MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Assessment Matters
at Montclair State University

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Institutional Effectiveness

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. The Committee on University Effectiveness (CUE) ties together institutional and academic program assessments into an integrated whole to answer the question, "As an institutional community, how well are we collectively doing what we say we are doing?" and, in particular, "How do we support student learning, a fundamental aspect of institutional effectiveness?"(http://www.msche.org/publications *Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations, 2005)*

CUE is an integral component of assessment at Montclair State. CUE facilitates the fundamental relationship of the work of the Academic and Administrative Divisions. CUE fulfills an advisory, and coordinating role at Montclair State University in planning and assessment matters as well as the implementation and evaluation of the Montclair State Strategic Plan. The Committee's responsibilities include annual evaluation of assessment plans and annual evaluation of progress toward achievement of the institution's strategic initiatives and the institution's academic achievements.

Administrative Divisions and Units at Montclair State clearly support student learning and the Strategic Plan along with the Academic Divisions and programs. The goals and objectives of the administrative divisions and units demonstrate that support. Without the successful operation of units such as: Student

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

Development and Campus Life, Budget and Planning, Finance and Treasury, Advancement, Facilities, Information Technology, and Human Resources, student learning could not be accomplished through the Academic Divisions and programs.

The focus of this Newsletter will be to highlight both the administrative and academic divisions and their activities that demonstrate our collective support of student learning. This issue will include the work of Student Development and Campus Life.

Student Development and Campus Life - Assessment Highlights

Under the direction of the vice president, Dr. Karen L. Pennington, the Division of Student Development and Campus Life (SDCL) provides a broad range of programs and services that enhance students' out-of-the-classroom experiences. SDCL has a rich history of working collaboratively with all University professionals to ensure that students gain proficiency in skills that prepare them for the realities of post-college life; the professionals who work in the SDCL departments are committed to identifying beneficial ways to contribute to student learning.

Through the coordination of the division's assessment efforts, led by Assistant Vice President for Student Academic Services, Dr. Allyson Straker-Banks, the SDCL departments have aligned   their individual goals with the University goals/objectives and the Middle States standards. Another important priority has been to ensure that a relationship exists between office

Top row (left to right): Andrew Pignataro, Linda Smith, Dr. Daniel Jean, Keya Burks
Bottom row (left to right): Dr. Esmilda Abreu –Hornbostel, Fatima deCarvalho, Dr. Allyson Straker-Banks, Dr. Michele Campagna

goals and the standards established by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), a national body that promotes professional standards to guide student learning and the development of support programs and services.

As a result of competing for and successfully acquiring a CAS research grant, SDCL has established the Montclair State CAS Incentive Program. SDCL departments have created exemplary plans for implementing and assessing collabora-

tive programs that clearly incorporate student learning outcomes; in turn they receive monies to use in their student programming.

The Office of Institutional Research is partnering with SDCL to provide relevant data and to assist in ensuring that assessment strategies are aligned with the goals and objectives of learning outcomes. It is hoped that this initiative will increase the knowledge among SDCL professionals and other student affairs practitioners,

so that more integrated learning experiences can be developed through collaborations with faculty and other university entities.
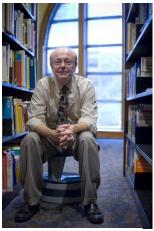
Some areas of research in SDCL currently underway include: the impact of diversity programs on student development; the effect of leadership programs on students' self-advocacy, emotional intelligence and critical thinking; and the impact of campus employment on success for students with disabilities.

Faculty Highlights: Dr. Schelvis and Dr. Burlew

Dr. Larry Burlew and Dr. Johannes Schelvis were selected by the Provost's Office to highlight their efforts in student learning outcomes assessment this year.

Dr. Burlew is a Professor in the Department of Counseling, Human Development and Educational Leadership at Montclair State University. Dr. Burlew was also the chair of the department from 2009 – 2012.

When asked how assessment has impacted him and his program, Dr. Burlew responded that he and his colleagues examined course content more critically. Therefore, the faculty had to determine the milestone

Dr. Burlew, Professor, Counseling and Educational Leadership

markers of their program. This includes which courses are particularly critical to the training of future counselors, and what would help them determine whether or not content was mastered.

Dr. Burlew also stated his realization of how interesting assessment can be, the time it takes to develop an assessment process, and that being successful requires the work of everyone in the department. These were all outcomes of his work. He felt that a lot of administrative support is needed in this process. Dr. Burlew stated, "I could have never even started this without the help of the Provost and the President's office." Having someone to talk to, getting questions answered right away and having training sessions were all extremely helpful. The workshops helped Dr. Burlew, his Graduate Assistant and Department Administrator in getting the system operational.

The plans for AY 2013 will be to use the data to examine and determine what changes

and improvements might be made in critical courses.

Dr. Johannes Schelvis is Professor and Chairperson in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Montclair State University. He has been at Montclair State since 2007.

