

Assessment Matters at Montclair State University

Volume 1, Issue 1

November 26, 2012

Inside this issue:

Assessment: Meaningful and Manageable	1
Assessment Faculty Highlights	2
Middle States Workshop Surveys	3-4
Coordinator's Corner	4
Upcoming Assessment Workshops	4
Assessment Appreciation Breakfasts	5
Online Assessment Resources	6
2012-2013 Middle States Events	6
Next Issue Highlights	6

Assessment: Meaningful and Manageable

By Dr. Coté-Bonanno

Assessment matters because it is about student learning, achievement and success.

Assessment is a widely used term in Higher Education today and it supports the Strategic Plan, but what does it mean to us as faculty members, staff and administrators.

As faculty, we assess programs based on students' collective achievement of Program Learning Goals. We evaluate individual students' progress based on their ability to demonstrate achievement of competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes as defined by course and program learning goals.

Are students learning what we expect them to learn? Are students able to use their learning in the workplace? How do we evaluate student learning? What does the assessment tell us? And, what are we going to do with the results to improve learning, achievement and success?

These are some of the many questions we focus on in Student Learning Outcomes Assessment. All academic programs at Montclair State University have developed assessment plans and are collecting data for their Program Learning Goals. This academic year focuses on Collection, Analysis and Use of our Data.

Let's start with the basic premise that assessment needs to be meaningful and manageable to insure sustainability.

How do we make assessment meaningful? For assessment to be meaningful (not bean-counting or teaching to the test!) for Academic programs it must be done thoughtfully and systematically.... It should be driven by faculty so that the information gathered reflects the goals and values of particular disciplines, helps instructors refine their teaching practices and grow as educators, and helps departments and programs refine their curriculum to prepare students for an evolving workplace. (<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/>)



*Dr. Coté-Bonanno,
Associate Provost for
Academic Programs
and Assessment*

The Provost's Office will continue to address the issues of assessment and student learning through our Assessment Matters Newsletter, our Assessment Website and our ongoing Workshops and "House Calls".

We are committed to making the Assessment process meaningful and manageable. Your feedback is always welcome and keeps us in the Assessment Cycle as well!





Dr. Maria Jose Garcia Vizcaino, Associate Professor of Spanish, Department of Spanish and Italian

Assessment Faculty Highlights

Dr. Maria Jose Garcia Vizcaino and Jacqueline Catalano were selected by the Provost Office to highlight their efforts in assessment this year. Dr. Maria Jose Garcia Vizcaino is an Associate Professor of Spanish, Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Translation and Interpreting in Spanish, and Deputy Chair of the Spanish/Italian Department at Montclair State University.

When asked how assessment impacted her and her program, Dr. Garcia Vizcaino responded that she and her colleagues were made more aware of the learning goals in their program as a whole and in the individual courses that are taught. It has made them reflect upon how they are getting to those goals and if the current means are enough or need modification to achieve the goals successfully. It has also made them analyze their assessment tools, revise their syllabi, work on rubrics to be more transparent and adopt a reliable process of evaluation for students.

She also stated that it helped to have a database, workshops and

meeting with the Assessment experts. In particular, the constant help and support of Irina Koroleva was fundamental in the whole process. They plan on sharing the findings with their department and continue to work on developing new measures and tools for assessment.

Jacqueline Catalano is the Program manager for the Center for Child Advocacy at Montclair State University. As such, she is challenged with organizing and supporting a growing center with academic programs and several grant awards. Jacqueline feels that assessment has motivated the department to take a critical look at their courses and programs while allowing them to see their successes in student learning, as well as to pick up inconsistencies in areas needing improvement. Of note, it has also given her and her department the opportunity to spend many hours engaging in scholarly conversation regarding student learning, faculty needs and future planning. This has enhanced the quality of their programs while optimizing the class-

room learning experience for all.

When asked what has helped her in the process, she responded that critical to their assessment efforts was the fact that her faculty saw the merit in the initiative. Wanting to know whether their students were being taught became critical to assessment efforts in the Child Advocacy Center. Given credence to this, was the fact that the faculty saw merit in the initiative. The assessment team from the Provost's Office provided hands-on and timely responses to the queries to guide them through the process.

