

Assessment Matters

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Inside this issue:

Middle States Update	P.1
Assessment Liaison Highlights: Karen Goodman & Ahmet Baytas	P.2
Frequently Asked Questions	P.3

Proposed Changes in Accreditation Processes

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is proposing to refocus, update and improve its accreditation processes and accreditation cycle.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education processes have served the Commission and its members well, enabling them to support institutional self-appraisal and improvement and to assure the quality of education offered by accredited institutions. With the Commission's Standards and Mission Statement changes the Middle States Commission on Higher Education believes it is time to update the processes and cycle. The update in the processes and cycle, according to MSCHE, is to realign them with the current nature of higher education and to allow the processes and cycle to be more sensitive to the varying conditions and needs of member institutions.

Below are MSCHE's key components of the **proposed processes and cycle**:

1. A Self-Study and Evaluation Team Visit that will include a separate document review to confirm that the institution meets the Standards, freeing the Self-Study Report to focus more directly on institutional initiatives and improvements (*a current Comprehensive Self-Study Report must address compliance with the Standards as well as institutional improvements, making the report lengthy, complicated, and often of limited use for institutional improvement*)
2. An Annual Institutional Update submitted electronically by the institution, about which the institution will receive useful feedback (*the institution does not receive feedback on the current Annual Institutional Profile*)
3. An off-site Mid-Point Peer Review of the accumulated information from the Annual Updates between Self-Studies (*the institution will not produce a separate report—such as the current Periodic Review Report—for this review*)
4. An eight-year cycle for Self-Study Evaluations (*currently there is a Self-Study Evaluation every ten years and a Periodic Review Report (PRR) at the five-year point between Evaluations*).

When approved, the refocused processes could be implemented beginning with institutions currently scheduled for an Evaluation Visit in 2018-2019. An implementation schedule based on multiple factors will be developed.



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Highlighting Professor Karen D. Goodman

Karen D. Goodman is a Professor in the Music Department at Montclair State University. She is credentialed as a music therapist, a special education teacher and a licensed creative arts therapist. Professor Goodman received her education at University of Wisconsin - Madison, Montclair State College, Hunter College-C.U.N.Y., and New York University. She has conducted research-based clinical work in child and adult psychiatry and neurodevelopmental disabilities at facilities throughout the Greater New York area including New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, Creative Arts Rehabilitation Center, Child Development Research Center, Communication Disorders Demonstration Program-MSU, and Regional Day School at Morris.



Karen D. Goodman
Professor, School of Music

Professor Goodman is an integral part of Assessment in the Cali School of Music here at Montclair. She stated that as a music therapist, she has always had a keen interest in “clinical assessment because those data outcomes provide a portrait of clinical strengths and weaknesses which serve as the basis of a designated treatment plan”. She also further stated that “in program assessment, the data outcomes resulting from a well-designed series of program learning goals can serve as the basis upon which we can evaluate and, as necessary, revise the health of a curriculum”. In explaining the challenges of assessment in John J Cali School of Music, she attributed this to the music performance agendas and academic agendas. She stated that assessment has played a role in the department by actualizing different academic directions for music education and helping performance based faculty recognize the possible importance of rating scales (quantifiable outcomes) in juries and recitals. She also mentioned that it is critical for coordinators to communicate with other full-time faculty and adjuncts teaching courses in a given program, which is particularly difficult because of the unusually large number of adjunct teaching faculty in the music school.

Professor Goodman’s suggestions for being well organized in the assessment database include forging a conversation with coordinators of various programs within your department or school, aim to be available and welcoming, send reminders about what will make the assessment systems more valuable for each program as well as reminders when information is due and promote simplifying assessment process.

Highlighting Professor Ahmet Baytas



Ahmet Baytas
Professor, Economics, Finance and Real Estate

Dr. Ahmet Baytas has been a member of the economics faculty at Montclair State University for the past 28 years. According to Dr. Baytas, when he first joined Montclair State College in 1988, the Department of Economics, not yet part of the School of Business was located in Russ Hall. They had a small number of majors and relatively small number of faculty. Today they are a large department with a new name, Department of Economics, Finance and Real Estate that is located in the new Feliciano School of Business Building. The department offers various degree programs in economics, finance and real estate, and is still growing rapidly.

Dr. Baytas stated that in recent years, he, alongside the department, determined three learning goals for the students, which he has been assessing in the Advanced Seminar in Economics capstone course that he designed and has taught since its inception. Assessment method includes assigning students problem sets on specific topics to work on, which then are discussed in class. In addition to requiring class discussions, he gives writing assignments in class and exams to assess student learning. In short, for each of the three learning goals, each student’s performance is graded in class discussions, writing assignments and exams by assigning him or her a number from 1 to 5. A score of 1 denotes a failing student (in relation to a specific learning goal); 2 denotes a performance below expectations; 3 means a student meets expectations; 4 denotes a student performing above expectations; and finally, 5 indicates an excellent performance.

Dr. Baytas stated that “the goal of the department is to ensure that at least 80 percent of our students meet expectations or do better in each learning goal. Generally speaking, we have been achieving these targets”. During every academic year, he saves copies of the problems sets and exams (assessment tools) as well as examples of student work (without names to protect their privacy) that meets, are above and below expectations, and upload all these as pdf files on the University’s assessment website along with his assessment results and their summary.

Dr. Baytas further added that “the best part of assessment work is that it encourages me to think about my teaching, helps me realize that educators must themselves be continuously educated, and hence makes my life as an economics professor more exciting and rewarding.”

Frequently Asked Questions

What Does it Mean to be Accredited?

In the Middle States region, accreditation is an expression of the confidence that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has in an institution's mission and goals, its performance, and its resources. Based upon the results of an institutional review by a team of peers assigned by the Commission, accreditation attests to the judgment of the Commission that an institution has met the following criteria:

- that it has a mission appropriate to higher education;
- that it is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals, including goals for student learning;
- that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized;
- that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement;
- that it is accomplishing its mission and goals substantially;
- that it is so organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals, and
- that it meets the eligibility requirements and the standards for accreditation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

References

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=About&Nav2=FAQ&Nav3=Question07>

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2016). Proposed changes in the MSCHE accreditation processes and cycle. Philadelphia, PA. <http://www.msche.org/documents/ProcessChangeMemo.pdf>

