

# CIE UPDATE

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness

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## Middle States Annual Conference

From December 3 - 5, the CIE Assessment Fellows accompanied Dr. Kim and Dr. Mullaney to the Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. The sessions at the conference covered best practices, practical ideas and innovative approaches to higher education and assessment. Contributing to this informative conference were two Bergen professors, Gail Fernandez and Maureen Ellis-Davis, who presented the session *Assessing General Education Across the Curriculum* to an enthusiastic audience of assessment professionals. Professors Fernandez and Ellis-Davis outlined Bergen's adoption of the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) learning outcomes, spearheaded by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, as part of the College's General Education curriculum. The intention of LEAP is for students, whatever their chosen major field of study, "to achieve a set of Essential Learning Outcomes fostered through a liberal education," (<https://www.aacu.org/leap>). The LEAP value rubrics and the process of reviewing student work representative of the LEAP goal of Intellectual and Practical Skills was explained, and preliminary conclusions were shared with the audience. The response and feedback to the professional and engaging presentation was extremely positive.

The majority of the sessions at any assessment conference understandably address Student Learning Outcomes, as the key endeavor of a university is to provide a quality education to all students. But, it was thrilling for the Academic and Educational Support (AES) department assessment liaisons to see, for the first time, many sessions that strictly addressed the unique assessment needs of the departments that provide the advisement, financial aid, career, personal counseling and enrollment experience to the students. Several sessions addressed the need for focus groups and surveys to provide qualitative data to review alongside the quantitative data that we often focus on (retention, graduation and number of students served in any given department). Another area of interest is to assess Student Learning Outcomes in Student Services. One example that was given is to assess the training of Student Ambassadors. Using rubrics to assess Student Learning Outcomes isn't new, but this session showed how to use a rubric to assess how successful the student training was by examining how students related facts about the college, their knowledge of the departments, and their level of engagement with prospective students during tours. Pre- and post-tests are another learning outcome assessment technique that was suggested for use in Student Services.

## Changes on the Horizon

Currently the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accreditation standards are comprised of 14 standards and their respective fundamental elements. Institutions are expected to demonstrate compliance with these standards, conduct their activities in a manner consistent with the standards, and engage in ongoing processes of self-review and improvement.

On June 26, 2014, MSCHE approved the Commission's revised standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. The new standards were developed by a Steering Committee of higher education administrators and faculty with input received from attendees at the Commission's 2013 and 2014 Town Hall meetings, the 2013 Annual Conference, and more than 400 written comments. The new standards are as follows:

**Standard I:** Mission and Goals

**Standard II:** Ethics and Integrity

**Standard III:** Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

**Standard IV:** Support of the Student Experience

**Standard V:** Educational Effectiveness Assessment

**Standard VI:** Planning, Resources and Institutional Improvement

**Standard VII:** Governance, Leadership and Administration

According to MSCHE, four principles guided the development of the new standards: the diversity of institutional missions; the student experience; institutional assessment and assessment of student learning and innovation as an essential part of continuous institutional improvement. The standards emphasize functions rather than specific structures, recognizing that there are many different models for educational and operational excellence.

The Commission is in the process of launching a Collaborative Implementation Project to assist in the adoption of the revised standards. Fifteen institutions, representing a cross-section of the MSCHE membership, were selected from among the institutions scheduled to submit their self-studies and undergo an evaluation team visit during the 2016-17 academic year. These 15 institutions will work closely with the Commission staff and with each other to use the new standards in conducting their institutional self-studies. Lessons learned in the process will be used for the wider implementation of the revised standards for all MSCHE institutions.

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

## What Does It Mean?

Recently, we have been hearing a lot about program review, curriculum mapping, assessment and accreditation. What does each of these mean to us? How do they affect our work? Here are some explanations:

**Program Descriptions:** Explains to students what a program of study is about. It informs the student of academic and career options associated with the program.

**Program Goals:** Describe what we want our students to learn in our programs.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Transform program goals into specific student performances and behaviors that demonstrate student learning and skill development of these goals. They are written using measurable outcomes.

**Outcomes Assessment:** Refers to the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning. CIE asks faculty to assess their program goals for this purpose. Each department assesses one of their program goals on a two-year cycle.

**Curriculum Mapping:** Is a tool that allows faculty to align courses in their programs to see how they relate to one another and where gaps in learning may exist.

**Program Review:** Provides an opportunity for faculty to review their programs to ensure their programs are current, and address student and community needs. Presently, each program at Bergen is on a five-year review cycle.

**Meta-Analysis of Assessment Reports:** Is a holistic evaluation of assessment reports conducted by the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and the CIE Fellows. It allows all of us to learn more about the current state of assessment at Bergen.

## ASSESSMENT TIPS:

Relax

You know more than you think.

Data = Quantitative + Qualitative Information

## Reaccreditation Self-Study at Bergen Moves into Research Phase

Bergen's decennial Self-Study made tremendous strides in 2014. Throughout the summer months, eight Working Groups comprised of more than 80 faculty, staff and administrators across the College began preparing for what would prove to be a productive fall semester. Working Group Chairs led the way, encouraging members to review Self-Study guidelines and become better acquainted with potential sources of information. Meanwhile, the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) generated a comprehensive roadmap of every relevant document for use during the Self-Study.

Fall 2014 represented a shift in emphasis in the Self-Study process from planning and preparation to research and analysis. Most recently, Working Groups began interviews with relevant leaders across campus. These interviews, along with supporting documentation provided by CIE, are crucial in demonstrating compliance with Middle States' 14 Characteristics of Excellence. By May 2015, Working Groups plan to complete their reports, which will serve as the primary source of the final Self-Study document.

In an effort to increase involvement and make the Self-Study process comprehensive in its scope, a Student Working Group has begun addressing specific questions pertaining to recruitment, student support, retention and related educational activities. Comprised of a diverse mix of student majors and backgrounds, their unique perspective and enthusiasm has proved a valuable asset to the Self-Study process. In February 2015, the group will present their findings in an open forum for Self-Study members and the College community at large.

## General Education Assessment Update

This year the General Education Committee is assessing the LEAP Outcomes of Quantitative Literacy and Problem Solving. Faculty members are invited to submit all student artifacts that they believe are representative of either of these outcomes. The General Education Assessment Group will then evaluate the work of students who have at least 45 college credits. As with the 2013-14 assessment, the General Education Committee is interested in learning more about our students' strengths and weaknesses and using it to continuously improve our teaching and programs.

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

**Yun K. Kim, Ph.D.**  
*Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness*  
yunkim@bergen.edu

**Tonia McKoy**  
*Director of Center for Institutional Effectiveness*  
tmckoy@bergen.edu

**Jesse Jacondin**  
*Research Assistant*  
jjacondin@bergen.edu

**Amanda Moynihan**  
*Senior Research Assistant*  
amoynihan@bergen.edu

**Ruth Ann Heck**  
*Administrative Assistant*  
rheck@bergen.edu

### Affiliated Staff:

**Joanna Campbell**  
jcampbell@bergen.edu

**Maureen Ellis-Davis**  
mellisdavis@bergen.edu

**Gail Fernandez**  
gfernandez@bergen.edu

**Amarjit Kaur**  
akaur@bergen.edu

**Ilene Kleinman**  
ikleinman@bergen.edu

**Jill Rivera**  
jrivera@bergen.edu

**Shyamal (Sony) Tiwari**  
stiwari@bergen.edu