Executive Summary of CSB and SJU

Higher Learning Commission

Re-accreditation Assurance Arguments

There are five criteria that the institutions must meet in order to be reaccredited by HLC. The assurance arguments are organized around each criterion and the sub-categories within each.

Criterion 1: The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.

Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict, fulfill Criterion One through clearly defined mission and vision statements. Our strategic plan articulates a set of core commitments and aspirations to fulfill both. We lead and operate through the lens of mission. Consistency in the mission over many years has enabled us to nurture a strong sense of identity and purpose, and allowed us to direct our focus to goals, experiences, and activities that clearly move us toward the achievement of the mission. The liberal arts, residential and Catholic and Benedictine values expressed in our mission provide us with tremendous opportunities to create a true community of active and committed scholars and learners.

Criterion 2: The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

CSB and SJU strive to act with integrity and conduct all operations ethically and responsibly. Policies and processes have been developed to ensure financial, academic, personnel and fiscal responsibility and accountability befitting an organization founded in the Catholic and Benedictine traditions.

Staff members are encouraged to follow professional association standards and best practices. Students are taught about the importance of academic integrity. The missions, bylaws and board committee charters inform board and committee practice; and trustees and key employees are asked to disclose known conflicts of interest.

Faculty are encouraged and expected to work according to the principles established by their respective disciplines. Controls are in place to ensure research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner.

The Boards of Trustees are committed to preserving and enhancing the institutions while allowing the administration to oversee daily management and the faculty to oversee academic matters.

As Catholic and Benedictine institutions, CSB and SJU support and actively encourage freedom to explore the truths of faith, to pursue intellectual and scientific inquiry of all types, and to engage in active dialogue about the interactions between these.
Criterion 3: The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Our shared mission is to create an excellent residential, liberal arts educational experience in the Catholic and Benedictine traditions with an emphasis on serving others, leadership and global engagement. The student academic experience is one of small class sizes, a rigorous curriculum, and extensive support services.

The quality of education is supported by a highly qualified and engaged faculty whose primary role is to teach and mentor students. Faculty are principally full-time and tenured. The financial and opportunity investment in faculty development is significant. Faculty have access to funding and numerous opportunities to improve their teaching effectiveness.

The quality of education is evidenced by student learning through the Common Curriculum as well as in 35 majors and 41 minors. The Common Curriculum promotes the breadth and depth of learning expected of a liberal arts education and the majority of our students study abroad. Departments and programs undergo a comprehensive program review every 10 years, which promotes currency and appropriate rigor. Students are academically challenged and satisfied with the quality and rigor of the academic programs. Faculty are highly engaged in the development, implementation and assessment of the curricula.

The quality of education is enhanced by a "high touch" supportive environment and learning facilities. From enrollment through graduation and beyond, students have access to academic advising, accessibility services, libraries, technology support, a writing center, a math center, tutoring, health promotion and counseling services, academic language services, experience and professional development services.

The residential, co-curricular experience is also a strength of the colleges and contributes to a high-quality education. CSB and SJU host a range of co-curricular programs, which contribute to the educational experience of students.

Criterion 4: The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University have developed systematic approaches to undergo data-informed, ongoing reform to enhance student learning. Assessment timelines are established and used to assess learning goals at the institutional, student development, general education and departmental/program level. Data are reported and maintained and used to guide decisions as it relates to the assessment process, pedagogical change, as well as curricular change. Over the past decade, the culture of assessment has grown and with new structures and commitments now in place. We expect this culture to continue to expand in the future.

CSB/SJU are in the final stages of integrating academic and student development learning goals. We are also in the final stages of reforming the general education curriculum as a result of a
program review of the current curriculum and the work of faculty committees to intentionally incorporate best practices into the general education curriculum. The Office of Academic Assessment and Effectiveness is incorporating practices to make assessment more integrated and coordinated.

**Criterion 5: The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.**

CSB and SJU operate to ensure the institution's resource base supports the educational program and mission. There are structures in place that promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes. Not only does the institution operate effectively in the here and now, there is always an eye toward the future. There is a culture of systematic and integrated planning that ensures emerging factors in the world generally and higher education specifically are considered as the college charts its course into the future. Throughout all of this planning, the institution is systematically working to improve its performance.