"Assessment data will be an invaluable and integral part of discussion" that will be used to review the curriculum and provide ongoing insight into courses.



Jacqueline Catalano, Program Manager, Center for Child Advocacy

What do the best teachers do?

"The best teachers constantly monitor what is happening to students as they set about learning and investigate when things do not proceed as planned or expected. They also inquire their own practice so they might get better at ensuring that their students learn successfully."

www.demos.co.uk

February 2012

Middle States Workshop Surveys

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) provides workshops and events for professional development. On September 10, 2012, the workshop “Becoming an Assessment Facilitator” was held in Philadelphia, PA. It was a one-day program for those who were familiar with assessment and wanted to learn to guide others in developing plans and tools for assessing student learning.

Two associates from MSU were invited and sponsored by the Provost’s Office in conjunction with their Departments. Dr. Helen Roberts, the Chairperson of the Department of Mathematical Sciences and Jennifer Schiffer from the Computer Science Department attended the workshop. They were kind enough to share their observations and learning with us.



*Dr. Helen Roberts
Chairperson, Department
of Mathematical Sciences*

Q.: What did you learn and benefit from this workshop?

H.R.: It was interesting to learn about issues that other universities have about Assessment. We are further along the process than other Universities. The Workshop made me think about where we are in the process and what is our next step.

J.S.: I learned that a lot of different schools are dealing with questions of assessment with regards to what tools are available, how to do it in a correct and efficient manner, and how to find support for those facilitating the assessment and the faculty as well.

Q.: What aspects of the workshop were the most valuable for you? And why?

H.R.: The workshop confirmed what I have been thinking. We need to complete the loop. We (the Department) have gotten very good at doing the Assessments, but we have not acted on what we have learned from the Assessments.

J.S.: There were a few roleplaying activities that allowed us to act

out issues we’ve encountered as assessment facilitators and learn how to handle situations, like resistance and lack of prioritization of the process. Because there were people from different positions in higher education – provosts, faculty, full-time assessment facilitators, etc. – we saw different points of view from the university-wide level to departmental.

Some schools had great ideas and did not know how to execute them, others knew how to do assessment but did not know where to start.

Q.: How will you use or apply this in your Department/College/University Community what you learned from the workshop?

H.R.: We are going to discuss next steps at the next Department Meeting. I will be more confident about working towards the next steps.

J.S.: Brainstorming and talking to other attendees has inspired me to rethink the way our department handles assessment. There are lots of ways to do a little more work in the beginning of the process to prevent a deluge



*Jennifer Schiffer
Department Administrator,
Computer Science*

*“Assessment is the process of gathering information from multiple sources in order to develop an understanding of what students know, understand and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experience. The process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning.”
Huba and Freed (2000)*

Continued on p. 4



of work when it comes time for milestone requirements in the process. I think making assessment something that is understood by both faculty and students is important, as improving programs for the students is a reason why we assess. I would like to change the way we publicize our assessment information so that is more accessible to students and other people that need to see that we care about

assessment and that we do it.

Q.: Would you recommend this workshop to your colleagues? Why?

H.R.: I would recommend this workshop. I think it is primarily designed for the person who is leading the Assessment effort in their department/unit. It is helpful to see that other people are facing some of the same issues we are facing.

J.S.: I would recommend this workshop be-

cause those who resist assessment would likely come to appreciate the importance and the amount of extra work that comes from being resistant against this mandatory process. Those who are in favor of assessment would learn that they are not alone when either handling resisters or confused about how the process is and what is available to help them facilitate assessment.

Coordinator's Corner

What Assessment IS and IS NOT:

- Assessment IS an **ongoing** process with the repeating cycle of actions...it IS NOT episodic.
- Assessment AIMS at **improvement**...it IS NOT evaluation of an individual faculty or student.
- Assessment IS a faculty, staff and administrators' **team effort**...it IS NOT solely an administrative process.



