WHAT IS FORTNIGHT?

A fortnight is a unit of time equivalent to 14 days. The term derives from the Old English fearwertyne 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.

CLOSING THE LOOP: STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTOR PROCESS (SEI) UNDERGOING REVISION

At the end of each fall and spring semester, students have the opportunity to evaluate their classes and instructors through a process that was implemented more than a decade ago. Summaries of the fall and spring evaluations are used during tenure and promotion decisions by department appointments committees, the Personnel and Budget Committee (P&B), and by members of the administration in comprehensive reviews of faculty members’ records. Because of the importance placed upon it, the evaluation process and resulting information require the utmost levels of accuracy and integrity. At the present time, courses taught during the growing winter and summer sessions are not evaluated.

A number of department chairs, particularly during P&B discussions, have expressed concerns about the process. Over the years, some data were noted as missing, possibly due to envelopes being misdirected either before or after the students actually evaluated their classes, while the design of the analysis has meant that results from small classes have never been reported.

In response to these concerns, and in the interest of preparing the campus for changes coming with CUNYfirst, Provost Fritz requested that Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness Susan Holak work with several chairs to review both the current SEI process, and the instrument used. As the first step in changing and updating the SEI process, responsibility for the effort was moved from the College Testing Office to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA).

Professors Gerry Milligan (Acting Chair, World Languages and Literatures), Syed Rizvi (Chair, Engineering Science & Physics), and Thomas Tellefsen (Chair, Business) stepped forward and were endorsed by the General Chairs Committee to work on this project with the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness. The team met throughout the spring and into the early summer, discussing and comparing instruments used at other CUNY institutions as well as colleges and universities throughout the country. The SEI Committee also explored ways in which the integrity of the data collection process might be strengthened. Their work continues, focusing on revisiting and revising the survey instrument itself, while specific recommendations regarding the data collection process have already been made.

For academic year 2011-2012, the SEI Committee explored approaches that would alter the existing evaluation procedure. Of primary importance was minimizing the time that surveys are “out in the field,” along with reducing the number of hands that the survey instruments pass through in their path from preparation to optical scanning and processing. Three different approaches were considered to achieve this improvement of the process: 1] tighten the existing procedure by creating a signature trail of responsibility, using sealed envelopes to distribute evaluation forms, and implementing a secured delivery system using locked receptacles in academic building vestibules; 2] employ a large group of trained student facilitators to administer surveys in a very complex service delivery model; and 3] utilize an online instrument through either an in-house or external provider. A thorough examination of these three approaches was performed using information garnered by Associate Provost Susan Holak, OIRA Director Sam Michalowski, and OIRA Coordinator Warrick Bell. This analysis showed that the second option was unworkable for the campus, and it was eliminated from further consideration.
Derived from the work of the SEI Committee, a new SEI process is being implemented beginning in fall 2011. A key component of the new process is a Non-Carbon Reproducing (NCR) signature form that provides detailed instructions to the faculty and student volunteers who handle the envelopes and administer the surveys. Spaces are provided for both instructors and students to sign the form, in order to document each point at which the evaluation materials change hands. Faculty will be able to demonstrate that they have completed their obligation to entrust the envelope to a student volunteer, and students will be able to document the time and place at which their role in the process was successfully completed. The identities of both instructors and students will be available should forms go missing, and the return of all packets is being monitored by the OIRA.

The new evaluation package comprises an outer delivery envelope, an inner sealed envelope(s) containing blank surveys, and sealable envelope(s) for returning the completed surveys. Pencils are also provided in the packets. In order to conserve as many resources as possible, the campus community is asked to return ALL envelopes and pencils as instructed to the secure, easily identifiable metal drop-box in the vestibule of each academic building.

Associate Provost Holak kept department chairs briefed on the developing analysis and proposed changes during several General Chairs’ meetings this fall, noting that the whole process evaluates close to 2000 class sections, and that the first stage of the process alone requires separating, batching, and packaging over 51,000 forms. After collection, every one of those forms must be hand processed for feeding through optical scanning equipment; once scanned, forms are hand-collated and packaged for distribution back to instructors. Given these complexities, the amount of labor involved and the unsustainability of the process, the SEI Committee is investigating options for online evaluations. The group has recommended that the College use the January intersession for a pilot study.

**COUNTDOWN TO THE MIDDLE STATES SITE VISIT:**
**LESS THAN SIX MONTHS REMAINING**

Preparation of the Middle States report continues with the release of a second draft. The College community is invited to go to the CSI Middle States website to access and comment on the document. Recently, Associate Provost Susan Holak, Special Assistant to the Provost, Dr. Ann Lubrano, and Debbie Mahoney, Special Resources Committee member, met on October 25 with Sirio Flores, Acting Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Campus Planning; Vincent Bono, Administrative Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds; Stanley Suski, Administrative Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, and Marilyn Ulrich, Laborer Supervisor, to discuss further preparations for the site visit. Bulbs have already been planted for campus beautification next spring, and weathered campus signage will be improved.

**CUNY NEWS AND EVENTS**

The College of Staten Island and five of its sister CUNY institutions are part of a Central CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment initiative to implement Harvard University’s Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey for tenured faculty. We are fortunate to be in the very first cohort of colleges to administer this version of the COACHE survey. Our readers may recall that the COACHE survey for pre-tenure faculty was conducted at CSI during the 2009-2010 academic year (see FORTNIGHT Volume 5, Issue 4, for discussion). These two surveys serve as an important resource for colleges to evaluate both the tenure-track and tenured faculty experiences in the following areas: Nature of the Work; Resources & Support; Interdisciplinary Work; Collaboration, Mentoring, Tenure and Promotion; Institutional Governance & Leadership; Engagement, Work & Personal Life Balance; Climate, Culture & Collegiality; Appreciation & Recognition; Recruitment & Retention; and Global Satisfaction.

Letters from the Provost were recently sent to all tenured College faculty inviting them to participate in the survey. The response period ends on January 13th, 2012. If you received an invitation, we encourage you to respond so that the College will have a thorough and complete picture of all of its tenure-track faculty members’ experiences. Results from the surveys will inform and help guide institutional efforts to improve teaching and learning.

**FORTNIGHTLY NOTES**


Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by November 25, 2011, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.