

What is the Assessment Newsletter?

Montclair State University's Assessment Newsletter highlights administrator, faculty and staff efforts in assessment, as well as assessment events that take place inside and outside the University.

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ASSESSMENT MATTERS

AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

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THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY

As the University's Middle States Self-Study is completed and submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), our accrediting body, it provides an opportunity to reflect on and discuss this process and its purpose within the campus community. The guidelines put forth in "Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report - Working Document for Institutions Participating in the Collaborative Implementation Project" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education; January 2015), as well as the thoughts of Montclair State's

Executive Leadership Team within the Self-Study, clarify the value of the Self-Study to both students, faculty and staff. The process itself is one of reflection, discussion planning for institutional improvement. The first questions most people ask regarding this process are, "What is the primary purpose of the Self-Study process?" and "What outcomes constitute a 'successful' Self-Study process?" The purpose of the Self-Study is to ensure that the University's work at all levels is focused on students and providing them

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THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY

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with the best possible education both within and outside the classroom. This focus allows the identification of both strengths and challenges in serving students, and results in ongoing program and services revisions that continually enhance student growth and learning outcomes.

Montclair State University, like all MSCHE accredited institutions, is expected to present evidence that all instruction and support to students aligns with our Mission Statement and corresponding Strategic Plan to serve students. MSCHE recognizes that every institution serves its own unique community. The goal of the Self-Study report is to tell the story of the work of Montclair State's faculty and staff to meet the needs of the growing student population. These efforts are as diverse as the University community. A "successful" Self-Study presents evidence of achieved and likely continued success in meeting all seven of the MSCHE accreditation standards in ways unique and specific to the growing and diverse Montclair campus community. Faculty and staff may ask, "This is great for the University, but how

does it help me?" The Executive Leadership Team (Dr. Joanne Coté-Bonanno, Dr. Christine Lemesianou and Dr. Joan Besing) that the outcomes of the self-study provide guidance to faculty and staff across the campus with regard to the effectiveness of the assessment of student learning and program goals. As these assessments are faculty driven and implemented the data gathered will continue to inform program development and revisions. It also provides guidance and insight into the effectiveness of student support services and the facilities in which learning takes place. In addition, the self-study addresses the issues of resource allocation to support the achievement of Montclair State's Mission and Goals.

"Where is MSU in the Self-Study process?" The final written Self-Study report was submitted on February 17, 2017. The self-study process began with data gathering by working groups of faculty and staff that addressed each of the seven MSCHE standards. Under the guidance of the Committee on University Effectiveness (CUE) (serving as the "Steering Committee" for the Self-Study Pro-

cess) and the Executive Leadership Team, narrative and data took shape as the final report. The report is now shared with both the campus community and the assigned MSCHE Evaluation Team. This team will conduct its on-campus visit and review April 2-5, 2017, ending the visit with a written report including recommendations for continued institutional improvement. The University responds to these recommendations with plans for further review and program implementation that will facilitate meeting accreditors' recommendations for continued progress in meeting the standards. These final steps provide opportunities for reflection and discussion within the campus community, fueling continued growth in Montclair State's efforts to provide students with the best possible educational experience and outcomes.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Joanne Coté-Bonanno
Joan Besing
Christine Lemesianou



ASSESSMENT LIAISON HIGHLIGHTS:

DR. KATHLEEN LOYSEN



Kathleen Loysen is an Associate Professor of French, Deputy Chair in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and an Undergraduate Advisor here at Montclair State University. The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

has 17 programs and each of these programs requires assessment on an ongoing basis. This process plays a crucial role in the department by, for example, identifying those languages or programs where course sequencing may need to be re-organized.

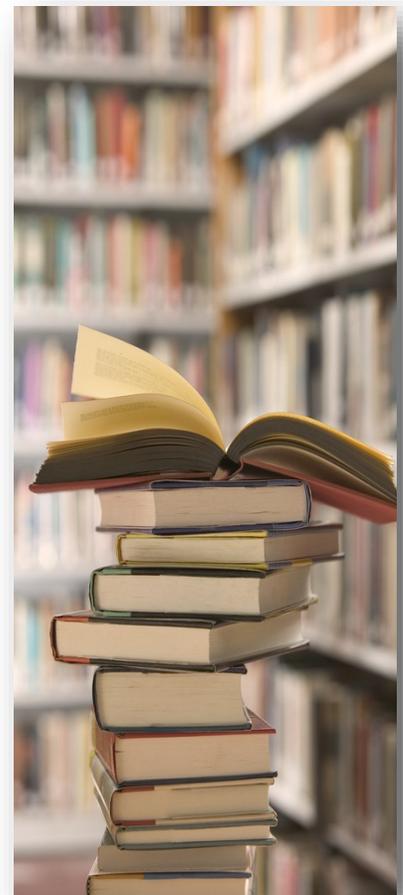
“In addition to smaller meetings with Assessment Liaison and the program coordinators, assessment results are discussed regularly at monthly departmental meetings.”

