

Institute for American Apprenticeships (IAA)
Application for Postsecondary Certificate of Approval
to offer credit-bearing courses and Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority
May, 2017

Preface

Following the application of the Institute for American Apprenticeships which also does business as Vermont HITEC, Inc., to be approved to grant college credits and the associate degree credential, The VT Department of Education tasked the Vermont Higher Education Council (VHEC) to carry out a comprehensive review of IAA's application materials. VHEC's committee on Accreditation with the support of its Executive Director identified a team of higher education professionals to review the application and make a detailed site visit.

Team members include Barbara E. Murphy, President Emerita of Johnson State College (chair); Cynthia Bellevieu, EdD., Dean of Continuing Education at the University of Vermont; Jon MacClaren, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Landmark College; and Michelle Miller, PhD., Senior Associate Provost, Champlain College. VHEC Executive Director Carrie Williams Howe, PhD., assisted our visiting team and served as a de facto member. All team members brought significant and broad higher education experience to this engagement.

The committee chair met with IAA Dean of Continuing Education Lisa Dame on March 28, 2017, for an initial conversation about the upcoming team visit and to finalize details of that visit. It may be worth reiterating that IAA and HITEC are one and the same organization. Senior staff members use the names interchangeably and invited team members to do so as well.

On April 3, 2017, the visiting team met by conference call to discuss the self-study, identify additional documentation needed for our review, and to finalize details of our upcoming visit. The team held a second in-person meeting in the afternoon of April 12, 2017, preceding the dinner meeting with IAA staff and associates that launched the visit.

Present at the dinner meeting were founder and IAA President Dr. Gerry Ghazi who also holds the title of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Academic Officer; Steve Lutton, Dean of Student Affairs, Dean of Admissions, and Executive Director; Juliane Hegle, Dean of Academic Affairs and Chair of Liberal Arts & Sciences; Lisa Dame, Dean of Distance Education; John Collins, founding and current member of the board; and Rosa Laboy-Hernandez, Director of Human Resources for Talent Development at the University of Vermont Medical Center. Ms. Laboy-Hernandez is an employer-partner to IAA.

The team wishes to thank this group as well as other IAA staff members for their hospitality and lively conversation during our site visit. Particular thanks go to Lisa Dame who served as primary host, coordinator, and information provider to us during our engagement. The

commitment to IAA’s mission and purposes is strong. Pride in the success of students and programs was evident throughout all our meetings.

Following our dinner meeting, we reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on April 13, 2017 at HITEC’s executive offices at 156 Commerce Street, Williston, VT and worked through the day in meetings and document review. A copy of the team’s schedule is attached to this report.

Introduction

The Institute for American Apprenticeships (IAA) was incorporated in 2000 as Vermont HITEC, Inc. and is a registered 501c3 organization in Vermont. The Purpose, Philosophy, and Objectives will be discussed in the next section of this report, but a brief initial review of the organization’s history here may be helpful. IAA’s background document describes the founding mission as “...to create employment opportunities for underemployed and unemployed Vermonters in the healthcare and technology fields by providing them with the necessary education and training that leads directly to guaranteed jobs.” IAA describes its approach as “...multi-faceted and collaborative...” and includes both classroom work and apprenticeships.

All programs are described as “closed”; that is, while recruitment of participants may be carried out through advertising and marketing to the public, employer-partners—whose role is integral to the IAA model—have the final decision-making authority as to who is selected for participation. Most of the participant cohort are “invited guests” of employer partners; others may be incumbent workers. All are promised immediate employment at a livable wage upon successful program completion.

A January 2017 document titled “IAA Background” describes IAA programs as following “a structured and complete workforce development model.” The programs are further described as having “...the rigors of an academically-reviewed curriculum with the awarding of college credits and the necessary position-specific credentials through national certifications by examinations.” The programs are indeed rigorous as will be discussed further in this report. We will also describe what is meant at present by “...awarding of college credits...”. While several staff members hold the title of dean, associate dean, or department chair—most typically associated with higher education entities-- we remind the reader that IAA is a candidate for college-credit and degree-granting authority.

IAA has an impressive history of identifying employment needs in Vermont, preparing just-in-time targeted training opportunities, and working closely with its partners. More than 1400 participants have successfully completed IAA-sponsored programs and many have also completed the relevant apprenticeships. IAA has been justly recognized at the regional and national levels for its impressive delivery and completion results, competency-based apprenticeships, and ability to identify cutting edge workforce programs leading to livable wage-earning positions in the workforce.