Dr. Schelvis stated, "In our department, there is always an ongoing discussion about evaluating and articulating the skill set that we expect our graduates to have and about potential changes to our curriculum that we may need to make for students to meet these expectations." He believes that outcomes assessment will be a useful tool to provide additional information, making a positive contribution to his program. He stated that it allowed him to better articulate the expectations and the specific skills he expects his students to have mastered. An obstacle faced by chemistry and biochemistry is that they are inter-disciplinary. Therefore, the Department decided to use a

Dr. Schelvis, Chairperson, Chemistry and Biochemistry

standardized exams accredited by the American Chemical Society (ACS).

The plan is to discuss within the department the assessment results and use these findings to support efforts to improve curriculum. This academic year, 2012-13, they plan to gather more data and to begin program improvements. After collecting multiple years of data, Dr. Schelvis anticipates that a more significant assessment of the curriculum can be made, including re-evaluation of the assessment rubrics, as well as assessment schedule.

2012 Middle States Annual Conference

Dr. McDermid, Assistant Professor, Philosophy and Religion

"The most important thing about assessment is that it promotes dialogue among faculty."
--Senter, 1998

Barbara Ritola, Academic Programs Coordinator

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) held their Annual Conference in December, 2012. Approximately 1,200 people attended the event. Included at the conference was a well-represented team from Montclair State University: Joanne Coté-Bonanno, Kirk McDermid, John Bonanno, Barbara Ritola, Irina Koroleva and Christine Lemesianou. The conference was packed with exemplary practices, practical ideas, and numerous opportunities to network with colleagues. We asked all our representatives to share their experiences at the meeting for this article.

Dr. Coté-Bonanno reported that the MSCHE Conference was a valuable experience as it provided useful information about the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, its mandates, deadlines and implications for our institution. In addition, she learned about available software for organizing and reporting assessment data and investigated the ePortfolio function of the TracDat Software. This information from Middle States will be used "to assist Montclair State faculty and staff with our Student Learning Outcomes Assessment initiative and our Institutional Effectiveness work. Also, it will help to frame our future initiatives and accreditation reports."

Dr. McDermid learned ways that institutional assessment efforts can be scaled up, and oriented towards faculty collaboration and a collective reflection on our teaching. "[For] General Education we need to have faculty in on the ground floor of developing meaningful and useful assessment that they can trust will be helpful for them and their students. We're going to do that by having continual outreach and dialogue, and setting up a system that is flexible enough to follow where the data leads us, and where faculty need it", he said.

Mr. Bonanno stated that "The conference (especially the pre -session) was very helpful in learning what Middle States expects to see when doing a site visit and also very helpful in laying out a format to present the data. Visibility is an ongoing theme and pertains to every aspect of the site visit." This information will help Institutional Research create Key Performance Indicators (KPI), as well as develop an interactive road map to guide the Middle States team towards an accurate understanding of MSU. "This road map will include mapping to the 14 Middle States standards as well as mapping to the 132 University Objectives defined in the 2011 Strategic Plan."

John Bonanno, Database Administrator

Ms. Ritola thought that this year's conference was extremely informative with regard to federal compliance issues institutions must address as authorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008. She was encouraged "to learn that our regional accreditor is also subject to the same type of self-study and self-assessment, which they require of their member institutions, as Middle States itself is in the midst of a self-assessment of its existing standards as required by the US Department of Education." This is important, because "[p]otential standard changes or revisions are significant to us as we work toward our assessment of institutional effectiveness for 2016/2017."

Dr. Lemesianou and Ms. Koroleva were both surprised by how much every school was dealing with the same issues regarding assessment and how much we can learn from each other's experiences. Dr. Lemesianou remarked that, "Assessment continues to be a driving force in higher education. I believe that as faculty, we have always approached our teaching and student learning from an assessment standpoint, but now there are new opportunities to formalize and centralize assessment efforts. Such efforts can only lead to added program quality and strong responsiveness to the changing intellectual, professional, and technological skill set required of today's graduates."

Evidently, the MSCHE Annual Conference was a valuable and useful experience for all participants. They all are looking forward to using and implementing their newly-gained knowledge and skills in their everyday academic and administrative life on campus.

Dr. Lemesianou, Associate Professor, School of Communication and Media

"If we always do what we've always done, we will get what we've always got."
--Urbanski, 2000

Coordinator's Corner

Three Reasons to Assess

Improvement. Assessment can help course instructors, programs, and departments make informed decisions in terms of the program strengths in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, as well as programs and services offered.

Validity. Assessment can validate programs, services, and teaching and learning efforts and thereby demonstrate, with evidence, their effectiveness to concerned audiences.

Student Learning Outcomes. The assessment of student learning is an essential component of university effectiveness, General Education, and Program Goals. This assessment is fundamental to achieving the Strategic Plan goals and fulfilling the mission of the University.

Irina Koroleva, Assessment Coordinator

Assessment Network of New York ANNY Regional Event

Rockland Community College Technology Center

How does assessment help to make an effective school?

