Assessment Matters
At Montclair State University

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Middle States Accreditation and Self Study
by Joanne Coté-Bonanno

Update: Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Decennial Review

Self Study Design Document

The self-study is a multi-stage, 3-year process that involves discussion, critical inquiry, and report preparation that carefully documents the institution's progress over time. This process aims to engage the entire campus community and provides opportunities for all constituencies to provide input and offer feedback.

The Design for the Self-Study is a blueprint for the entire self-study process, including the final self-study report. It guides the efforts of the Steering Committee and Working Groups as they engage in discussions, inquiry and report preparation. It also guides the institution as a whole as various constituencies participate throughout the multi-stage process of self-analysis.

Self Study Design Visit

On Tuesday April 28, 2015, our Middle States liaison, Dr. Ellie Fogarty - MSCHE Vice President, will be spending a full day with the Montclair State community. Her visit is focused on the Self Study Design Draft. She will begin her day by meeting with the President, members of the Board of Trustees and the Provost.

Throughout the day, she will meet with the Committee on University Effectiveness (CUE) and the Working Group Chairs and Working Group members. In addition, there will be open meetings for faculty, staff and students, giving her an opportunity to meet, discuss and answer questions from the entire MSU community. Please see the Agenda for the visit on the next page. All are welcome to participate in the open meetings. We look forward to your participation.

The Executive Leadership Team

Joanne Coté-Bonanno
Joan Besing
Christine Lemesianou

Dr. Coté-Bonanno
Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Assessment,
6234
bonannoj@mail.montclair.edu

Dr. Irina Koroleva
Assessment Coordinator
3114
korolevaai@mail.montclair.edu

Gail Ahnemann
Assessment Specialist
ahnemanng@mail.montclair.edu

Maria Aiello
Assessment Specialist
aiellom@mail.montclair.edu

Douglas Stech
Assessment Specialist
stechd1@mail.montclair.edu

Schedule for Self Study Design Visit
April 28, 2015

8:30 - 9:00	Meet with Dr. Susan Cole, President	President's Office
9:15 – 10:00	Meet with Board of Trustees representatives: Mr. Ralph LaRossa, Chair Mr. George Hiltzik, Vice Chair	President's Office Conference Room
10:15 – 11:00	Meet with Dr. Willard Gingerich, Provost	Provost Office Conference Room
11:15 – 12:00	First open meeting for University campus constituents	University Hall Ferraro Lounge
12:15 – 1:45	Lunch meeting with the Committee for University Effectiveness (CUE) and Self-Study Standards Working Groups Chairs	President's Office Conference Room
1:30 – 2:00	Break	
2:00 – 3:00	Second open meeting for University campus constituents	Dickson Hall Cohen Lounge
3:15 – 4:15	Meeting with Working Groups Chairs and committee members	Dickson Hall Cohen Lounge
4:30	Debriefing with the Executive Leadership team of Joanne Cote-Bonanno, Joan Besing and Christine Lemesianou	Provost Office Conference Room

The Assessment Circle

The Provost Office would like to introduce the Assessment Circle now in Canvas. The goal of the Assessment Circle is to provide a forum for an ongoing discussion of assessment of student learning outcomes at Montclair State University. We are committed to the systematic assessment of student learning outcomes to enhance student experience and improve programs.

All of the academic programs at Montclair State have clearly defined goals and strategies to achieve each goal. The results are documented and used for curricular development and change, review of teaching/learning strategies and the development of student support services.

Therefore, the purpose of the Assessment Circle is to provide an opportunity for participants to disseminate pertinent information, to discuss concerns, and to ask questions. This format will be open at all times for posting and for members to provide feedback. The members of the Assessment Team will also participate and provide topics for discussion. The discussions will be ongoing and will be followed up with individual assistance when requested.

Assessment Liaison Highlights

Dr. Kristin Scrabis-Fletcher is an Assistant Professor from the Exercise Science and Physical Education Department. She was asked about her role in her department and the importance of assessment. She said that engaging in assessment activities has helped to examine what the majors are learning. We identify to make sure there is alignment across courses and throughout the programs. In physical education, the faculty have made some major revisions to the program because of a Program Review as well as NCATE / CAEP accreditation and alignment to our Specialty Program Areas (SPA) standards. These revisions have helped create a dialogue among faculty to re-examine the courses and create specific outcomes for each course so they can create more of a spiral curriculum and less unnecessary repetition.

Within the department, the Middle States Assessment review has created a conversation ensuring that all faculty are aligned with the expectations and standards for student work and outcomes. The faculty work collectively to critically examine what students are learning in classes. Assessment points have been implemented throughout the program of study as checkpoints to ensure that standards are being met.

Here are some of Dr. Scrabis-Fletcher's tips to help other liaisons:

◊ "First, I work in a **wonderful department where everyone is very good about working towards a common goal.** Sharing responsibility for the work both at the undergrad and graduate level makes life so much easier!!"

◊ She stated that with everyone so busy with teaching and research she wanted **to make it as easy as possible for everyone involved**. "I read each program report and the recommendation given from the last review. I then created a document for each program highlighting what they did previously and what changes need to be done. **I made it very explicit and simple**. I then gave ample time for each coordinator to complete each task. I followed up with them one or two times as my "deadline" approached. I made sure that the deadline I gave to the coordinators was about seven to ten days prior to the date posted by Dr. Koroleva so I could have time to assist in any way necessary."

◊ "**I just kept following up with everyone and made myself as accessible as possible to them.** It really is a shared effort in which everyone plays a vital role.

Kristin Scrabis-Fletcher
Assistant Professor,
Exercise Science and
Physical Education

◊ **Good, clear communication is the key** along with "chunking" the pieces / tasks in to simple steps."

The following are Dr. Scrabis-Fletcher's suggestions for organizing data collection process:

◊ **Create a Drop Box folder** for each program to upload their assessment examples.

◊ **Create dates in your calendar** to send out reminders to each program about data collection.

◊ **Remind program coordinators** that they are responsible for collecting data from faculty about assessment and uploading student work examples.

◊ **Remind program coordinators** to upload overall data for each assessment at the end of each semester in an Excel file which lists their individual assessments for each semester.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the difference between a rubric and an assessment tool?

A: A rubric is just one form of an assessment tool. Another form of an assessment tool would be a test/exam. A paper is an assessment measure and not an assessment tool. The rubric would be used to assess the paper.

Q: What is the difference between assessment and evaluation?

A: Assessment and evaluation are often confused. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between these two concepts, which have similar methods, but have different goals.

The main goal of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment helps to ensure the following:

◊   Institutional and program-level goals are clear to the public, students, faculty, and staff.

◊   Institutional programs and resources are organized and coordinated to achieve institutional and program-level goals.

◊   The institution is indeed achieving its mission and goals, and

◊   The institution is using assessment results to improve student learning and otherwise advance the institution. (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2007, p.75).

While assessment focuses on how well student learning goals are achieved, evaluation addresses how well all the major goals of a program are achieved (Suskie, 2009).

Evaluation is using assessment information to:

◊   Make informed judgment on whether students have achieved the learning goals established for them.

◊   Investigate and judge the quality or worth of a program, project, or other entity rather than student learning.

Thus, evaluation is "the analysis and use of data by faculty to make judgments about student performance. Evaluation includes the determination of a grade or a decision regarding pass/fail for an individual assignment or for a course." (Goldman & Zakel, 2009)

Next Issue Highlights

Update on Self-Study
Assessment Liaison Highlights

References

MSCHE – link to website - http://www.msche.org

Link to standards - http://www.montclair.edu/
        provost/
        mschestandardsinstitutionaleffectiveness/