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.

MIDDLE STATES CONFERENCE 2010: ATTENDEES LEARN ABOUT THE COMMISSION, ASSESSMENT, AND THE CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

More than 1,500 people from campuses in the Middle States region (New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico and some international locations) attended the Commission’s annual conference held in Philadelphia from December 8-10. The College of Staten Island fielded an unprecedented contingent of 22 faculty, professional staff, and administrators, representing a broad cross-section of the institution. Only Long Island University, with 31 representatives from two campuses, surpassed CSI’s group in size.

In addition to President Morales and Provost Fritz, the College had in attendance its two Middle States Reaccreditation Co-Chairs, Associate Provost Susan Holak and Professor Richard Powers, along with Vice President Ramona Brown, Vice President Milton Santiago, Dean Christine Flynn Saulnier, Interim Associate Provost Ann Lubrano, Assistant Vice President Mary Beth Reilly, Warrick Bell (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment), Barbara Cohen (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment), Christopher Cruz Cullari (Office of Disability Services), Dr. Abdeslem ElIdrissi (Biology), Dr. Richard Flanagan (Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy), Kenichi Iwama (Office of the President), Dr. Catherine Lavender (History), Dr. Jacqueline LeBlanc (Biology and Chair of the Faculty Senate), Louise Levine (Adjunct Instructor and Information Liaison Staff to the Steering Committee), Dr. Susan Mee (Nursing), Dr. Sam Michalowski (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment), Sasha Spence (Graduate Admissions), and Joyce Taylor (Office of Information Technology). Every one of the Groups in the CSI Middle States self-study design (seven Working Groups, three Advocate Groups, the Special Resources Committee, and the Steering Committee) had representation at the conference.

This year’s conference was anchored by three informative, and at times sobering, plenary sessions. During the opening presentation, Dr. William Kirwan, Chancellor of the University of Maryland System, noted several recent changes in Maryland in a presentation entitled “The Present and Future of Higher Education Accreditation”: a system-wide efficiency and effectiveness initiative for cost savings, containment, and avoidance; a curricular change allowing 10% (12 credits) of coursework to be done outside the classroom; and a program to transform large section delivery in lower division courses using course redesign approaches from the National Center for Academic Transformation (see [www.usmd.edu/usm/academicaffairs/courseredesign](http://www.usmd.edu/usm/academicaffairs/courseredesign)). Dr. Michael Middaugh, Chair of the Middle States Commission, led a panel discussion about the structure of Middle States and pending changes in the organization during the plenary on day two of the conference; and Dr. Judith Eaton, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), spoke during the final plenary session about the relationship between higher education and the federal government, noting the similarity of tone between the Bush and Obama administrations and commenting that the country may be at the beginning of a fundamental change in its thinking about accreditation and educational regulations.

During the conference, the College of Staten Island contingent was extremely fortunate to be able to meet en masse with our Middle States Vice President Liaison, Dr. Barbara Loftus. She spent more than an hour speaking to the group about our progress thus far, provided guidance, and responded to questions pertaining to our process.
THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY PROCESS: WORKING GROUP 7

Co-Chairs: Dr. Edward Miller, Associate Professor of Media Culture
Ms. Mary Beth Reilly, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management

Working Report Title: Building a Culture of Assessment and Accountability for Informed Decision-Making

Working Group 7 is focusing on elements from Middle States Standards 7 and 14. The group’s charge reads as follows:

*Working Group 7 will examine the College’s procedures for promoting institutional effectiveness and informed decision-making, in keeping with the special emphasis of the self-study (creating a culture of assessment). This group will focus on the assessment processes and how effective they are in demonstrating and improving student learning outcomes.*

Working Group 7 includes individuals who demonstrate interest in assessing student learning outcomes; individuals in operational services positions; members of the campus community who have some awareness of or participation on the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee, Assessment of Special Programs Committee; and individuals who are familiar with FORTNIGHT, the Middle States Log, self-study processes, survey development and use, and the benefits of data-informed decision-making.

CAMPUS UPDATES

The College of Staten Island General Education and Curriculum Committees are currently engaged in discussions of assessment in relation to courses that contribute to the goals of several programs. Any given CSI course may be a requirement for one or more majors, and it may also carry one or more General Education designations. Faculty are attempting to determine the best way to ensure that objectives for courses adequately address all the programs that courses contribute to, how to ensure collaborative input from the faculty involved in each of those programs, and how any assessment of course objectives can be performed without overburdening either faculty teaching the classes or the students in the classrooms.

CUNY NEWS

This year’s CUNY IT Conference was held in two parts: Friday, December 3, at John Jay College, and Tuesday, December 14 at the CUNY Graduate Center. Presentations by CSI faculty and staff included: “Campus Collaboration for Sustained Assessment of Technology-Enhanced Courses,” by Susan Holak, Barbara Cohen, Louise Levine, and William Bernhardt; “Enabling Collaboration through Technology Integration,” by Doriann Pieve-Hyland and Benji Kuriakose; “Enhancing Academic Success Through Closing Accessibility Gaps with Digital Pens” and “Students Invested in 21st Century Learning: Collaborative Publishing,” by Nicole Dory and Maryellen Smolka; “The CUNY HPC Center Supporting Research from Nanometers to Light Years,” by Paul Muzio; “Education Faculty Perspectives Toward Teaching Online,” by Helen Mele Robinson; “CUNY Online Composition Pilot: A New Model of Collaborative Course Development,” by William Bernhardt; and “Improving Procedures to Provide Access to Students with Disabilities,” by Maryellen Smolka. Assessment-related topics were addressed throughout many of these presentations.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

The British agency Eco-Schools UK began its third annual “Switch-Off Fortnight” on 22 November this year, as part of ongoing government efforts towards developing sustainability in the school system. With more than 15,000 institutions registered, the “fortnight” has been extended into January 2011.

FORTNIGHT will resume publication after a brief hiatus for the semester break. We will return in mid-February, 2011. 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, 2011, 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 2011!