

FORTNIGHT

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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.

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION HOLDS ANNUAL CONFERENCE WITH RECORD AUDIENCE

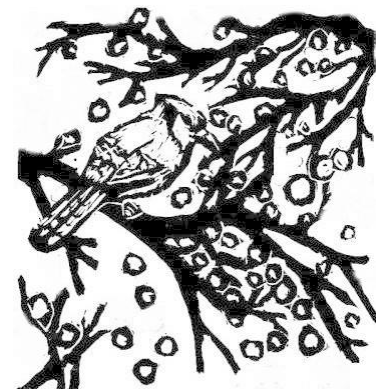
The Middle States Commission on Higher Education hosted its annual conference from December 11-13 in Washington, D.C. This year’s event, with its theme of “Quality Assurance Through Accreditation,” set a record attendance with 1300 representatives from institutions in the region. Although it was smaller than the contingent that the College of Staten Island sent to the 2010 conference in Pennsylvania – which was among the largest groups at that event – CSI was well represented by several members of the Middle States Steering Committee this year. Colleagues from other CUNY institutions were also out in force: representatives from Queensborough, Kingsborough, and Hostos Community Colleges, and NYC City College of Technology, Medgar Evers, Lehman, Queens, Baruch, Hunter, John Jay, and City Colleges also attended.

In her opening plenary address entitled, “The Questions are Easy – The Answers are Hard,” Molly Corbett Broad, President of the American Council on Education (ACE), said that the US Educational System should advance an “engagement” rather than “compliance” attitude towards accreditation, where the focus is on improvement. Ms. Broad, who is a former President of the University of North Carolina and has held leadership posts in the California State System and in Arizona’s University System, spoke of recent trips to India and China, during which she was impressed by the will and determination with which these highly populated countries are going about educating vast numbers of school-age cohorts. Noting the increasingly competitive landscape that the rising number of college graduates will bring about, she stressed the importance of ensuring quality in higher education in the United States.

Ms. Broad discussed the current work of an ACE Blue Ribbon Task Force that is studying the mission of higher education accreditation and is attempting to “re-center” it towards quality assurance. The Task Force is building on the existing regional structure of accreditation (Middle States is one of six regional accreditors in the United States). The following issues and questions are being explored:

- 1] Should accreditors adopt a different approach, allowing for a less “directive” review for those institutions that show “less risk” of not meeting standards?
- 2] Is there room to consider more alignment and consistency among the regional accreditors?
- 3] Should the accreditation cycle be shortened from ten years – possibly to a five-year accreditation cycle?
- 4] How could transparency of accreditation and dissemination of results best be achieved?
- 5] How can the costs of accreditation be reduced?

In addition to being mentioned during Molly Broad’s presentation, one theme that was heard at several points throughout this year’s conference was the idea of revisiting the current model for accreditation. One possibility is the wider adoption of a model that already exists, but which accounts for only a small percentage of Middle States accreditations each year: institutions may opt to use a “Special Topics” approach to accreditation, where they provide documents for a review visit by a “generalist” evaluator for compliance purposes; this is followed several weeks later by another team of specialists who conduct a focused review on a set of key topics.



COUNTDOWN TO THE MIDDLE STATES SITE VISIT: REVIEW TEAM CHAIR MAKES HIS PRELIMINARY VISIT

Dr. Carlos Vargas-Aburto, Provost of Kutztown University, visited the College of Staten Island on Monday, December 5 in his preliminary visit as chair of our institution's decennial reaccreditation evaluation team. As a reminder to our readers, the full evaluators' visit will occur from Sunday through Wednesday, April 1-4, 2012.

During his visit, Dr. Vargas met with President Morales, Provost Fritz and the self-study Co-Chairs, Associate Provost Susan Holak and Dr. Richard Powers. A luncheon meeting with all the members of the Steering Committee was followed by an animated conversation with ten student representatives. Dr. Vargas also met with members of the self-study Special Resources Committee to discuss logistics, hotel accommodations, hospitality issues, and the information needs of his team members. Warrick Bell, Coordinator of Assessment in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, provided a comprehensive overview of the special SharePoint documents repository being developed for the review team, and other options for CSI's evidence files. Dr. Vargas was extremely pleased with the new SharePoint system, and requested that the team have access to evidence documents about a month prior to their visit. Per the customary requirements of team chair preliminary visits, Dr. Vargas also met with the Honorable Rita DiMartino, Trustee of the City University of New York, and with Robert Ptachik, Senior University Dean for the Executive Office and Enrollment. At the time that Dr. Vargas was on campus, he did not yet know the identities of his team members, although that selection process has since been completed.

CLOSING THE LOOP: POLITICAL SCIENCE USES STUDENT PREPARATION DATA TO DEVELOP ASSIGNMENT-BASED COURSE

Professor Richard Flanagan, PEP Department, and Dr. Jonathan Cope from the Library, have been collaborating on a project based around students' use of political blogs that was incorporated into a 200-level political science class, "American Presidency." As part of the course activities, students had to track congressional (House) races using both conventional and blog sources. Drs. Flanagan and Cope evaluated how students were using social media and non-traditional news sources on the web in an IRB-approved study. Through an analysis of this student activity in the course, they concluded that more student preparation was needed to make the assignment work; in particular, more time needed to be spent looking at media theory and providing additional context relating to congressional elections. As a result of this project, they created a 300-level course, "Storming Washington: Presidential and Congressional Elections," that has just moved through the curriculum approval processes. Students in the new course will be more seasoned and better equipped to analyze the political landscape using various media.

CAMPUS UPDATES

The Faculty Center for Professional Development hosted the seventh and final Special Events Program for its inaugural Fall 2011 semester. Dr. Sam Michalowski, Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, led a "Conversation about Institutional Research: Measuring Retention and Other Indicators," on Wednesday, December 7. In a clear, straightforward manner, Sam demonstrated how standard national measures elide the successes of many CSI students since the College serves as its own baccalaureate feeder school. Most entering CSI freshmen are first categorized as seeking associate degrees, but are infrequently counted as completing it; they convert to baccalaureate status, stop out, or drop out. Sam will return to the Faculty Center to present on other institutional research-related topics that are of interest to faculty.

CUNY NEWS AND EVENTS

COACHE Survey - FINAL REMINDER - The COACHE Survey, currently being administered by CUNY, invites tenured faculty to comment about many aspects of their academic and professional experiences. The survey is open through January 13. Please refer to [FORTNIGHT](#), Volume 7, Issue 4, for more details.

FORTNIGHTLY NOTES

In 1815, Thomas Jefferson wrote to United States Attorney General William Wirt that the Jefferson family "met at Nathanl. Dandridge's, in Hanover, about the Christmas of that winter, and passed perhaps a [fortnight](#) together at the revelries of the neighborhood and season."

Paul Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. (1892-99), 11:415.

[FORTNIGHT](#) will resume publication after a brief hiatus for the semester break. We will return in mid-February, 2012. The Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy holiday season, enjoyable intersession break, and prosperous New Year 2012!