The self-study submitted by IAA outlines the program concentrations in detail but made only non-specific mention of the General Studies section of the proposed degrees which would be

essential to degree approval. While the self-study made reference to the 15-credit obligation of general studies, the obligation is for 20 credits. IAA staff are agreed that the general education obligation of a degree program would add to the length of degree completion time, they see this as a time commitment that students would complete over time as their personal schedules permit. Some students may begin general education coursework directly after certificate completion, others during the apprenticeship.

While the number of partnership engagements is changeable as new opportunities are realized, there are currently 40-50 students involved in four programs with three distinct employer partners. These programs include a Pharmacy Technician program, a Medical Assisting program, a Surgical Technologist program and an Advanced Machine Tool Technologist Program. Additionally, students who have already completed the classroom portions of their learning are engaged in completing hours for the registered apprenticeships.

At this time, IAA seeks authority from the Vermont Department of Education to award college credits and the Associate of Sciences in Individual Studies degree in Allied Health, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, and Business Services.

Part One –Evaluation of Standards

I. Purpose, Philosophy, and Objectives

IAA states in its application that it is a “learning institution designed to transform students through high-quality, employer-partner sponsored education programs that directly lead to employment or advancement with the sponsoring employer-partner.” In this regard, IAA programs are “closed” programs with the employer-partner making the final selection of the participants who are generally their “invited guests” recruited by IAA staff. On occasion, incumbent workers join the cohorts.

Founded as a non-profit organization in 2000, HITEC has, according to its Scorecard Highlights, served 30 employers in 23 communities in more than 20 job fields grouped within the areas of Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Healthcare. More than 1400 people—mostly Vermonters—have completed the programs and most have also completed the apprenticeships which are described as “non-traditional apprenticeships.” A hallmark of the IAA programs is the concentrated delivery method: nearly all programs are designed to be completed in “10 weeks or less” at which point most students move from the certificate-classroom delivery phase to the apprenticeship phase.

The design that underpins the programs is “...an immersion-based philosophy with strict behavioral standards”. IAA describes this model as able to “accelerate student-learning outcomes and maximize graduation and placement rates well beyond initial expectations and industry standards.”

Rigor is a key component of program expectations, delivery, and completion. The demands—40 classroom hours per week with an additional expectation of 30 homework hours weekly—are described to aspiring participants during the recruitment phase as are the supports to students during the program.

The IAA philosophy is further described as “...provid(ing) quality education programs that are well designed, implemented by a professional and dedicated faculty, and geared to serve the employees or invited guests of our employee-partners seeking the knowledge and skills required to foster success in their sponsoring organizations.” A stated program intention is to “develop lifelong learning and community contribution” although the self-study did not make explicit how lifelong learning is fostered or how community contribution is to be established.

Neither the documents presented to the visiting team nor conversation during our visit suggested that the philosophy, purposes, or objectives would be revised or reconsidered should degree-granting authority be conferred. The primary driver for IAA’s application to the Department of Education is to have the authority to award college credits and the Associate Degree, thereby reaching out to businesses and funders for whom the credential is important. IAA has been understandably frustrated in its dependence on higher education entities whose changes in priorities and leadership have resulted in erratic recognition of programs as college credit-worthy. While IAA did not discuss a plan to change its outreach or program delivery approach, the organization believes that the ability to award a post-secondary credential would expand its options.

It was not made clear to the visiting team that the board, faculty, administration and students are involved in periodic and regular review of the purpose and philosophy of the organization or that these purposes have been adjusted in its seventeen-year history.

II. Educational Program

The Institute for American Apprenticeships (IAA) has four focus areas under which programs cluster. These include Healthcare, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, and Business Services. According to the 2016 program handbook and the dean of academic affairs, IAA offers certificates of completion that it believes would equate to an average of between 24 and 30 college credits and continue to be delivered in eight to twelve week blocks. IAA is a nonprofit, distance learning organization focused on workforce development with the sponsoring employer-partner. While IAA describes itself as a student-centered entity, it is at least as distinctly an employer-centered organization. IAA prefers that programs they create have national certification and standards.

