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.

**SOLO: STRUCTURE OF THE OBSERVED LEARNING OUTCOME**

The SOLO taxonomy, developed by Educational Psychologist Dr. John Biggs and Education Professor Kevin Collis while both were based at the University of Tasmania in Australia, was described in their work *Evaluating the Quality of Learning* in 1982. SOLO, or **S**tructure of the **O**bserved **L**earning **O**utcome, is “a means of classifying learning outcomes in terms of their complexity,” similar to Bloom's taxonomy but specifically targeted to learning objectives rather than broad teaching and education concepts.

According to Biggs, the SOLO taxonomy can be used as a means to help develop “constructive alignment” between the learning objectives of a course and the teaching activities occurring in the classroom. The implementation of Biggs’s approach emphasizes the development of straightforward, observable learning objectives. More information about SOLO can be found at [www.johnbiggs.com.au/solo_taxonomy.html](http://www.johnbiggs.com.au/solo_taxonomy.html)

During a recent presentation at the Faculty Center for Professional Development, Dr. Calvin Yu, Director of Assessment in Office of Undergraduate Instruction in the Division of Life Sciences at Rutgers University, provided a brief overview of SOLO and a discussion of some ways in which its ideas are used in his Division.

**CLOSING THE LOOP: OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT MODIFIES SEI COLLECTION BASED ON FEEDBACK**

As reported in prior issues of **FORTNIGHT** (Volume 7, Issue 4 and Volume 8, Issue 5), the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment has been involved in a long-term project focused on revising, streamlining, and piloting online data collection for the Student Evaluation of Instructor (SEI) process. Customarily conducted during fall and spring semesters using paper evaluation forms, the process began to change in Fall 2011 with the introduction of tracking forms and drop boxes in academic buildings. The drop boxes eliminated the need for student volunteers to return forms to department offices or slide them under office doors when offices were closed. And, since the form packets were collected from the drop boxes by the OIRA, there was no intermediary between the students and the commencement of the scanning process.

Using feedback from the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 data collections, the SEI process continues to evolve. Fall 2012 changes include new stickers featuring the College’s colors and branding and a moniker – “Official Survey Drop Box” – to identify the drop boxes. To address questions that arose from student volunteers, particularly those with classes in Buildings 1R and 2A, the instruction sheet now includes a revised map that clearly indicates the locations of the 12 drop boxes. These new identifiers and maps will facilitate the Fall 2012 data collection by streamlining the process and helping to mitigate student uncertainty. Future plans include expanding the use of the drop boxes to serve as survey collection receptacles for other projects, in addition to the faculty classroom evaluations.
CAMPUS UPDATES

Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee – During its meeting on October 24, 2012, the committee revisited the College's Assessment Reporting Template and made minor revisions to the AY 2011-2012 version. The template was then distributed to members, all active in their respective department assessment committees, and to the academic deans for distribution to department chairs and directors of interdisciplinary programs. Customarily, department assessment committees are comprised of the department representatives to the AOAC and the three curriculum committees (Graduate Studies, General Education, and Undergraduate Curriculum). The template is available on the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness’s website at www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment.

Each department and program is requested to complete the form, describing the course(s) that were assessed and other assessment accomplishments in the last academic year. The 2012-2013 version of the template will be distributed during the Spring 2013 semester.

CUNY NEWS AND EVENTS

Foundations of Excellence – During AY 2012-2013, the College of Staten Island will be joining several other CUNY campuses (York, LaGuardia, and the New Community College) in their assessment of the first-year experience through the Foundations of Excellence project, under the auspices of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. Founded and directed by Dr. John Gardner, a noted assessment specialist, the Institute provides information and resources to improve student learning, retention, and graduation rates. Gardner has received funding from prominent organizations like Lumina, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, and has worked with more than 240 2-year and 4-year institutions on first-year and transfer experiences. Organized as a year-long self-study process, the Foundations of Excellence project will involve nine working groups or "dimensions committees" that will be charged with exploring key principles of excellence related to the first-year experience. These include: Philosophy, Organization, Transitions, Faculty, Engagement, All Students, Diversity, Roles and Purposes, and Improvement. For more information on the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education and the Foundations of Excellence project, please refer to the organization’s website at www.jngi.org/foe-program. John Gardner will be on campus on November 27 to interact with the community and kick off the project.

CUNY Assessment Council Seminar – As part of its ongoing series of professional development assessment seminars, the CUNY Assessment Council held a “Think Simple, Assessment Tools/Instruments” event on Friday, November 16. The seminar took place at the Macaulay Honors College and included presentations from the Directors of Assessment at Hunter and Brooklyn Colleges, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at the Grove School of Engineering at City College. All Assessment Council seminars are open to staff and faculty from across CUNY. Contact any member of the AOAC or Warrick Bell (warrick.bell@csi.cuny.edu) in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for more information about these events.

REGIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

The Assessment Network of New York (ANNY) – The Assessment Network of New York, open to all postsecondary educators across the entirety of New York State, had scheduled a regional methodology sharing event for Friday, November 2, at Rockland Community College to the northwest of New York City. This event was postponed due to hurricane-related issues, and was instead held on Friday, November 16. The organization also intends to hold other similar events in the future, as part of its efforts to develop a regional community of academic professionals engaged in learning assessment activities. ANNY encourages both faculty and staff participation in its organization and events. More information about the group is available at www.oneonta.edu/anny

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

The Indian Seed Freedom movement aims to address issues of world hunger by encouraging the planting of openly-pollinated crops and limiting patents on life forms. Their 2012 Fortnight of Action ran from October 2 to 16 – Gandhi’s birthday until World Hunger Day. http://seedfreedom.in/events/category/fortnight-of-action

Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by November 26, 2012, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.