



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

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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.

TRANSITIONING TO THE VISIT: MIDDLE STATES EFFORT TURNS TO CAMPUS PREPARATIONS

Our more-than-two-year Middle States Self-Study process recently turned an important corner with the naming of our evaluation team chair, Dr. Carlos Vargas-Aburto. As reported in the previous issue of **FORTNIGHT**, Dr. Vargas-Aburto, Provost of Kutztown University in Pennsylvania (a member of the PASSHE System), has had an academic career as a physics professor and significant experience in higher education administration. We are now at the point in the self-study process when the Middle States Commission works with Dr. Vargas-Aburto to name the remaining members of our team. Judging from other visits and information from the Commission, the team will likely number 8-10 members, representing different functional areas and roles, and will be drawn from peer institutions. Team members will likely be given two or more Middle States standards, usually related to their areas of specialization, on which to focus when reading our self-study document. Dr. Vargas-Aburto will also make a preliminary visit to the College to familiarize himself with the campus.

The College’s Steering Committee members have already spent more than a year leading our seven Working Groups in the development of Working Group reports, given their charge of researching, composing, and drafting documents focused on specific elements of the 14 Middle States Standards of Excellence. These reports are now being combined into one integrated, unified document that has appropriate internal cross-referencing; demonstrates that the College of Staten Island meets all the Fundamental Elements of the 14 Standards; highlights recurring themes; and holds true to the Special Emphasis of our Self-Study design. As that process continues and an initial full draft is developed, Working Groups may be asked for clarification or further research, while the Steering Committee also turns to preparations for the site visit, scheduled for April 1-4, 2012.

The Middle States Special Resources Committee with its representation from Student Government and functional areas like Campus Security, Special Events, Buildings & Grounds, Media Services, the Office of Information Technology, Academic Affairs, and the Provost’s Office, is ramping up its efforts to plan for the many details and activities necessary to execute a Middle States site visit. An advance team has already made hotel arrangements for next year and toured facilities and workspace options for the team visit.

Significant attention is now being paid to organizing both paper and electronic documents in a repository for our visiting team members. The Middle States Steering Committee, Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee, and Division Chairs have been presented with sample materials and initial checklists as part of a major effort to gather and organize material; given the size and complexity of this task, the process of preparing documents has already begun and will continue over the summer months. Members of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and Jessica Stein, Executive Assistant to the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and the Interim Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Academic Programs, will be integral to the process as it develops.



CAMPUS UPDATES

Curriculum Assessment Template – The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee recently re-approved a slightly modified version of its new course assessment guidelines, which were previously discussed in [FORTNIGHT](#) (Volume 6, Issue 4). The guidelines were also adopted by both the Graduate Studies Committee and the General Education Committee. The General Education committee requested that additional example guidelines be added to demonstrate how the template could be used, both by faculty in preparing objectives for Gen Ed courses, and by the Committee members to evaluate whether proposed course objectives are assessable in practice.

Student Affairs Assessment Committee – Director Sam Michalowski and Assessment Coordinator Warrick Bell from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment have begun a collaborative effort with the assessment committee of the Division of Student Affairs, to refine and implement a comprehensive assessment plan for that Division. Of particular importance are delineating issues surrounding Institutional Review Board protocols relating to the surveying of students, and, in preparation for the mandatory two-day New Student Orientation being implemented this summer, streamlining the collection of information and lessening the “survey burden” that students are faced with as they enter the College.

General Education Goals – After almost two years of work, the General Education Committee unanimously approved eight overarching General Education goals for the College. Inspired by the “Liberal Education and America’s promise” (LEAP) nationwide initiative organized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the new goals are not intended to replace the current distribution structure of the College’s General Education curriculum. Rather, they provide a set of broad skill, knowledge, and ethics categories to which both the curricular and non-curricular activities of the College can contribute. The distribution structure remains the mechanism through which engagement with the new goals is achieved. As well as being guided by the AAC&U effort, General Education committee members sought and received comments from their departments and associated programs, and revisions were made throughout the development process based on this faculty input. The goals will go forward to the Faculty Senate for approval in the Fall semester.

Office of Academic Advisement – Following the consultation and discussion model used to great success with the Office of the Registrar, Director of the Office of Academic Advisement Paulette Brower-Garrett, AVP for Enrollment Management Mary Beth Reilly, Assessment Coordinator Warrick Bell, and Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness Susan Holak met to discuss an overall assessment plan for the Academic Advisement office. Starting with the Office’s own mission statement and draft goals, areas of activity were grouped together and the goals streamlined, leading to a simplified list which the Office will discuss and refine further. Their end product will be used as the basic framework for their processes of long-term planning and evaluation.

CLOSING THE LOOP

The Enrollment Management Division of the College recently assessed the impact that disparate office hours of operation were having on students. In particular, they took note of the different opening and closing times of the two closely-related offices of the Office of the Registrar and the Hub. In their review of this issue, they considered and took into account anecdotal information regarding when students came for services from these offices, as well as the quantitative information provided in reports from the Q-matic ticketing system.

In response to this review, in October 2010 the opening and closing hours of the Registrar and the Hub were coordinated and synchronized: the Registrar now opens at 9:00 AM rather than 9:30 AM and the Hub now closes at 5:00 PM on Fridays rather than 4:30 PM. An evaluation of staffing patterns was also performed and examined, alongside data from Q-matic. Consequent changes were implemented to reflect the findings.

Since the changes in the operational hours of the two offices, nearly 1,000 students have been serviced by the Registrar’s Office from 9-9:30 AM. Additionally, the Hub has accommodated approximately 300 students between the hours of 4:30-5:00 on Fridays. Finally, the average wait time for the Registrar’s Office has fallen from more than 18 minutes to just over 8. These extended hours have been implemented solely through schedule arrangement, without requiring the use of additional staff.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

To celebrate the spectacular show that the arrival of spring brings to the Isle of Sark, the smallest of the Channel Islands, the island’s tourism board organizes a Wild Flower [Fortnight](#), which runs from April 23 to May 7 this year.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to submit items related to departmental assessment projects, College institutional effectiveness activities, committee announcements, and best practices by **May 27, 2011**, for consideration to appear in the next communiqué.