All certificate programs follow a sequence of in-class instruction that lasts between eight and twelve weeks. All class materials, readings, reviews, assessments, are delivered online through IAA’s license with Canvas Learning Management System. After the completion of the in-class portion of the program, a certificate of completion is issued from IAA to successful completers. The certificate is then followed by a one or two-year apprenticeship

within the hiring organization. Apprenticeship completion is recognized with a certificate from the U.S. Labor Department. Students sit for a national exam if such exams are available in their program area after completing the classroom part of the program. Completion rates, as reported, are impressively high. During the classroom program delivery phase, a faculty member teaches approximately five didactic courses including mathematics as well as technically specific units.

Programs deliver the equivalent of 24-30 credits depending on the area of focus. IAA states that the apprenticeship sequence equates to 39 credits. We were not clear how the difference between a one and two-year apprenticeship affects this credit number unless the difference is simply in the hours students “clock” in a given year.

IAA is currently teaching four programs which it hopes would fall under the AAS in Individual Studies umbrella: surgical technician, medical assistant, pharmacy technician, and machine tooling. The first three would lead to an Allied Health concentration or certificate. The machine tooling program-- to an Advanced Manufacturing Certificate. Each program’s educational objectives, criteria, and standards are clearly expressed and understandable for current purposes to serve industry needs.

Until its recent closure, Burlington College (BC) and IAA shared an articulation agreement. In February 2017, IAA replaced that agreement with a new articulation agreement –almost the exact agreement it had in place with BC--with Columbia College in South Carolina. This agreement which would recognize technical programs already in place as well as the yet-undeveloped general education curriculum has not operationally started up yet. IAA has proposed creating its own general education requirements with its own faculty to be taught online or in-person. There is a list of potential general education courses included in the proposal we reviewed.

In conversation with the dean of academic affairs, we learned that approximately 15 credits of general education could be added to the in-class certificate portion of programs or introduced during the apprenticeship phase. However, we were later informed that general education coursework is intended to begin after completion of the certificate portion is finished. Faculty whose credentials we reviewed appear qualified to teach the proposed business and government courses, and marginally qualified for the mathematics courses. Team members were not able to affirm that those staff members who also serve as instructional members possess qualifications to teach the proposed general education courses in composition, literature, sociology, or history.

Each technical program’s design includes classroom time and real-world application immediately following. The programs are well-planned and succinct in teaching to the needs and specifications of the industry partners. As stated in the *Faculty* section of this report, IAA employs 12 individuals full-time who hold the title of faculty. They serve as both instructors and administrators, depending on their intensive teaching cycle (8-12 weeks). Many of the full-time faculty have substantive administrative roles, such as department chairs or academic deans; student affairs; digital and media marketing specialists; and other work as required. This flexibility of staff is a point of pride for IAA.

Each program is delivered by two faculty members: a primary instructor and a project leader. The primary instructor is responsible for delivering the didactic instructional content while the project leader—who is responsible for student marketing and recruitment as well—provides administrative and student support during the length of the program. As stated in the *Faculty* section of this report, all instructional faculty who appear to have taught in the last two years have at least a baccalaureate degree, four faculty hold master’s degrees, and one holds a juris doctorate. According to the *Faculty Handbook*, faculty are oriented to teach online and their performance is reviewed by their chair through student evaluations.

Programs are developed and reviewed based on the business partner’s needs. Once completers begin their apprenticeships, another opportunity for program revision presents itself. There appears to be a close relationship between IAA and their business partners in determining curriculum. The IAA Curriculum Committee, consisting of six instructors, six project leaders, and the dean, meet at least once a year to review and make needed adjustments.

IAA is an impressive organization in preparing targeted programs and delivering skilled workers needed in a fast-paced economy. Program areas are appropriate for immediate needs and are able to change when industry changes. The review team admires this pace and, relatedly, wonders about IAA’s ability to maintain this flexibility should the organization take on credit and degree-granting capability. Whether IAA can grow its infrastructure to accommodate the need for more qualified faculty—especially to teach general education courses, conduct regular program review, and maintain curriculum oversight in compliance with state and federal statutes, and still be as elastic in its work within the industry—remains to be seen. On paper, the materials presented were clear and orderly. However, when doing the site review, the heralded fast-paced delivery of coursework and IAA faculty’s ability to multi-task present future concerns for optimal program creation and evaluation. We did not see evidence that an integral –as distinct from an “add on” role for general education—has been contemplated or planned for.

