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.

CUNY SYSTEM PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COLLEGIATE LEARNING ASSESSMENT (CLA) IN 2012-2013

The City University of New York will implement the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) beginning in 2012-2013, following the recommendation of an Assessment Task Force. The assessment, designed around a “value added” model, is offered by the Council for Aid to Education. During its research and evaluation process, the Task Force, comprised of representatives from the central Offices of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Testing, the University Faculty Senate, faculty, and college administrators, compared several assessment products – the CLA, the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CTAT) from Tennessee Tech University, the ETS Proficiency Profile (formerly known as the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress, MAAP) from ETS, and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) from ACT. In the view of the Task Force, the CLA offered advantages over the other products in many areas including content validity, test development, benchmarking, and implementation logistics. Information about the Collegiate Learning Assessment can be found at [www.collegiatelearningassessment.org](http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org).

The CLA takes the place of the CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE), which was used from 2001 to 2009 as a high-stakes rising junior evaluation. Because every student reaching 45 credits was required to take the CPE, it was becoming prohibitively expensive to develop and implement each year. In contrast to the CPE, the CLA is an institution-focused assessment. Based on a cross-sectional sample of freshmen and seniors, the CLA will approximate the degree to which an institution improves its students’ analytical, critical thinking and writing skills over time. An institution’s profile will be measured using a population of 100 freshmen and 100 seniors, who will be recruited as a random stratified sample. The web-based test will be scored manually and by highly developed computer programs that can reliably assess writing mechanics (e.g., verb-subject agreement).

To estimate the unique value that an institution has added to its students’ skills, the data will be “modulated” in such a way as to measure the difference between their estimated degree of skill change based on aggregate characteristics (e.g., incoming skill level) and actual change over these two time periods. This will, in essence, hold constant the student demographics to produce an estimation of the “value added” by each institution. The CLA also allows CUNY to benchmark to other colleges’ outcomes.

A meeting of campus representatives chaired by University Dean David Crook, University Dean of Undergraduate Studies Karrin Wilks, University Director of Assessment Raymond Moy, and University Director of Testing Melissa Uber, was held on Wednesday, May 23 at the Chancellery. Representatives from campuses that piloted the CLA in 2011-2012 (Brooklyn and City Colleges, and LaGuardia and Bronx Community Colleges) were on hand to discuss their experiences, answer questions, and offer advice on the upcoming University-wide rollout. Lessons learned from the participating pilot institutions include the importance of a campus communication plan, benefits related to the involvement of faculty, the preference for incentives for participants, and the need for multiple forms of contact with student participants.
At the College of Staten Island, the CLA will be overseen by the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and will involve both the Offices of Testing and Institutional Research and Assessment. The opportunity to participate in the CLA this fall will be communicated to incoming freshmen during the summer and early fall. The freshmen participation window runs from August 15 through October 31, 2012. Seniors will participate between February 1 and April 15, 2013.

As we reported in the most recent issue of FORTNIGHT (Volume 8 Issue 6), there are significant changes in the reporting requirements for the Performance Management Process (PMP) cycle in 2012-2013. The Collegiate Learning Assessment is among the new items that colleges will be required to monitor and about which they will submit progress updates. For the initial 2012-2013 year, campuses are expected to set a goal of implementing the CLA and attracting appropriate numbers of student participants in both the freshman and senior cohorts. For the 2013-2014 PMP cycle, campuses will be expected to set local goals related to the actual “value added” measures that the CLA yields.

CLOSING THE LOOP: STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISION ESTABLISHES CALENDAR FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW

Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. A. Ramona Brown has established a calendar from administrative program reviews in her division, in some ways similar to the reviews that are done in academic departments and centers. The Office of Student Accessibility is the first program on the Student Affairs divisional calendar; a self-study draft is complete with an evaluation visit planned for September. Vice President Brown has established a calendar through 2017-2018 detailing anticipated reviews of division offices; this schedule will be added to the Assessment at CSI website along with the academic program review calendar. The website can be accessed at www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment/resources.html.

Academic program review, whether as a result of a site visit from a discipline-specific accrediting body or a visit from expert colleagues, is increasingly becoming a more formalized, routine process at the College. The process generally consists of the following stages: 1) preparation of a self-study document for the program(s) under review, 2) selection of two external reviewers who make a site visit, having read the self-study document in advance, 3) a report by the visiting evaluators that is submitted to the hosting department, Dean, and Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, 4) a response document prepared by the department to address suggestions/issues in the evaluators’ report and demonstrate short- to mid-range plans, and, after a year, 5) a progress report detailing what has been accomplished in the intervening time. Reviews often bring fresh perspective to a program’s operations and curriculum; useful suggestions, new approaches and directions, or guidance for resource allocation are just some of the positive outcomes resulting from the experience of self-study preparation and site visit.

CAMPUS UPDATES

After a process of more than two years, the Counseling Center at the College received accreditation by the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. (IACS). The site visit culminating the accreditation application process occurred in October 2011. CSI’s Counseling Center is the first within the CUNY System to hold this “seal of approval” and is also the first non-academic department or program at the College to gain external accreditation. In order to attain accreditation, the IACS requires that Counseling Centers demonstrate high levels of professionalism, offer the appropriate array of services, handle confidential information in the appropriate manner, provide professional development opportunities for staff, partner with other offices and services on the campus, and be in compliance with Association standards. The Counseling Center holds the IACS accreditation for an eight-year period; given that this is a new accreditation, a follow-up visit will take place in two years. We congratulate Dr. Ann Booth, Director of the Counseling Center, and all of her colleagues for their work on this successful accreditation initiative.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

The island of Jersey, the largest of the Channel Islands, engages in a “Walk to School Fortnight” between May 21 and June 1, 2012, to promote “safer, healthier and greener school journeys.” On the final day, the initiative culminates in an island-wide Schools Green Travel Day when the effects and impact of the event will be examined and celebrated.

FORTNIGHT will resume publication after the summer break. Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.