

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

Bergen Community College

Paramus, New Jersey

By

A Team Representing the

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a Visit to

the Campus on

October 3-4, 2012

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INTRODUCTION

The team offers its sincere appreciation to Bergen Community College for hosting this monitoring report follow-up visit. The team notes that considerable effort went into the production of the monitoring report, and we thank the members of the Bergen community for their honesty, openness, and commitment to the processes of self-appraisal and self-improvement. The team noted the sense of commitment to sustaining these efforts by faculty and staff as demonstrated in their conversations during the site visit. The team was impressed by what was accomplished since the Middle States Commission on Higher Education warning was issued.

REASONS FOR THE VISIT

Bergen Community College submitted its Periodic Review Report in summer 2011 and in November 2011, the Commission acted to place the institution on warning.

On November 17, 2011, the Commission acted as follows:

To accept the Periodic Review Report and to warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) and Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2012, providing evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standards 7 and 14, including but not limited to (1) evidence of a comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used in planning and allocating resources (Standard 7); and (2) evidence of systematic and sustained assessment of student learning outcomes at the course and program levels, including general education (Standard 14). To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss the Commission's expectations for reporting. A small team visit will follow submission of the report. To note that the date of the next evaluation will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed.

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

During their visit, the small team met with a number of individuals and groups, including:

President Kaye Walter, President's Cabinet, CIE Fellows, Vice President Jose Adames, Department Chairs, Assessment Liaisons, and Joann Marzocco.

The team organized the meetings around three major themes: the institutional priority given to assessment; the sustainability of efforts related to assessment; and the depth and

breadth of Bergen's culture of evidence, that is, how widespread is assessment and learning outcomes assessment across the institution. Faculty and staff responded readily to these themes.

TEAM FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment)

Bergen Community College meets this Standard.

College Response to the Commission:

As a result of receiving notification on November 17, 2011 that Bergen Community College (BCC) was placed on warning by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the College actively responded by developing a report that sought to demonstrate that College was in compliance with Standards 7 and 14. The Interim Coordinator for Assessment and Strategic Planning, the Deans of each School, the Academic Department Chairs and the assessment liaisons met numerous times to review all assessment reports developed since 2005. Examples of assessment of student learning narratives were created from this review. The Administrative and Educational Support (AES) units performed a similar audit and created narratives that showed how assessment was effectively used in the areas of planning, resource allocation and improved student services. The Interim Coordinator for Assessment and Strategic Planning collected feedback generated via open forums and emails from the Board of Trustees and the entire College community. The resulting report, endorsed by the Faculty Senate in May 2012 and approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2012, demonstrates Bergen Community College's belief that it demonstrates a commitment to a comprehensive and sustained assessment process in the Academic and Administrative and Educational Support areas.

Team Findings:

The College has explicitly connected its Mission with its Strategic Planning goals, and has created a dashboard as a shorthand way of tracking success on major indicators. The Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) website has been steadily improving, bringing together all the major components of institutional assessment and explaining them in understandable terms. The CIE has been a driving force in providing faculty and staff development, designing processes for academic departments and administrative departments to define Key Performance Indicators and to report annually on goal accomplishment that is also linked to the College's five large strategic planning goals. Institutional Research reports are well presented, and the College has made strategic decisions about participating in national surveys such as PACE and CCSSE, and the Monitoring Report describes good use of these results to stimulate productive changes.

The College has added a column for budget requests to the annual report template, which is intended to explicitly link the annual budget process to the strategic planning process.

The team found varying quality in the AES assessment reports.

Commendations:

The College has taken steps to develop, demonstrate and sustain a culture of evidence, as demonstrated in both its Monitoring Report and feedback from faculty and staff. Considerable thought, action and resources have been dedicated to examining what would be critical to documenting and achieving outcomes that are aligned with the College's mission and to improve institutional effectiveness. The College has moved quickly to search for a vice president of institutional effectiveness and has committed to adding additional resources to institutional research and assessment efforts.

Recommendations:

Continue to evaluate AES departmental assessment processes to improve programs and services. Ongoing staff development will assist departments with designing and conducting meaningful assessments.