"*Assessment for learning can contribute to the development of effective schools. If assessment of learning provides evidence of achievement for public reporting, then assessment for learning serves to help students learn more. The crucial distinction is between assessment to determine the status of learning and assessment to promote greater learning.*"
--Stiggins, 2002

Montclair State University sent two representatives, Gail Ahnemann and Irina Koroleva, to the Assessment Network of New York AN-NY Regional Event that took place on November 16, 2012. Hosted by Rockland Community College, the workshop was called "Sharing Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in the Disciplines." After a brief welcome and overview of the day all attendees were dispersed to different areas of the college for group work.

Gail participated with The Arts and Humanities Group, which was chaired by Janice Grackin, Assistant Vice President of Academic Assessment and Program Review at Nassau Community College. The group consisted of the representatives from Fei Tian College, Concordia College, and Rockland Community College. The topics focused on were Course and Program Level Assessment. Focus was to be on how we put things together, as well as how we evolve a culture of assessment. After a rather lively discussion centered on the pros and

cons of rubric use, the group discussed the value of base line assessment as it relates to truly determining what students have learned. Many ideas were shared as to evolving a culture of assessment. It was a very enlightening experience with participants from various schools.

Irina participated with the Gen. Ed. Group, facilitated by Susan Parry, Assessment Coordinator at Rockland Community College. The group had representatives from Fei Tian College, Concordia College, Dominican College, SUNY Old Westbury, Utica School of Commerce, and Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology. The main topics discussed were the levels of assessment and the Critical Thinking Assessment. The group members shared their assessment processes, which was very valuable and interesting information for all participants. The group discussion was very enriching. We look forward to further meetings and continuing the discussions.

At a delicious lunch, served in the early afternoon, one member from each group shared comments and findings with the audience of participants. Plans were revealed for an upcoming Assessment and Accreditation conference, supported by Middle States, and headed by Linda Suskie, an internationally recognized consultant, speaker, writer, and workshop facilitator on a broad variety of higher education assessment and accreditation topics. The conference will be held at Nassau Community College on April 5th, 2013. The main speaker, Dr. Michael F. Middaugh, Retired Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, University of Delaware, higher education consultant, and former Chair (2009-2011) of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, will be addressing the group on Using Assessment Results to inform course planning and budget planning. As this is a topic of utmost importance, we will keep you updated.

Dr. Heard on Assessment Consortium

The New Jersey Assessment Consortium consisting of community colleges, private and public New Jersey Higher Education institutions has formed a collaborative group as a means of supporting a variety of accreditation efforts. The Fall Consortium "*Using Assessment to Understand Learners and Increase a Sense of Urgency for Needed Change*" was held at Kean University on October 19, 2012. The presenter, Rutgers Professor Emeritus Lion Gardiner, introduced numerous ways of using no - or low-cost assessments to reveal important information about our students and their learning and development, and included research results from New Jersey students and data collected from colleagues across the United States. Dr. Dorothy Heard, Assistant Professor in the Art and Design Department was invited by the Provost's Office to attend the Consortium. Dr. Heard was kind enough to share her observations and learning with us.

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

A.: One of the things that stood out, and that I was happy to see being emphasized, was the value of assessment as a means to enhance student learning. Using assessment, first and foremost to increase the opportunities and enhance the chances of students achieving course, curriculum and/or program goals is more important than assessment for reporting beyond the instructor and students. 'Assessment for better student learning' also speaks to the kinds and qualities of learning we want students to achieve.

Q.: What aspects of the Consortium were the most valuable to you? And why?

A.: Some of the comments made by the presenter, as well as some of the things my table mates said, resonated with something I tell my own students; students who are preparing to become teachers. I tell future teachers that 'assessment is a natural part of instruction'. That not only do good teachers want to know whether their students are grasping the ideas, concepts, skills and dispositions, the learning objectives and habits of mind that are at the heart of the instructor's teaching, messages, and actions; but they also want their students to know how, why and what they're learning as well. The presentation and discussions during the Consortium also got me thinking about expanding, adding more classroom opportunities for talking to students about assessment in the context of course objectives. Helping students better understand course goals and consider possibilities for applying their knowledge and abilities in contexts beyond the immediate classroom is important.

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

A.: My plan is to survey students in the department about the kinds and levels of knowledge, skills, concepts, and abilities they've acquired.

Wall of Breath, Marc D'Agusto, Montclair State University

"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, & Freed, 2000

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Assessment Analogy
*"When the cook
tastes the soup,
that's formative;
when the guests
taste the soup,
that's summative."*
--Stake, 2004

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*"The important
question is not how
assessment is de-
fined, but whether
assessment
information is
used…"*
*--Palomba &
Banta, 1999*

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Assessment Matters at Montclair State University

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NJAC - New Jersey Assessment Consortium Meeting at Montclair State University
June 13, 2013
9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Ferraro Lounge, Room 1106, University Hall
RSVP to Irina Koroleva at korolevaai@mail.montclair.edu

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

Next Issue Highlights

- Thoughts on Assessment from the Associate Provost Coté-Bonanno
- Assessment Faculty Highlights
- Institutional Effectiveness Highlights
- AAC&U Gen Ed & Assessment Seminar, Boston
- General Education Assessment
- May Middle States Workshops
- Strategies to Improve Student Learning
- New Jersey Assessment Consortium Meeting