III. Students and Student Services

Though understandably proud of its pared-down overhead and lack of bureaucracy, IAA would have to begin a process of reviewing and fortifying its student and student service resources as it pursues accreditation and a post-secondary education identification.

In keeping with its mission to develop a high-performance workforce to fuel business growth, IAA has an extremely focused recruitment and admissions approach. Through heavy advertising, students fill out an application and write an essay for admission. Applicants are expected to have graduated from high school or earned a GED. According to the academic

dean, there are often as many as 750 applications for 30 job placements. The ratio never dips below 150 applications for 20 partner placements making recruitment quite selective. Students also submit a resume in order for IAA to review work history and stability. Students are invited to attend a mandatory orientation session to discuss the job, benefit packages, and general certificate details and subsequent apprenticeship. After orientation, 30%-40% of the pool do not advance. Through a continuing process of interviews and assessments, the selection process continues. A list of vetted candidates is submitted to the employer partner who makes the final admission decision. It can be argued that IAA has a significant role in student recruitment, it outsources the final admissions step.

As a result of the careful vetting of students, close supervision and support, and the short duration of the certificate program (academic portion of 8-12 weeks), student retention and graduation rates are high in IAA. According to the *Student Handbook*, the teaching assistant and/or mentor will communicate closely with students to ensure that competency expectations are being achieved during the apprenticeship period. We were not able to confirm that.

The student body at IAA appears to be diverse in education level, socio-economic status, and gender (with concentrations according to program type). While we did not see evidence of efforts to increase enrollments for students of color, we learned later that 25% of students in the Medical Assisting programs are students of color born outside the United States.

IAA assures the team that as a Vermont Department of Labor approved Eligible Training Provider, IAA must demonstrate compliance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements. However, we did not see a policy so stating.

The website and *Student Handbook* state that all tuition and costs are paid by the business partner, or through a government or other external funding partner (DOL). IAA has been the fortunate recipient of specially directed federal funding for several years. There is no federal financial aid available although eligible students (approximately 60%) access limited funds through VSAC non-degree grants. IAA offers no institutional aid.

Students seeking extra help in their academic courses can access the LMS (Canvas) to reference lessons, links, articles, and other forms of reinforcement. For the most part, any services to students—both academic and behavioral—appear to be managed by the classroom instructor and the project leader. Students experiencing personal issues are referred to external service providers as appropriate to their needs although the instructor interviewed was unclear as to specifics. IAA staff may work with students to make adjustments in their personal situations to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Student and faculty interviews revealed that most issues are handled in the classroom. It is important to note that there are significant differences between faculty skill, experience, and credentials in handling student requests and issues. As a result, there appears to be unevenness and inconsistencies in the student/faculty experience.

The *Student Handbook* contains statements related to grading, academic honesty, and other expectations of students, but there appear to be few policies that would provide for protection of student rights and provision of due process. Review and expansion of the *Student Handbook* and academic policies, including those related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), are needed in support of this application.

The IAA student recruitment process sets the stage for program success. From the long and exhaustive application process to significant aptitude testing and multiple interviews, qualified students emerge and succeed. Since there is no direct program cost to students and there is the promise of a liveable-wage job at the end of the program, there is a real incentive for students to apply. Team members met with a student who had successfully completed his program and is well-situated in his current position. He did not recall being advised of the possibility of support from a VSAC non-degree grant, though he described having been well-oriented to and prepared for the intense time demands. Once he began the apprenticeship phase of his program, this student, while fulfilling obligations of journals and reviews with IAA staff, described his new employer as his primary connection to the program.

Because admissions and recruitment are a shared function of IAA and employer partners, the question remains as to whether the intense application process might prevent students with financial need who might otherwise be good candidates from securing placement. Moving toward a planned degree program might require that IAA make student financial need more of a priority than it currently is.

As stated above, IAA “counts” its student success based on graduation from the academic section of the program, before transitioning to the apprenticeship. There is some confusion with this calculation as it obscures the role of the apprenticeship as a necessary component of program completion.

Student services are delivered primarily through the role of the Project Leader on a 1:1 model. Project Leaders stay close by students during the duration of the programs and reach out regularly to offer support or course correction. Senior administrators share this commitment to close advising and support. However, we did not see evidence of a program that could strengthen this individual model. As IAA pursues degree-granting approval and, if it opens its doors to a more diverse student profile, attention to the expansion of the student services resources will be necessary.

