

# CIE UPDATE

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness

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## Bergen Reaches Milestone with Middle States Self-Study

The Middle States effort at Bergen is officially complete, with the result a resounding success. After over two years of planning, research, writing and editing, the self-study process culminated with a successful evaluation team visit from February 28th - March 2nd. The purpose of the visit was for a team comprised of faculty and administrators from fellow Middle States institutions to corroborate elements in Bergen's Self-Study Report (released in December 2015) and deliver a recommendation to the Middle States Commission on the College's accreditation status.

The evaluation team, led by Dr. Kenneth Ender of Harper College, held meetings and forums with faculty, staff and students. In the end, the College was shown to be actively fulfilling its promise to students and the community at large. The team determined that Bergen was in full compliance of the 14 Standards of Excellence, singling out 48 practices worthy of special commendation. In particular, the College's efforts in institutional assessment and assessment of student learning were identified as areas of significant improvement.

Reaccreditation lasts for 10 years. The collaborative self-study process included input from more than 100 faculty, staff and students, who served on the steering committee and in working groups. The Commission will issue its final report in June.

## Why Assess Online Learning

### Part I

Although it has been more than a decade since research was compiled that documented no significant differences in student outcomes between alternate modes of educational delivery, the online learning experience has remained unique in nature for both students and faculty. "Best practices" to communicate with fellow students, interact with course content and conduct assessment during the course of a semester are markedly different for an online course. At the start of the semester, a new online student feels a sense of anonymity and lack of identity with limited channels of communication before one-on-one relationships develop for a deeper level of work. The lack of visual cues to understand the content, as well as immediacy to get feedback from behind the computer screen and make meaning of text based instructions play a vital role in whether a student successfully completes and remains in an online course.

On the other hand, online instructors have to deal with ongoing responsibilities, deadlines and communication which, if not timely resolved, could lead to different classroom dynamics and behavior problems. Any ambiguities and in-class emergencies need to be quickly resolved by maintaining a constant teaching presence. Besides making sure the links are active and digital content is aligned with the current edition of the prescribed textbook, an online course needs to leverage the Learning Management System tools with each upgrade to create a virtual learning space and build a learning experience consistent with higher education expectations (Standard III, MSCHE revised standards for Accreditation and Requirement for Affiliation).

Assessment that takes into account these types of differences between online and face to face classes help faculty make changes to their courses to improve student learning. In Part II we will address the issue of completion and retention in online courses.

## Curriculum Oversight

### Part II: Focus on Quality

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.

As discussed last time, the Academic Issues Committee (AIC) reviews and makes recommendations to the NJ Presidents' Council (NJPC) on academic program proposals and changes in academic programs. Both a needs assessment and a consultant's report are required with each new program approval submission. From the AIC's perspective, a thorough quality review begins with an assessment and validation of the consultant report, considering the following questions:

1. Is the consultant appropriately credentialed and experienced?
2. Is the consultant's report a thorough and thoughtful analysis of the program proposal?
3. Does the consultant's report respond adequately to the quality indicators listed below?
4. Were the consultant's recommendations responded to appropriately by the institution?

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In addition to a review of the consultant's report, the AIC focuses on program quality using the following quality measures:

- a. Are the program objectives sound and clearly stated?
- b. Are the student learning outcomes adequately articulated?
- c. Is there evidence that a program review process is in place?
- d. Does the program fit within the institutional mission and its strategic plan and educational goals?
- e. Is the demand analysis convincing?
- f. In the learning outcomes plan, the program review and the demand analysis, are there measurable expectations (qualitative as well as quantitative)?
- g. Does a review of the proposed curriculum suggest that there will be rigor in the program?
- h. Is the budget and enrollment plan reasonable?
  - i. Are the facilities adequate, including library, laboratory equipment and technological infrastructure?
  - j. Are the faculty adequate and appropriately credentialed with the necessary scholarly/creative/research expertise?
- k. Is there adequate staff and administration?

Our internal program reviews are critical to ensuring (and demonstrating!) program quality.

**Part III** will discuss quality from the program review perspective.

### “Where Can I Get the Data I Need?”

We all know the importance of data; from using data to make educated decisions and influence change, to planning and tracking classroom outcomes and student success. However, often the question arises, “Where can I get the data I need?” Well, you will be happy to know that Bergen Community College has this covered! We are fortunate to have some excellent data gatherers and crunchers here who not only can get you the data you need; they can teach you how to gather some of it yourself!

Tonia McKoy and the staff in Institutional Research (IR) have the primary task of handling mandated reporting – the information we must report – institutional data to IPEDS and various federal, state, and local agencies. All data that is going to be reported outside of the College, such as The Fact Book, National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP), and Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), is handled by Institutional Research. But, IR also handles internal projects as well such as grade distribution inquiries and program reviews, retention and persistence trends of a particular student cohort, and assisting with preparation, execution and analysis of surveys and the findings. To submit a request to Institutional Research go to: <http://www.bergen.edu/about-us/institutional-effectiveness/institutional-research/data-request-form>.

#### Assessment Tip:

Set realistic and achievable desired outcomes (benchmarks) for success. In a circumstance when an accrediting agency sets the desired outcome, collaboratively formulate a benchmark that expresses your philosophy of success. Start at the foundation for success, and then little by little raise the benchmark as needed.

For day to day internal ad hoc reports and data, the go to person is Pam Ricatto. Pam, along with her colleagues in Information Technology (IT), can prepare up to date data to track current enrollment, current retention, and set up for you to receive auto-generated scheduled reports to help areas track their students' activity on a weekly or daily basis. Interested in knowing how many students in your program have enough credits to graduate next semester? Curious to know how many students in your program with a GPA over 3.0 began with a developmental math placement? Pam Ricatto is the data guru who will produce that report for you. To submit a request to IT to receive a scheduled report of student outcomes or just a one-time inquiry, send an email request to the Help Desk [helpdesk@bergen.edu](mailto:helpdesk@bergen.edu). Put “data request” in the subject line.

For those of us who want to be a part of the data gathering experience, there is training through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CITL). “Creating Savedlists in Colleague” is a workshop that addresses how to identify the data needed to create the parameters for a savedlist and the syntax used to create the savedlist. Savedlists are lists of student IDs and can be saved and used to compare data from the same groups of students from year to year or can be used for a one time inquiry. Class offerings can be found at <http://www.bergen.edu/citlworkshops>.

So, if you haven't already done so, reach out to these areas and see what the data can do for you.

### Conference Presentations

Professors Mecheline Farhat and Victor Conversano, along with Professor Paul Gormely of Lynn University, Boca Raton, FL presented *Assessment: Lost and Found in Translation* at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Research and Pictorial Showcase on April 1, 2016.

Professors Joanna Campbell and Gail Fernandez and Associate Dean Jill Rivera presented *The Assessment Fellows of the Roundtable: Ambassadors of a High Performing Culture* at the American Association of Community Colleges on April 10, 2016.

Professors Maureen Ellis-Davis and Shyamal (Sony) Tiwari presented *The Assessment Fellows Program – An Inside-Out Approach* at the New Jersey Best Practices Conference on April 22, 2016.

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