Continue to integrate the Institutional Dashboard (key performance indicators) with the Strategic Plan, linking goals to outcomes, and linking outcomes to institutional decision-making and budget priorities. Ensure that the outcomes of the Strategic Plan, including the Institutional Dashboard, are readily available and easily accessible to the campus community. Future strategic plans should be built on the strength of outcomes assessment.

Requirements:

NONE

Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)

Bergen Community College meets this Standard.

College Response to the Commission:

The Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) has focused on the training of faculty and staff regarding assessment, particularly student learning outcomes. The Faculty Development Committee now offers a special orientation for non-tenured faculty and programs for faculty to improve teaching skills. Working together, CIE and the Faculty

Development Committee have offered workshops focused on assessment. The Interim Coordinator for Assessment and Strategic Planning instructed Administrative and Educational Support (AES) leaders on developing outcome statements and related metrics. Opportunities for training external to the College were made available to faculty and staff. Lunchtime chats focused on teaching and assessment provided an informal way for faculty to share best practices. While training of faculty and staff has been ongoing since 2005, the collaboration of the Faculty Development Committee and the Center for Institutional Effectiveness further enhances assessment efforts.

Team Findings:

Numerous examples of assessment of student learning outcomes by department and at the course level were provided in the Monitoring Report and the document room. Program review documents for externally accredited programs were provided.

The College has established a framework for conducting meaningful assessment of student learning, and has presented ample evidence of broad faculty engagement in assessment, especially at the course level. Reports on file indicate that student learning outcomes assessment has been carried out over two-year cycles since 2006, although there are gaps in some reports, especially during 2008-10. The Center for Institutional Effectiveness has conducted workshops on assessment each year since 2005, and a large cadre of faculty assessment liaisons have assisted faculty with designing and conducting assessment. During 2011-12 the Learning Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate was created; this committee surveyed faculty to help determine what assessment methods, cycles and reporting formats would work best for faculty. A deliberative four-semester assessment process and a new academic assessment report form have been instituted as of Fall 2012; the report form makes explicit links among the desired outcome to be assessed and the relevant General Education requirement(s), strategic goals of the College, and program (disciplinary) learning goals.

A number of the academic assessment reports demonstrate thoughtful design of assessment tasks, a multi-step process of setting targets, writing rubrics, collecting and analyzing data, and reflecting on the results, then suggesting possible strategies for improving student performance. In some cases, the reports document an action taken – sometimes as a pilot – with results analyzed and a suggestion for broader implementation. The assessment process includes frank discussion about the assessment results and the assessment process itself.

Some reports are narrower in focus and will benefit from further faculty development workshops, especially on assessing general education competencies.

The College has made good progress in preparing curriculum maps; some are excellent, showing how all the disciplinary courses are connected to the College's General Education Goals and to the discipline's Program Learning Goals. Individual courses are mapped with their course student learning outcomes matched to the General Education and Program goals. Curriculum maps are in various stages of development.

The accreditation reports for the externally accredited Health Professions programs show that these degree programs are being successfully evaluated against agency standards. Assessment at the program level for other curricula (degree programs) is currently made up of course and course sequence assessment.

Faculty members are familiar with the College's General Education requirements, and with the previous Core Competencies, and General Education outcomes have been cited in course syllabi across the curricula. The Monitoring Report states that "Bergen is currently assessing general education proficiencies ... in a decentralized manner" (p. 20). The Chair of the General Education Committee is preparing a draft proposal regarding an interdisciplinary approach to the assessment of general education, which will be considered by the LAC in Fall 2012.

Commendations

The College has made and implemented plans to address student learning outcomes at the course level. The odd-year review cycle should ensure that recommendations that require follow up will be assessed in a timely manner and that the desired progress toward strategic goals are met.

Recommendations

The College will need to complete the curriculum mapping, and ensure all the maps are of consistent quality.

The College should create a clear and practical process for the comprehensive reporting of academic program learning outcomes (i.e., degree programs).

Drawing on the existing general education assessment results, the College should develop a regular review and report on general education outcomes across disciplines.

Requirements

NONE

CONCLUSION

The team again thanks the institution, particularly the hospitality provided by Dr. Walter and the College. We appreciate the support from Carol Clarke as she covered many logistical details prior to and during our visit. We hope that the College will be open to the ideas and recommendations contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.