IV. Faculty and Staff

IAA employs nine individuals who hold the title of full-time faculty –two of whom are department chairs. Additional teaching responsibilities are carried out by the president, deans, and associate dean. Indeed, all but three people on the organizational chart (registrar and two financial officers) have “faculty” as part of their titles. The intensive instructional time (40 hours per week for 8-12 weeks) creates periods in which faculty and, presumably, administrators in teaching roles are primarily focused on instruction.

Because of its small size, the faculty organization is a relatively flat structure. Department chairs in Allied Health and Advanced Manufacturing supervise the work of other faculty, as does the Dean of Academic Affairs. However, faculty do not report directly to the academic dean, nor do the chairs or the associate dean; with the exception of the one person identified as a fulltime Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty member who reports directly to the Dean of Academic Affairs, others report to a Chair or Dean of Student Affairs who report directly to the President. Daily communication between course instructors and the Executive Director (who also holds the titles of Dean of Student Affairs and Dean of Admissions) is required. The small size of operations provides for frequent informal communication among all faculty.

All instructional faculty, as mentioned earlier, have at least a baccalaureate degree, four hold masters degrees and one holds a juris doctorate, as does the President who teaches on occasion. Two of six faculty in the allied health area hold nursing credentials; the remaining faculty hold unrelated academic degrees and we were not able to confirm that they have professional experience relevant to the field in which they instruct. The department chair holds certifications in three relevant allied health areas and reports professional experience in one of them, but not in areas that she has been teaching in the past three years. Faculty in the information technology and advanced manufacturing departments hold degrees and or professional experiences related to their areas of instruction.

Faculty described to the visiting team as prospective liberal arts faculty to teach the identified general education courses hold minimal qualifications to teach the battery of courses that have been proposed. Faculty appear qualified to teach the proposed science, business and government courses and marginally qualified for the mathematics courses. None on this list appears to have qualifications to teach the proposed composition, literature, sociology, or history courses.

IAA faculty are proud of their continuing professional development. Many have learned a new area of practice, such as medical coding, on their own and have passed certification exams in these areas where they then develop curriculum and teach. Both new and existing faculty prepare themselves to teach in new subject areas by observing others teaching existing programs and by co-teaching before they take on full responsibility for instruction. Faculty members also spend time at employer sites observing the workplace culture and learning about the jobs that students will be expected to perform.

IAA faculty demonstrate clarity about, and a strong commitment to, the institution's mission and to student success. The small size of the institution requires a flexible, adaptable, hard-working faculty and staff. Those we met demonstrated these qualities as well as pride in their work of engaging students in transformative education.

While it is hard to argue with the success of IAA graduates in employment settings post-graduation, the team has concerns about the qualifications of the faculty. It is admirable that the faculty have practiced IAA's "just-in-time" educational philosophy to prepare themselves to train students for employment in new areas of practice, but recognition as a credit and degree granting institution brings with it greater expectations for academic qualifications that

directly relate to the area of teaching. Faculty qualifications to teach in the proposed general education area are particularly weak.

Personnel policies are published for the basic functions of hiring, renewal, benefits and dismissal. The Faculty Handbook contains an academic freedom policy and references the possibility of advancement, although it contains no policies or procedures related to the promotion of faculty from assistant to senior as explained to us onsite. Policies for tenure, retirement and salary are not seen in either the faculty or employee handbooks. Sabbatical leaves are not stated as a faculty benefit, but family medical, bereavement and military service leaves are addressed. We did not see a closing plan should IAA attain degree-granting authority nor is there mention in any policies—though it does appear on the website—of credit transfer. The matter of academic credit as it currently stands carries some confusion. We heard mention of several articulation agreements over time; however, none appear to be extant with the exception of the recently signed one with Columbia College.

Faculty appear to be involved in establishing academic policies. Review and expansion of the student handbook and academic policies, including those related to FERPA would need to be developed. The faculty handbook does not describe practices and procedures related to the curriculum committee that were presented in the application.

