new campus and the revenue that will be used to pay these costs. The plan must assure current employees that the revenue for the new campus is not coming from funds to pay salaries. (See Appendix D: Facilities Plan)

**Technology**

This effort needs to include a technology planning process to identify existing needs in equipment, networks and software capacity. The campus lacks a comprehensive technology plan that includes communications, equipment needs, network capacity, and a life-cycle budget to provide ongoing training, maintenance and upgrades. This plan should contain both administrative and educational technology applications, including automation of the student admissions and registration processes and on-line support for student advising.

The technology plan needs to define a broader application of technology in the education program. This means that consideration should be given to including faculty members in the planning and development of any campus-wide approach to encourage the use of technology in the teaching and learning process.
**Resource development**

The strategic plan assumes that the state will not significantly increase support for Orange County Community College. The college needs to concentrate on developing alternative sources of funding to achieve its goals. Capital funding for the new campus and improvements for the Middletown campus need to be assured as planning moves forward.

The strategic goals need to guide the annual budget process. This plan requires an ongoing process that integrates the strategic priorities into the budget cycle of the college. Each budget year provides a chance to reassess and update the priorities to make sure they are still relevant to the College and its future.

**Enrollment management**

Orange County Community College has a reputation for providing quality education to students. The students who transfer to other colleges have a positive record of success. The problem is that an increasing number of students arrive at Orange County Community College with inadequate preparation and other problems that make it difficult to succeed.

The problem is that the majority of students who start at Orange County Community College neither graduate nor transfer to a four-year college. Evidence suggests that the problem will get worse. The rate of students entering developmental programs grew at twice the rate of enrollment increases between 1998 and 2003. (See Appendix C: Orange County Community College Enrollment Figures)

Graduation rate data show that 20 percent of students who start at Orange County Community College will receive a degree within three years and another 15 percent will transfer. The remaining 65 percent are either still enrolled or have dropped out. These persistence rates are on the low end compared with the other community colleges in the area. The goal is to be the best in the SUNY system. A key to success is the identification of students who are most likely to drop out of the college so that a proactive effort can be made to help them.

The college has a number of programs designed for students with special academic and financial problems, including student aid, services for disabled students, advising, developmental programs, counseling and job placement. However, Orange County Community College is not known for its developmental student services. Some area high schools advise students with IEPs to enroll in other area community colleges, steering them away from Orange County Community College.

In addition, the advising services for students are disjointed. Students may have advising counselors from both admissions and faculty at different times in the academic year. The lack of a systematically prepared group of advisors and the lack of student records
technology to support advisors create inconsistent advising, as was identified by a number of staff members with whom we talked.

Improving student success will require student services and academic programs to work closely together to lower the student loss rate. Student success programs work best when they integrate the efforts of student services and academic programs. This effort will require a single administrator to be responsible for student success. The Orange County Community College experience should provide a coherent process that supports the student from the time he or she first contacts the college to graduation day.

The process should start with an assessment of current programs (advising, remediation, student aid, tutorials, etc.) that are designed to help students in order to determine how they work together and how they can be improved and integrated from a student perspective. Achieving a coherent approach to student support is an important goal for Orange County Community College.

The student success plan should include a comprehensive evaluation procedure to determine which programs are making a positive difference, which need to be modified or dropped and what types of programs should be added. This will require a systematic student tracking system to identify which students succeed and which do not, and determine the factors associated with leaving. The student tracking system should include information on student background characteristics and goals at the time they enroll.

III. Provide adequate resources to allow the College to realize its strategic goals

Orange County Community College needs to diversify funding sources and increase revenue to complement funds from state, county and tuition sources. Diversification will protect the college from unexpected losses in any single revenue source. Orange County Community College should define a plan for developing alternative revenue sources. Several have been mentioned in different parts of the strategic plan. They include increasing federal and state grants, developing contract training programs or self-supporting certificate programs that may provide revenue for other college functions, and pursuing private gifts. (See Appendix F: Financial Indicators)

Fundraising needs to be aligned with strategic objectives. Grant writing and development activities need to be consistently related to raising funds to support the objectives that guide the development of the college.

