WHAT IS FORTNIGHT?

A *fortnight* is a unit of time equivalent to 14 days. The term derives from the Old English *feorwertyne niht*, meaning “fourteen nights.” Inspired by the opportunities and challenges of Middle States Standard 14 and the desire to share information and best practices, FORTNIGHT is a communication vehicle which is distributed online to the campus community. Prior issues are available on the Office of the Associate Provost website, at www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment


The City University was well-represented at the annual Middle States Conference held in Philadelphia from December 9-11. Dr. Susan Holak, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, and Warrick Bell, Coordinator of Institutional Research and Assessment, were joined this year by Dr. Jerald Jones-Woolfolk, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences Christine Flynn Saulnier as part of CSI’s contingent. President Morales and Provost Fritz also traveled between the campus and Philadelphia to meet commitments in both venues. A record number of more than 1100 participants, representing institutions across the Middle States accreditation region (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and international locations) attended sessions covering Middle States Commission policies, assessment methods, and changes in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

Plenary sessions at this year’s conference featured presentations by Scott Jaschik, editor of *Inside Higher Ed*, and Mark Milliron, President and CEO of Catalyze Learning International. Presidents from The College of New Jersey, DePaul University, and the University of the Sacred Heart (Puerto Rico) participated in a panel discussion about the future of higher education. Among the provocative topics mentioned throughout these presentations were the challenges presented by new modes of instructional delivery, competition from online universities, and the growing prominence of international institutions.

A major focus of this year’s conference was the role of the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), generally a Presidential designee on campus who communicates with the Middle States Commission on behalf of the campus, and is knowledgeable about the Commission’s policies. Among other responsibilities, the ALO may lead efforts to educate a campus community about assessment, oversee preparation of the institution’s annual Institutional Profile for Middle States, and monitor campus initiatives for substantive changes that might need to be reported to the Commission. Dr. Susan Holak, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, serves as CSI’s Accreditation Liaison Officer.

The Middle States Commission requires that an accredited institution inform the organization about significant changes to the campus mission, programs, locations, or modes of instruction. Such substantive changes must be documented with regard to their purpose, financial impact on the institution, necessary resources, and assessment plans. The most common substantive changes considered by the Commission relate to new campus locations, distance education, new degree levels, and contracts with external entities.
PREPARING FOR THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY: STANDARD 7

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

As the culmination of the Institutional Context Standards (1-7), Standard 7 is at the heart of the assessment process; it focuses on demonstrating that the institution has sustainable, integrated processes in place to assess its progress towards achieving its stated goals. The College has many structures and procedures in place which help to demonstrate our achievement of the requirements for this Standard, including the current Strategic Planning Process initiative; efforts on the part of academic departments and support offices to develop or revisit their missions; master planning discussions; the compilation and sharing of resource-related data; the work of the College-wide and departmental Academic Outcomes Assessment Committees, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and the Assessing Special Programs Committee; as well as the documentation of all these activities.

CLOSING THE LOOP: MUSIC NOTES RESOUND IN STUDENT PROGRESS, POST-BACCALAUREATE SUCCESS, AND ALUMNI DATA

Dr. Sylvia Kahan and her colleagues in the Department of Performing and Creative Arts have amassed a wealth of information about their students’ progress through the music curriculum, graduate school applications, and career placement, which the department is using to inform critical programmatic decisions. Situated in a unique curriculum characterized by small class sizes, one-on-one study with performance faculty, recitals, and measured skill progression, the music program lends itself to such detailed study. The department has been able to track cohorts of students from MUS 125 (a General Education course) to MUS 225 (the first course in the major) and beyond. Time to graduation, completion of General Education requirements, and majors’ success in advanced music courses are among the indicators monitored by Dr. Kahan and her colleagues. Along with curricular changes, this detailed information has resulted in the department confirming the necessity of some of the program’s pre-major requirements. In addition, Dr. Kahan has compiled a list of music alumni and their post-graduation activities that reaches back to the 1970s.

CAMPUS UPDATES

Associate Provost Susan Holak held focused discussions involving OIRA staff, each department chairperson, the department assessment liaison and their respective Dean throughout this semester. Thus far, Business, Chemistry, History, Modern Languages, Nursing and Media Culture departments, as well as the Library, have all had “baseline” meetings. Many departments, especially those in the process of adding or modifying programs, spent the semester examining and revising components of their assessment strategies including their mission statements, program goals and course learning objectives, as well as collecting outcomes information.

CUNY NEWS AND EVENTS

Pre-tenure faculty members who started at the College before fall 2009 were recently contacted by the COACHE survey, developed and implemented by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This national survey, being coordinated at CUNY by the Central Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, examines many aspects of the early-career faculty experience. At CSI, the responses will be used to inform efforts to develop and retain the high quality faculty who have chosen to join our institution, as well as recruit their future colleagues.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

In 1750, postal service went out of New York only once a fortnight during the winter season.


FORTNIGHT will resume publication after a brief hiatus for the semester break. We will return in mid-February, 2010. Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by February 8, 2010, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.

The Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy holiday season, enjoyable intersession break, and prosperous New Year 2010!