There are a number of discrepancies noted across the various policy documents. As might be expected in a small organization where faculty, staff and students have frequent informal communications, it appears that IAA has not yet settled on a practice of documenting current practices. The expectations associated with an entity that awards academic degrees would require a formalization of much that is now informal. For example, the description of FERPA in the faculty handbook is not in sync with that in the student handbook which requires students to give permission—via their initials-- to release their educational records if requested to an employer partner if IAA deems it necessary. If a student may choose to opt-out of that requirement, such an opt-out is not described in any documents we were shown.

There is a similar discrepancy between the *Nondiscriminatory Policy for Applicant Recruitment* section in the Employee Handbook and the state statute referenced a page later in the handbook regarding the protected classes of individuals. Procedures for filing a discrimination complaint are included but are not specific as to who the responsible party is at IAA, perhaps encouraging employees to seek an external remedy first.

Faculty evaluation as described in the Faculty Handbook submitted as part of this application could not be confirmed. While IAA considers that daily program updates formal documentation of ongoing progress, team members did not share this assessment of this practices as “formal” or “documented communication”. It appears to the team that there is ongoing informal communication among all staff/faculty members that *could* include performance feedback, but, in our assessment, formal evaluation is not practiced. No one with whom we spoke seemed concerned about the absence of such procedures

V. Library and Media Resources

The resources, organized by course and program, are comprised almost exclusively of freely available web resources and those that accompany textbooks. Where apprenticeship sites/employer-partners provide access to information resources for employees, similar access may be negotiated for program enrollees. The learning management system is the primary tool for student learning and as such is supported fully by IAA.

The Learning Resource Manager/Dean of Distance Education is responsible for set-up and support of the learning management system (Canvas) and for training faculty and staff on the use of the system. Faculty and project leaders are in turn responsible for ensuring that students are trained. The training materials and support services provided by Instructure provide a foundation on which IAA builds its own support program. Since links to learning resources are provided to students as part of their course materials in the learning management system, resources are available to students 24/7 while enrolled in a course.

Like other areas of evaluation and planning (see section X), evaluation of, satisfaction with, and effectiveness of learning resources is by informal feedback from students and faculty. Individuals with whom we spoke seemed satisfied with the level of resource support provided for student learning in current courses and programs. Because of the manner in which resources are provided, the team was unable to obtain a comprehensive list of resources akin to a library catalog, nor were we able to obtain information about usage. IAA faculty seem confident in the available teaching materials in place to support the certificate portions of the planned degree programs (those courses directly related to professional training), but the team questions whether students are acquiring their own informational literacy skills—ability to locate, evaluate and use information-- beyond completion of their training programs.

Planning for the additional resources necessary to support the general education components of a degree granting institution are nascent, with only an intention to enter into agreements with local libraries if needed. The library and media resources budget (\$144,000 in the most recent year) funds the licensing of the learning management system as well as additional books, media, and other teaching and learning materials.

Students appear to have access to the library and media resources necessary specific to successful program completion. IAA realizes how critical it is for their students' learning that Canvas—the teaching and learning platform-- be well-supported and provided with sufficient resources and personnel.

There is no indication that faculty, students or employers are asking for anything beyond the current level of resources. The team expected that IAA and its faculty would have anticipated the need for expansion of resources to support the higher expectations of seeking credit/degree granting status, particularly in general education. The team did not see evidence that IAA is actively planning to respond to this higher expectation.

VI. Facilities and Equipment

Vermont HITEC, Inc. does not own any academic or administrative buildings nor does the organization own any equipment other than the office furniture and equipment located in leased office space in Williston, Vermont. Administrative computer equipment is regularly updated. Student instruction takes place in partner employers' facilities and any required equipment is provided by the employers. Vermont HITEC consults with their employer partners in the planning and purchase of equipment used in the organization's training programs, a good practice that should be continued.

As Vermont HITEC instructors use facilities and equipment provided by employer partners, it is important that the organization evaluates and documents the safety and accessibility of off-site facilities. To that end, HITEC leadership should develop basic standards to support that documentation.

VII. Organization and Governance

The Institute for American Apprenticeships (IAA) was incorporated in 2000 as Vermont HITEC, Inc. as a non-profit corporation. At that time, by-laws were written and adopted in accordance with the Articles of Association. The visiting team was given a copy of the by-laws but did not see the Articles that are referenced.