Throughout each semester, Dr. Loysen organizes discussions with the coordinators of each individual language area, to decide upon the assessment schedule, assessment point courses, assessment tools and measures, and analysis and use of resulting data. In addition to her smaller meetings with Assessment Liaison and the program coordinators, assessment results are discussed regularly at monthly departmental meetings.

In terms of organizational tips for the collection of data and management of the database, Dr. Loysen states that in addition to the ongoing

conversations with each program coordinator and with the department as a whole, reminder emails are sent to the instructors of the relevant assessment point courses each semester. Dr. Loysen also credits working with the Provost’s Assessment Team in assisting with organization of the data in the database.

The established methods ensure meaningful planning and implementation of data collection, resulting in faculty reflection and discussion on student learning goals and outcomes. This brings value to assessment for all involved.



ASSESSMENT LIAISON HIGHLIGHTS:

DR. WILLIAM PARZYNSKI AND DR. ELIZA LESZCZYNSKI



William Parzynski, PhD, has been a member of the faculty in the Department of Mathematical Sciences since September, 1968. During many of those years he has been the GPC (Graduate Program Coordinator). His experi-

ence working with faculty and students and his knowledge of the courses offered by the department provided the background for his work on assessment. His expertise is in the area of Pure and Applied Mathematics.



Eliza Leszczyński received her EdD in Mathematics Education from Montclair State University in spring 2014 and is an Instructional Specialist/Assessment Coordinator for the Department of Mathematical Sciences. Since Sep-

tember 2016, she has also been coordinating student teacher activities in mathematics education for the department. Her expertise is in the area of Mathematics Education. Her dedication to teaching mathematics and her work with students, including pre- and in-service mathematics teachers, make her well-suited to help our Math faculty ensure that instruction is helping students reach the department program learning goals.

The Department of Mathematical Sciences is large and diverse and includes Special Interest Groups (SIG) in Mathematics Education, Pure and Applied Mathematics, Statistics, and Physics. According to Leszczyński and Parzynski, the de-

partment is currently concentrating its assessment efforts on the basic courses such as Pre-Calculus and Calculus, so that the students are well prepared to concentrate in one of those SIG at the junior, senior, and graduate level. From time to time, upper level courses are also assessed to see if efforts at the foundational level are effective. Leszczyński and Parzynski stated that assessment in the core courses of their graduate programs have yielded good results and have shown that the programs are strong.

When asked about organization and the tips they can provide to other assessment liaisons, they mentioned how important it is to keep the lines of communication within the department open to faculty input and suggestions. It is imperative that assessment plans and goals are shared and discussed with faculty in advance. That is why they try to develop a schedule far in advance in order to be able to plan and design appropriate assessment procedures (e.g., assessment item development or grading procedures).

They also emphasized the need for careful recording of all assessment documents and data. “We try to carefully record all assessment documents based on their respective academic programs. In the past three years, we have tried to maintain good electronic records of all assessment items for the different programs and use them as a foundation for successive assessments. For each program, we develop individual documents (assessment items, program learning goals, data, and sample student work) and reports with faculty comments and recommendations. This ease of access eliminates much of the work involved in gathering and entering the needed student performance data and work samples in the University’s student learning outcomes assessment database.

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Please explain your method of data collection. What steps do you take in organizing your collection of data?

Data collection and analysis requires effective collaboration with the faculty teaching the courses to be assessed. Our faculty have been actively involved at all levels of assessment procedures. First, the questions to evaluate student learning have to be agreed upon. This can be difficult for a course with multiple sections taught by full time faculty and adjuncts. The next step is to create a rubric, so that the grading is uniform. In most cases, the data is comprised of final exam questions or final course projects. Appropriate pages with concealed student names are photocopied and graded. The grading is typically done by two faculty members independently. Depending on the course, a rule is established for when the faculty members disagree.

The scores are summarized in a report as: does not meet expectations, meet expectations, or ex-

ceeds expectations. Assessment schedule and results are periodically discussed at department meetings, where a discussion follows. As a result the calculus sequence has a new textbook and a new set of topics. Similarly in Pre-calculus, there is a new curriculum and textbook.

Faculty's ongoing assessment of courses at all levels of each program ensure that both faculty and students find instruction to be planned, sequenced and carried out in ways that bring personal and professional relevance to completion of each course and eventual program completion.

This ongoing collaboration both drives and informs instruction, serves students by leading to more uniformly positive outcomes and perceptions among students in all courses and course sections. Likewise, this collaboration serves faculty because the inclusion of all faculty in setting assessment priorities and goals allows faculty to know that assessment works in service of them rather than feeling that they are working in service of assessment.

