

# CIE UPDATE

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness

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## Self-Study at Bergen Moves Closer to Completion

This year has ushered along several key milestones in the Self-Study process. In May, over 150 pages of research reports were submitted by Working Groups comprised of nearly 100 faculty, staff, and administrators. Throughout the summer, the Steering Committee conducted three rounds of edits, focused on developing a strong narrative and creating a coherent tone. Finally, after 20 months of preparation, research and writing, a preliminary draft of the Middle States Self Study Report was released in September.

As part of a public comment phase, the College hosted nine open forums across its Paramus campus and Hackensack location in an effort to answer questions and solicit feedback. Shortly after, Middle States Evaluation Team Chair Dr. Kenneth Ender of Harper College in Illinois visited to finalize details for the team's visit in spring 2016. During this time, Dr. Ender met with key constituencies across the College and articulated a positive impression of the preliminary draft. Questions and feedback received during the open forums and Dr. Ender's visit were closely considered as the team prepared a final draft of the report in December.

After two years of planning and research, the College is preparing to wrap up the Self-Study process. In late February, Bergen hosts a Middle States team evaluation visit whereupon the College's accreditation status will be determined.

## Curriculum Oversight

The processes by which states oversee post-secondary curriculum vary from state to state. New Jersey's curriculum oversight process can be understood by discussing the role of the Academic Issues Committee, the New Jersey Presidents' Council and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

### Part 1: Academic Issues Committee

The Academic Issues Committee (AIC) reviews and makes recommendations to the NJ Presidents' Council on academic program proposals and changes in academic programs. Additionally, the AIC makes recommendations to the Secretary of Higher Education with regard to matters such as licensure and re-licensure of out of state programs, distance learning programs, establishment of branch campuses, exceeding mission or conversion to university status.

Historically, the AIC has limited its review of new programs to new programs that exceed the programmatic mission of an institution and programs that require significant added resources or raise significant issues of duplication. However, the review of a new academic program is not expressly limited to these matters and, over the years, the AIC has been given responsibilities for other features

of academic program review not expressly described in statute (e.g., conversion of an option/concentration to a major, change of degree designation, joint degree programs, and locations of programmatic offerings).

The Academic Issues Committee makes recommendations to the New Jersey Presidents' Council which in turn makes recommendations/comments to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education on the following matters as it relates to post-secondary academic programs at NJ colleges and universities:

1. new program proposals
2. conversions of options/concentrations to majors
3. changes of degree designations
4. joint program offerings
5. changes in location of offerings
6. terminations of programs
7. proposals for new degree programs that exceed the programmatic mission of an institution (programmatic mission is defined as the level of academic degrees that an institution has been authorized to offer)
8. new degree programs that demand significant added resources or raise significant issues of duplication but do not exceed the programmatic mission of the institution or require a change in the programmatic mission
9. review of branch campus petitions
10. proposals to offer a degree program not previously offered at the main campus or a branch campus

In Part II we will discuss the AIC as it consider matters of quality.

## Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning Assessment

On September 9 – 11, 2015 the CIE Assessment Fellows gathered with educators and administrators from throughout the region at Drexel University in Philadelphia for the Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning Assessment. The theme of this year's conference was *Assessment for Student Success: Building Academic Innovation and Renewal*. During the three-day conference, attendees had the opportunity to take a fresh look at how assessment can drive academic innovation in higher education through interactive workshops, presentations, snapshot sessions, and plenary addresses.

In one plenary session, titled *Issues and Trends in Global Higher Education: Implications for Accreditation*, Francisco Marmoleja, Lead Tertiary Education Specialist at The World Bank, discussed the

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changing demographics of the world's population and the implications for higher education, and predicted dramatic diversification of modalities and providers of education by the year 2025. He emphasized the importance of technology, multinational universities, and the portability of credentials, while indicating that creative funding models will be vital. At the luncheon, assessment and accreditation consultant Linda Suskie presented, *Where are We Going?* In her remarks she outlined three fundamental reasons why American education is under fire today citing economic development, affordability and return on investment, and the changing American college student. She addressed strategies for ensuring and advancing quality education and concluded that we have to "recommit ourselves to focusing on our fundamental priority of making sure every single student that crosses our door gets a really great, meaningful education."

Several of the Assessment Fellows from Bergen presented at the conference. Gail Fernandez, Joanna Campbell, and Jill Rivera presented an interactive session entitled *Assessment Fellows Program – An Inside-Out Approach*. The program outlined Bergen's assessment fellows model for ensuring the development of high quality and meaningful assessment plans in both academic and AES departments and programs. The presentation engaged attendees in rich conversation with a lively question and answer forum following the session. They will also be presenting this session in December at the Annual Conference of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in Washington, D.C. Ilene Kleinman and Sony Tiwari also contributed at this conference. Their session, *Building Reform Practices in a Highly Unionized Environment*, provided participants with different strategies to get faculty involved in institutionalized reform in an effort to bring the focus back to student learning and their success.


### Making Our Work Easier Through Backward Design

Backward design is a process of course planning that has proven useful to educators from pre-school to university. It is a method of course delivery preparation that gives both form and structure to courses and consistency to meeting curriculum outcomes. Though seemingly counterintuitive as an organizational tool, the process is consistent with how we ordinarily conduct our daily activities. When we leave for school, knowing our destination allows us to select the most efficient route and make adjustments where needed for traffic congestion.

As its name implies, when using Backward Design, course outcomes are the first concern when developing semester syllabi and lectures: "What do I want students to understand when they complete this course?" Considering the end from the start of course planning simplifies tasks such as identification of meaningful activities, tailoring lectures, and modifying reading assignments. Importantly, Backward Design improves our ability to sequence lectures, activities and assignments in a manner that encourages students to focus on targeted areas thus fostering their ability to see connections they too often miss.

Backward design remains a teaching and learning tool which incorporates meaningful assessment. In fact, it places assessment activities where they belong, at points throughout course delivery rather than completion. Decisions to gauge student learning is simpler to make when learning outcomes remain at the forefront of planning processes. By answering the question "what will demonstrate learning and understanding of this material" before it is introduced, we allow ourselves to "think like an assessor." In the end, use of backward design empowers faculty members to both more easily design curriculum and to provide learning experiences for populations where academic skills vary widely and accountability is a growing concern.

### Rubrics for AES Units

 In academia, rubrics are used to communicate expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria and describing the levels of quality. An assignment is linked to the lesson outcome for a student to demonstrate level of learning. Instructors find rubrics helpful to quickly and objectively assign grades to students. The same tool can be used to score efficacy of the processes or tasks carried out by the administrative units.

At the 2014 Middle States Annual Conference, Michael Sachs, Vice President of Student Affairs at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania provided a number of examples from the administrative units that used rubrics for assessing their services. Admission tour guides could be evaluated on organization, engagement, presentation and knowledge that could range from beginning, developing, accomplished to outstanding. The quality of students' expectations could be described and assigned a numeric score to tally ratings of this service. Similarly, a theater club could be tracked on quality of voice, connection to audience and improvisation with a range from "WOW" to "Need More Rehearsal."

The next time you are designing assessment for your area think of a matrix with criteria and expectations. Then describe levels of quality for each criterion and expectation with a numeric score. Provide this matrix to users for scoring the service in your area and don't be surprised if you end up giving yourself a pat on the back.

In addition, Institutional Research can assist faculty and staff with specific research questions. Click on <http://www.bergen.edu/about-us/institutional-effectiveness/institutional-research> to learn more about the College and Institutional Research.

### Contact CIE (The Center for Institutional Effectiveness)

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