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**"The important question is not how assessment is defined but whether assessment information is used."**

*Palomba & Banta*

# The Center for Institutional Effectiveness

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) promotes institutional policies, practices, and activities which support and enhance institutional effectiveness. The Center also oversees strategic and operational planning, as well as assessment activity.

The institutional research arm of CIE supports college-wide decision-making and planning initiatives by collecting, analyzing and reporting information about the College. Institutional Research compiles and publishes a Fact Book which includes enrollment, graduation, faculty, and financial information; surveys students, graduates, faculty, staff and members of the Bergen

County community; monitors student enrollment and demographic trends; monitors and reports on the College's planning process; and prepares reports as mandated by local, state and federal agencies.

In addition to research, CIE leads the College's assessment efforts. It is responsible for developing an overall framework for assessment and for fostering a culture of assessment at the College by sponsoring workshops and assisting departments with their assessment activities. The Center also serves as a repository for College assessment plans.

The Coordinator of the Center

is a member of the President's Cabinet and serves as the Accreditation Liaison Officer to Middle States.

**"We plan. We develop. We deliver. We assess and evaluate the results of the assessment. We revise, deliver the revised material, and assess and evaluate again. Perfection is always just out of reach; but continually striving for perfection contributes to keeping both our instruction fresh and our interest in teaching piqued."**

*E.S. Grassian*

## Assessment 2011 – 2012

CIE has had a productive academic year and would like to thank all the faculty and staff who have contributed to its success. Assessment activity is robust and recurrent. While departments are in various stages of assessment, with some departments just beginning their projects, other departments are already implementing changes resulting from their assessment work. The following is a review of assessment activities taking place at the College:

- Academic departments required to conduct assessment activities during the 2010-2012 academic cycle have completed their reports.
- AAS programs required to conduct assessment activities during the 2011-2013 cycle have developed their assessment plans and are in the implementation phase.
- AES units began their 2011-2012 assessment cycle. Many have completed the implementation and are now working on summarizing results and making recommendations.
- 33 Academic departments and 29 designated AES departments submitted annual plans in fall 2011 and have been working on their goals. To help these departments finalize their work, a workshop on Completing Annual Plans will be given on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2:00 – 3:00 pm and Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-2:00 pm.

In addition to the work being done by Academic and AES departments, *The Best Practices in Assessment Series* offered the following workshops in the fall and spring semesters: *Writing Learning Outcomes, Means of Assessment, Using Surveys for Assessment, Closing the Loop, and Documentation*.

## The Learning Assessment Committee

In September 2011, the Learning Assessment Committee was established as a standing committee of the Faculty Senate to serve as the primary advisory body concerning practices for the evaluation of student learning outcomes. Faculty representatives were elected by their departments to serve on this newly formed committee. Thus far, the Committee has revised the assessment form that faculty use for their assessment projects, developed guidelines regarding the assessment cycle, and created a policy for sharing assessment results with faculty and the greater college community. In its April meeting, the Faculty Senate approved the committee's revised Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. Future meetings will discuss sharing *Best Practices in Assessment*, and how assessment can strengthen our academic offerings, enhance our accountability and inform decision-making at the College.

## What is The Middle States Commission on Higher Education? Why Does It Matter to Us?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is the unit of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools that accredits degree-granting colleges and universities in the Middle States region, which includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and several locations internationally. The Commission is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than specific programs within institutions.

The U.S. Department of Education accredits agencies, such as Middle States, based on whether the accrediting entities' standards are sufficiently rigorous and effective in their application to ensure that they (i.e. Middle States) are reliable authorities regarding the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions or programs it accredits.

### What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a process of peer review that the educational community has adopted for its self-regulation since early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a voluntary process intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher

education, making it worthy of public confidence. Institutions choose to apply for accredited status, and once accredited, they agree to abide by the standards of their accrediting organization and to regulate themselves by taking responsibility for their own improvement.

### Why does an institute want to be accredited?

If a college or university wants its students to obtain loans and grants from the federal government through the Student Assistance Programs in Title IV of the Higher Education Act, the institution must have regional or national accreditation. The federal government requires accrediting organizations, such as Middle States, to ensure that their member institutions comply with certain federal regulations.

### What standards must an institution meet to be accredited?

In the Middle States region, accreditation is an expression of the confidence that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has in an institution's mission and goals, its performance, and its resources. Based upon the results of an institutional review by a team of peers assigned by the Commission, accreditation attests to the judgment of the Commission that an institution has met the following criteria:

- that it has a mission appropriate to higher education;
- that it is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals, including goals for student learning;
- that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized;
- that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement;
- that it is accomplishing its mission and goals substantially;
- that it is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals; and
- that it meets the eligibility requirements and the standards for accreditation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Source: <http://www.msche.org/>