Board members, as advocates for the college, should provide leadership in securing adequate funding from state, county and private sources by lobbying on behalf of the college in appropriate venues. Members of the foundation and the alumni group should become more directly involved in planning and implementing a fundraising campaign to help diversify funding.
New opportunities for contract training and other services to local organizations should be identified. The college can seek government funding to provide small business assistance, community development projects and other community support projects to help supplement general revenue.

IV. Review the missions, operations and staffing levels of all College departments in light of strategic priorities

At the core of the strategic plan is the necessity of making systematic decisions that, over time, will lead to achievement of the stated goals. This requires that every operation within the college be reviewed periodically to determine the degree to which it is contributing to the achievement of the strategic goals of the institution. This process has already started with the implementation of the Academic Master Plan. The same standards should be applied to all of the administrative functions of the college.

An examination of salaries and workload is an important part of the process because so much of the college’s budget is spent on salaries. Historically, Orange County Community College has implemented budget cuts by instituting a series of hiring freezes. Over the years, this has resulted in uneven staffing levels across offices. Some key offices are understaffed, which limits their effectiveness.

Staffing levels for departments should be evaluated with consideration for activities that could be streamlined by the use of technology. Examples include the admission, advising and registration processes that could be supported by more effective use of technology. Streamlining the admission process would also save student time, which should be an important consideration in the evaluation of college operations.

Human resources should undertake a systematic examination of staffing and workloads in different offices to identify hiring priorities. Staffing decisions should reflect the strategic priorities of the college. Faculty workload measures should also be included as part of the academic planning process. (See Appendix C: Orange County Community College Enrollment Figures)

The planning process should use systematic evaluation to identify areas in the college’s operation that are ineffective or do not contribute to achieving the strategic goals of the college. The program review process should be implemented as part of the planning and budgeting calendar. Every effort should be made to find operations that can be streamlined or made more productive using technology. Savings realized from making these decisions can be utilized to increase support for critical institutional activities.

V. Provide a clear, consistent and compelling presentation of the College

The perception of Orange County Community College in the community is generally positive. Some issues that should be addressed include outreach to the increasingly diverse community, especially the non-English speaking community. Information on the
Communication goes beyond the formal media materials produced by the college. Systematic personal contacts should be made with high school counselors and other college and university admission offices in the area. High school graduates would benefit from a seamless connection to Orange County Community College. The process would also improve continuity for those students who continue their education after attending Orange County Community College by providing guidance on financing, living and social expectations.

Involvement of community groups in the planning process will increase community support for the college and its budget. Employers, non-profit organizations and government agencies all provide points of contact for Orange County Community College. A college employee should be given responsibility for contacts with key external constituencies.

**Impediments to achieving strategic goals**

Achieving these goals will require Orange County Community College to respond to some important internal and external challenges.

- Funding from the state is flat to declining and will probably not improve markedly
- An institutional history that lacks consistent planning
- Cumbersome management information system that limits planning capacity
- Middletown facilities, including the technology base, are aging and need to be reviewed and updated
- Inconsistent availability and utilization of educational technology
- Low rates of student retention
- A growing county population, with increasing racial and ethnic diversity
- Employers in Orange County tend to be small businesses, with diverse needs that are hard to define and meet

**Orange County Community College in ten years**

In the next ten years, the Orange County Community College system will be recognized not only for the high quality of its programs, but for providing a wide range of educational opportunities to students from varying economic and academic backgrounds.

County citizens will serve on advisory boards that provide meaningful advice on operational and policy issues. They will work with college departments and offices to develop new curricula, improve student job placement and internships and, in some cases, provide teachers for specialized courses. The community advisors will also serve as proponents of the college in political and community settings.
Orange County Community College will have a revitalized campus in Middletown and a new, fully-functioning campus in Newburgh that serves as an educational and cultural hub for that part of the county. Both campuses will be a center for cultural activity and an anchor for new development. Each campus will provide facilities for commercial concerts and theater presentations, be available for community workshops and meetings, provide space for community and student art shows and have athletic facilities that can be used to provide summer and weekend programs for the community.

Orange County Community College will be identified as a model for innovative programs and efficient operation at national and state community college conferences. It will be a leader in improving education among smaller community colleges.