*Irina Koroleva,
Assessment Coordinator*



Assessment Workshops Sponsored by the Provost's Office

Rubric Workshops: Create and/or Edit Existing Rubrics

December Sessions

12/5 4 p.m.-5:30 p.m. in UN-5013

12/12 p.m.-5:30 p.m. in UN-5013

Details and registration information available at

<https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1350408602989>

Plan Revision/Data Entry Workshops

November Sessions

11/27 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. in UN-5011

11/29 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. in UN-5011

Details and registration information available at

<https://surveys.montclair.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1351180543165>

December Session

12/14 3:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. in UN-5013

Analyzing and Reporting Assessment Results Workshops (TBA)

Assessment Appreciation Breakfasts

Two Assessment Appreciation Breakfasts took place at Montclair State University during Fall 2012. On Monday, September 24, 2012, our first Assessment Recognition Breakfast was held in the Student Center ballroom. Approximately 40 invitees attended the event, where a delicious continental breakfast was provided. Dr. Coté-Bonanno, Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Assessment, welcomed the group and thanked all for their efforts on behalf of the ongoing assessment initiative here at Montclair State University. The Assessment team was introduced including: Irina Koroleva, Barbara Ritola, Gail Ahnemann, Maria Aiello, John Bonanno, Steve Johnson, and Provost Gingerich. Dr. Coté-Bonanno spoke about the continuing process of the assessment circle and plans for new and continuing workshops this fall. Dr. Gingerich shared some insights with the group and discussed the Periodic Review Report (PRR) and the commendations (five in all) that were cited by the Middle States reviewers. He explained how this was quite an honor for Montclair State. Dr. Gingerich applauded the efforts of the group and reminded the group that assessment is an ongoing cycle throughout the work of the University. Certificates of Recognition were presented to all those faculty and staff who are program leaders in the academic program assessment initiative. It was a very lively group, filled with conversations about assessment and how it is affecting student learning at Montclair State University.

On Monday, October 22, 2012, another group was invited to share assessment ideas and breakfast. This time, the Committee on University Effectiveness (CUE), charged with the task of developing a university assessment plan, was the recipient of Certificates of Appreciation and a delicious breakfast. Dr. Gingerich and Dr. Coté-Bonanno welcomed the CUE members and shared information regarding the PRR and next steps in the assessment process. The main focus of the formal meeting was the institutional effectiveness assessment process. Director of Institutional Research, Steven Johnson shared with everyone the accomplishments as well as next steps to be taken.

We encourage these conversations to continue as we explore the next phase of the assessment circle.



*Dr. Willard Gingerich,
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs*

“Assessment is the ongoing process of establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning, ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes, systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well students learning matches the expectations and using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.”

- L. Suskie, 2009

Office of the Provost
1 Normal Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07043



What is the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness (Standard 7)?

“Assessment may be characterized as the third element of a four-step planning-assessment cycle:

1. Defining clearly articulated institutional and unit-level goals;
2. Implementing strategies to achieve those goals;
3. Assessing achievement of those goals; and
4. Using the results of those assessments to improve programs and services and inform planning and resource allocation decisions.

The effectiveness of an institution rests upon the contribution that each of the institution’s programs and services makes toward achieving the goals of the institution as a whole.

Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) thus builds upon all other accreditation standards, each of which includes periodic assessment of effectiveness as one of its fundamental elements.”

- MSCE, 2007

Online Assessment Resources

- Bloxham, S., & Boyd, P. (2007). Developing effective assessment in higher education: a practical guide [electronic version]. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/53026895/Bloxham-and-Boyd-electronic-version-of-developing-effective-assessment-in-higher-ed#page=11>
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2007). The publication *Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding* (2nd edition). Philadelphia, PA: Author. http://msche.org/publications/SLA_Book_0808080728085320.pdf
- Taylor, J. A. (2008). Assessment in first year university: A model to manage transition, *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 5(1), 20-33. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol5/iss1/3/>



Upcoming Middle States Events
http://www.msche.org/events_calendar.asp

Next Issue Highlights

- ◆ Dr. Coté -Bonanno will discuss Administrative Divisions and the Assessment Process
- ◆ Assessment Faculty Highlights
- ◆ NJ Assessment Consortium at Kean University Overview
- ◆ The Assessment Network of New York (ANNY) Regional Event Highlights
- ◆ Middle States December 2012 Annual Conference



THANK YOU

The Provost and our Assessment Team greatly appreciate all your time and effort given to Assessment! We look forward to working with you in the future! Any questions, suggestions, or concerns you may have can be sent to korolevaai@mail.montclair.edu.

Our Assessment Team wishes you a Very Happy Holiday Season!