

Assessment Matters at Montclair State University



June 20, 2014
Issue VII, Volume VII

What is Accreditation?

By Dr. Coté-Bonanno

Inside this issue:

What is Accreditation? By Dr. Cote-Bonanno	1
2014 Assessment Day	2-3
Sharing Assessment Results	4
Next Issue Highlights	4
References	4

Accreditation is the means of self-regulation and peer review adopted by the educational community. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence and minimizing the scope of external control. The extent to which each educational institution accepts and fulfills the responsibilities inherent in the process is a measure of its concern for freedom and quality in higher education and its commitment to striving for and achieving excellence in its endeavors (MSCHE, 2011).

The most common type of accreditation of degree-granting colleges – from community colleges to large universities – is called “regional accreditation.” This accreditation is institutional, meaning an entire college/university is accredited. This gives credibility to the institution as a whole. This type of accreditation can be given by either a “regional accreditation agency” or a “national accreditation agency.” The United

States is divided into 6 regions—each with a regional accrediting body. Middle States Commission on Higher Education is the regional accreditor of MSU.

Montclair State University also has specialized and programmatic accreditation: certain specialized professional programs are accredited independently of their parent institution. There are specialized accrediting bodies for these programs—AACSB for Business, NCATE/CAEP for Education programs, NAST for theater programs, NASD for Dance programs, NASM for music programs, NASAD for art design programs. See the website for a complete list of Montclair State’s specialized accreditors. <http://www.montclair.edu/academics/accreditations-membership/>

MSU has a long history of regional and specialized accreditations. These accreditations are a strong, continuing expression of confidence in Montclair State’s mission, goals, its performance, and its resources.



Office of the Provost

1 Normal Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07043

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
maiello29@gmail.com

Spring 2014 Assessment Day at Montclair State University

On Friday, April 11, 2014 Montclair State University (MSU) hosted its first annual Assessment Day sponsored by the Provost's Office.

The event brought together ninety five MSU faculty, staff and administrators. The Assessment Day consisted of three presentations/workshops that broadly covered various assessment topics.



Opening Keynote

Presentation 1: *Using Your Assessment Results*

Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Assessment and Institutional Research at Temple University.

Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, has twenty four years of experience in higher education. As the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment and Institutional Research, she manages program review and academic programs for over 80 academic units and 17 schools and colleges, and accreditation activities for over 40 instances of specialized accredita-

tion, including the University's regular reporting to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. She coordinated several academic programs aimed at improving undergraduate teaching and learning. Dr. Levine Laufgraben serves on the Middle States Commission of Higher Education Steering Committee on Standards Review. She has also served as a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's Taskforce in 2012 and also served on the Advisory Panel on Student Learning and Assessment.

Dr. Levine Laufgraben's Power-Point presentation on Assessment "Using Your Assessment Results", focused on four major topics:

- How to identify the audience and their uses for assessment
- How to develop strategies for analyzing assessment information
- How to best share assessment information
- How to keep focus on continuous improvement in student learning

Audience participation in the form of question and answer



was infused throughout the program.

Presentation 2: *Gen Ed Assessment: Nuts and Bolts*

Dr. John Riley, Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science and Statistics at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.



The workshop focused on general education programs and its assessment by providing some background information of Bloomsburg's experiences. John discussed some key issues regarding General Education assessment. He gave thoughts on how/how not to address these is-

Spring 2014 Assessment Day at Montclair State University



sues according to what they found at Bloomsburg. Dr. Riley concluded with some discussion of the policies, rules, and procedures that he and his colleagues found important to address.

Presentation 3: *Designing Assessments in Canvas*

Courtney Volpe, Senior Technology Trainer, TTI Group of the IT Department.

Canvas, the new Learning Management System is replacing Blackboard by August 2014.

The workshop focused on how to build online assessment instruments, as well as demonstrating how to administer the Canvas Grade Center.



Courtney guided the audience through some features of Canvas that seem to be very useful. She presented ways to Assess Students on Canvas. Students are able to submit assignments and have that assignment linked to the gradebook in Canvas. Canvas also has a speed grader app, discussion boards, rubric creation, and the ability to create and take an exam/quiz. If you visit the website, more information is available (<http://www.montclair.edu/oit/canvas/>). This workshop was extremely helpful in the use of Canvas, and in the answers to questions posed from the audience.

In order to assist Faculty/Staff with the transition, training classes are being offered as well as private group training for individual departments/programs. The six training classes are available face-to-face, and online with evening classes available. There are also Self-paced Training Resources available.

Summary:

The Assessment Day agenda blended researchers and practitioners giving the audience a broad overview of assessment from a wide range of perspectives.

The event was important and served as an opportunity for our assessment community to advance their knowledge and

skills in assessment, which is critical to the success of our students and our programs.



We would like to extend our gratitude to all attendees and the speakers who made this event possible!

“Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and program goals and that graduates meet appropriate higher education goals”

— MSCHE, Standard 14

Sharing Assessment Results

First and foremost, assessment data collected at the institutional and program levels should be regularly made available to the relevant members of the campus community. Sharing data at the course level is also useful and appropriate when faculty members are collaborating to develop or revise a course, or are team-teaching a course.

When assessment data are collected but not shared with those who would be responsible for implementing change, the data sits uselessly with no practical purposes. Similarly, a perceived lack of faculty interest in assessment could certainly be due to the belief that assessment initiatives yield little or no meaningful information.

The first challenge—when data are collected but not shared with those responsible for implementing change—occurs when one area or program collects data that are relevant to another area but does not make the data available. For instance, social science faculty may assess their students' research performance via a required common paper, presentation, or capstone project. Assessments might reveal that students are not achieving desired levels of information literacy. Students may not demonstrate the ability to use analytical thinking when critiquing primary source articles, may cite materials improperly, or may conduct inadequate literature searches.

While this information can assist faculty in revising social science courses, it also would be of great value to library staff members who design and deliver significant components of the development of information literacy skills.

The second challenge—when faculty mem-

bers show little interest in assessment because they perceive it as meaningless—can result when data are collected at the institutional level to ONLY satisfy an outside agency, such as a state board of education or an accreditor, but are never shared with the faculty. In such cases, when there is no planned provision for collecting assessment data—there is unlikely to be a provision to share them regularly with the campus community.

There are also cases in which an institution decides not to share data because there is apprehension that assessment results indicating that students are not achieving desired levels of learning or that students are not satisfied will be shared with the general public resulting in the institution's ability to attract students.

This is counter-productive for several reasons: silence by the institution about student performance is itself a red flag to the public, and poor performance by the institution's graduates will nevertheless be noticed by employers and the public., resulting in negative feedback to Colleges/Schools, departments and programs.

Most importantly, when information is not shared with internal stakeholders, it precludes the opportunity to improve and to produce the type of student learning that will attract students to the institution. Even if an institution chooses justifiably not to publicize certain results externally, it should ensure that useful data are shared and used Internally. (http://msche.org/publications/SLA_Book_0808080728085320.pdf)

Next Issue Highlights

- Why Accreditation is Important?
- Preparation for Self-Study
- June 2014 New Jersey Assessment Consortium Overview

References

- 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
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2011). *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (12th edition). Philadelphia, PA.

