



FORTNIGHT

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A Communiqué focusing on topics related to Outcomes Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness, and Institutional Research produced jointly by the Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) at the College of Staten Island/The City University of New York

www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment

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.

ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, CHANGES, AND NEW APPROACHES

The term “General Education” has traditionally referred to the broad requirements that lower-division college students would take at the start of their academic careers. Often considered simply requirements to “get out of the way” prior to commencing study in a declared major, in recent years the national conversation about Gen Ed has changed. This shift is due in large part to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) (www.aacu.org), which advances the thinking that General Education extends throughout one’s years of academic learning and beyond. AAC&U recommends overarching Gen Ed “Essential Learning Outcomes” that include intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, integrative and applied learning, and knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world. The organization has focused its efforts in recent years towards developing rubrics and related measures for General Education goals, and surveying employers regarding their expectations of core student competencies.

The College of Staten Island’s current General Education program is organized around six skill areas and four common courses – English Composition (ENG 111), English Writing (ENG 151), Core 100, and PED 190. Generally taken during early semesters, Gen Ed courses expose students to concepts including Pluralism and Diversity, the Contemporary World, and Textual and Linguistic Analysis. The program is overseen by the College’s General Education Committee, composed of a faculty member from each academic department, the Academic Deans, representatives from the Office of the Registrar, and is chaired by the Provost.

Since Fall 2009, the General Education Committee has been involved in concerted discussions about AAC&U General Education goals, measures of student learning outcomes, and the changing national conversation about common courses. Insights were conveyed to the committee by Associate Provost Susan Holak, Interim Dean Alfred Levine, Professor Richard Powers, and Assistant Professor Maria Rice Bellamy, who participated on behalf of the College at the AAC&U General Education Assessment Institute held last June at the University of Vermont (www.aacu.org/meetings/institute_gened/resources10.cfm). At the Institute, the CSI team had the opportunity to hear from higher education experts regarding General Education concepts, e-Portfolios, assessment, and factors which build student success, while interacting with colleagues from institutions around the country who are involved in General Education reform on their own campuses.

For several months, the CSI General Education Committee has been engaged in a large General Education Mapping Project centered in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Warrick Bell of the OIRA is aggregating and analyzing curriculum maps from the academic departments, which describe the coverage of recently-approved new General Education goals by the College’s current Gen Ed structure. Using this information from the faculty in conjunction with the transcripts of anonymous, randomly-selected CSI graduates, OIRA can determine the degree to which students have been exposed to each of the overarching General Education goals.



THE MIDDLE STATES SELF-STUDY PROCESS: WORKING GROUP 5

Co-Chairs: Dr. Christine Flynn Saulnier, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences
Dr. Charles Liu, Associate Professor of Astrophysics

Working Report Title: Creating an Atmosphere of Academic Excellence

Working Group 5 is focusing on elements from Middle States Standards 11, 12, 13, and 14. The group's charge reads as follows:

Working Group 5 will evaluate the College of Staten Island's efforts to offer the highest quality education to its undergraduate and graduate students consistent with its mission and goals. The Working Group will examine the College's General Education program in terms of current national best practices. The Working Group will critique students' learning outcomes, the College's assessment thereof, and the use of assessment data in decision-making in undergraduate, graduate, and general education programs.

Working Group 5 includes strong representation from the Curriculum and General Education committees, staff and faculty with demonstrated interests in assessment, and other individuals concerned with academic standards.

CLOSING THE LOOP: FACULTY SENATE MOVES TO PROMOTE THE UNDERSTANDING OF COURSE-LEVEL NUMBERING

A course proposal that came before the Faculty Senate for approval in Fall 2008 sparked a discussion about course pre-requisites and numbering policies. As a result of that discussion, the Curriculum Committee was charged with examining course numbering practices across departments. Following research across the academic divisions, the resulting comprehensive analysis of department interpretations and practices has just been distributed to members of the Faculty Senate. While not meant as a prescriptive document, all campus constituents will now have more context and a better understanding of course levels and numbering across departments.

CAMPUS UPDATES

Committees

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee consists of representatives from a broad array of support offices and areas including Registrar, Design Services, Office of Sponsored Programs and Research, Auxiliary Services, and Finance and Administration. At its most recent meeting on November 2, the group was updated on the College's Middle States Self-Study Process and introduced to a new assessment tool: a revised assessment plan template for non-academic offices, developed by OIRA Coordinator Warrick Bell in collaboration with Associate Provost Susan Holak. Neila Green, Veronica DiMeglio, and Wandy Tse, representing the Office of the Registrar, presented an overview of their experiences using this template to develop an assessment plan for their area. The template is available in the Assessment Resources section of the website for the Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at www.library.csi.cuny.edu/assessment/resources.html.

Middle States Update

The Middle States Reaccreditation Website is now live and accessible at www.csi.cuny.edu/middlestates. In addition to an overview of the College's self-study design and information on the Middle States standards of accreditation, the site features a list of every participant, a timeline of activities, and the Working Group charges. The website will remain up at least through the summer of 2012 and will be updated on a regular basis. The College's reaccreditation symbol, the 14-sided cuboctahedron, is also displayed with an explanation of the unifying concepts that it represents.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

Beginning on Wednesday, 17 November, the honors student council of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is holding a Harry Potter **fortnight**, in anticipation of the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part One*.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by **December 6, 2010**, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.