The board of directors is made up of five individuals although the by-laws state that the "number of directors shall be not less than six (6) nor more than fifteen (15)." IAA informed us after our site visit that there is "one open position" on the board although there was no discussion of increasing membership to six. Three of the original board members seem to have served continuously since 2000. Two of the directors are founders of IAA, one as "President, CEO, and Chief Academic Officer" and the other as co-founder and Dean of Institutional Advancement. The second co-founder is currently on leave from IAA and serving in a volunteer capacity. The third of the original board members does not work for IAA. Of the two non-original directors, one has served since 2010 and occupies the roles of "Executive Director and Dean of Admissions, Student Affairs and Career Services". It should be mentioned that the co-founders and the Executive Director also serve as faculty members should the need arise. The final board member has been a director since 2009 and is not an employee of IAA.

The governing board of the organization appears to meet the standard of a "legally constituted body..." The board also meets the standard of "exercise(ing) ultimate and general control over the institution's affairs."

There is no evidence that regular elections of directors are held or that members serve on the rotational schedule by-laws describe. The current membership appears to have been in place seven (7) years. By-laws say that a director “shall serve as such unless and until removed by vote of the directors...” Such a practice ensures stability but may limit new input or perspectives.

The by-laws describe the officers as President, Secretary, and Treasurer. We are unable to see documentation on the web or organizational chart of the terms of membership or officer roles, except for the founder who occupies the role of president of the organization and president of the board. No mention of election of board members or officers is made in the minutes that were provided to us.

By-laws refer to regular meetings which are held “at such times and places as determined by the President” and an annual meeting to be “held at a time and place as determined by the President.” Five (5) days notice is required before a board meeting is held. A quorum is 40% of the five board members. The team was provided with minutes from the last three years. It appears that an annual meeting is held once a year and a second meeting in some years.

The structure of the board would appear to fit the founding mission of IAA/ Vermont HITEC in its commitment to be quickly responsive and “lean enough” to proceed quickly in its important work of “creat(ing) employment opportunities for underemployed and unemployed Vermonters...”

However, there are areas in which the board structure appears to fall short. The standard on organization and governance in the Certification Process Manual calls for a board whose composition is “diverse enough to assure that the public interest can be represented. More specifically, the board actions should demonstrate capacity to maintain organizational integrity, public access to programs and services, and consumer protection.” The tight overlap between those individuals who serve as board members and those who occupy the top tier of administration and leadership at IAA, as well as the lack of new input into board membership would seem to signal a more closed approach to governance than the standard encourages.

Related to the questions of governance that may be raised by the overlapping roles of board members (including officers) and executive leadership of IAA is the related question of management. We were unable to make a meaningful distinction between governance and management. The review standard calls for a description and appraisal of “the distribution of authority between the governing board and the principal administrative staff, and the working relationship between the two groups.” We could not confirm that such a distribution exists or that “...board activities (are) clearly separated from those of the administration”.

While conversation and informal meetings occur regularly, frequently, and toward a set of common outcomes, it appears that the majority of board members both govern and manage, and in addition to serving as longtime board members, also serve as chief executive officer, executive director, and deans. The selection of senior administrators and the evaluation of their effectiveness—also part of the standard on organization and governance-- is, in the

team's assessment, less than formal. IAA considers "meetings and email exchanges" as formal documentation in this area.

The faculty and staff section within this report includes a brief discussion of academic governance and organization and evaluation of faculty. The procedures for evaluation of faculty seem to differ from practice—e.g., the Executive Director not the Academic Dean has recently completed end of class reviews. It is not clear how faculty move up to a more senior practice as no description of such movement was made available.

VIII. Financial Resources

The Vermont HITEC, Inc. Fiscal Year 2017 budget includes income of \$2,368,000 and Expense of \$2,264,000 for a projected Net Surplus of \$104,000. Annual net surpluses are retained as unrestricted net assets. Projections of income are more than sufficient to meet current expenses.

Unlike a traditional institution of higher education, Vermont HITEC does not charge its students tuition but receives almost all of its income from federal and state grants and payments through contracts from employer partners. Prior to 2011, HITEC was the fortunate recipient of several Congressional appropriations—also known as earmarks—for workforce development projects. Those funds are no longer a piece of the IAA budget.

Unrestricted net assets have increased from \$324,000 in 2013 to \$909,000 in 2015. Almost all of total assets are current assets and the organization has no long-term liabilities.

Vermont HITEC, Inc. has provided audited financial statements for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 prepared by the certified public accounting firm of Wisheart, Wimette & Associates, PLC as well as copies of IRS Form 990 tax returns for the same years. The auditors provide their unqualified opinion that the financial statements "present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Vermont HITEC, Inc." for each fiscal year provided.

The professional staff involved in financial management of Vermont HITEC are individuals who have the knowledge and experience to successfully manage the financial resources of the organization including accounting, cash management, and grants management. Like most organizations that have a small financial and budget staff—higher education or otherwise—ongoing diligence is required to ensure checks and balances.

The evaluation team was not made aware of any recent changes in the financial condition of Vermont HITEC that might jeopardize the current programs. Although this assumption has not yet been tested, Vermont HITEC senior leadership are confident that employer partners will provide increased revenue to the organization to fund the increased expenses of an expanded Vermont HITEC should credit and degree-granting approval be authorized. The organization has a history of securing funding before it launches a training program at an employer partner location and has a history of prudent financial management.

IX. Publications and Advertising

IAA provided the evaluation team with an extensive list of print and web-based promotional materials and resources. These publications include Training Program Descriptions, a Course Catalog, Outreach Materials and a sample Program Application. Academic Resources include a Faculty Handbook, a Student Handbook, a Course Registration Form and an Enrollment Agreement. Other documents associated with specific training programs include a Program Fact Sheet, an Apprenticeship Overview and a Job Overview, information of Aptitude Assessment and important dates.

Publications accurately represent IAA's mission and purpose both in print and on-line. The materials describe the organization's current training programs, admission requirements, faculty biographies and administrative procedures and policies helpful to potential students who are considering application to a program. Informational materials seem to be controlled and their availability is in keeping with the tradition of "closed programs". None are on display, for example, at the IAA offices.

The design and layout of printed publications is standardized and one document looks very much like another without any design differentiation. The sameness of each piece to another might limit reader's attention or comprehension of what they are reading. We did not see evidence that IAA is able to provide prospective students an alternative means to access information on training programs other than reading standard written documents or web pages.

While the website is current in announcing new and upcoming programs, it does not seem to be regularly maintained. The most recent news or media releases are four years old. Inconsistencies between website and print documents provided the team caused some confusion. Some information presented in the academic section of the website (e.g., academic honesty policy, transfer credit policy) do not seem to be available in written policy form. The Student Handbook would be a likely vehicle to present these important policies. We did not see evidence that course syllabi for general education courses are under design. A list of courses with their proposed numbers and descriptions was made available to the team.

X. Evaluation and Planning

The Institutional Assessment and Improvement Plan is the primary tool of institutional planning and evaluation for IAA. The plan is substantially aligned with the institution's purpose and philosophy, and admission, retention and program completion practices. The plan further addresses professional development and student success, areas that faculty and staff describe as important. The team is confident that IAA regularly seeks and receives informal input from constituents. It is our understanding that adjustments are made to curriculum in line with this input.

However, IAA's program application materials state that the plan "has been created and reviewed by all members of the faculty and staff," and those we spoke to had difficulty recalling details of the plan. None of the surveys mentioned in the plan are currently being administered. It is difficult to confirm that IAA evaluates its achievement of its stated goals --

many of which are stated as “3.5 out of 5.0”--without regular use of instruments that would yield such specific indicators. We are unclear whether the “plan to evaluate” is pending or it is a former plan that has been put aside and not in current use. There was no evidence of annual review of operations by the Board of Directors.

The organization authored “Vermont HITEC, Inc. Strategic Plan: 2015” a few years ago. The plan was written by six IAA staff and faculty members. This well-written document includes a look at the landscape of IAA, vision, mission and value statements, a set of seven objectives and a candid analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) which seem to accurately recognize the assets IAA, brings to the workforce education landscape, the uniqueness of its model, and an awareness of factors that might constrain its growth and success. The “strategic plan elements” section identifies strategies, responsible staff members for plan elements, and tactics for achieving goals.

The Plan is presented as a “1-3 year plan” which could carry it through to 2018. The goals appear sturdy and ambitious enough to justify three years’ worth of activities. It should be noted, however, that no formal planning group is currently constituted, nor are there regular assessments of progress on goals and strategies or updates. For example, among the strengths listed is the “Partnership with Burlington College”. There is no mention of an organizational intention to make application to be recognized as a credit or degree-granting entity.