A Community College of Philadelphia Culture of Assessment

At this point I am sure everyone knows we have a critical task before us—documenting our compliance with Standard 14 of the Characteristics of Excellence (Assessment of Student Learning). We must submit a report by March 1, 2015 to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) with evidence that 100% of our credit certificate and degree programs are using multiple, quality, direct measures of assessment; evidence that faculty and administrators are working collaboratively to create a culture of assessment; evidence that we are sharing information about our outcomes with stakeholders; and, most importantly, evidence that we are using our data to improve teaching and learning. After submission of the report, a small team representing MSCHE will visit the College to validate the report and to review our documentation. Steps we have taken so far to comply with this requirement include: meetings with program faculty to ensure everyone is aware of the issues and has an opportunity to provide ideas to help ensure success; a faculty and administrative team working collaboratively to create a repository for sharing our data (see the article on the repository on page 2); creation of a faculty Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT) to provide peer assistance for faculty; an increase in communication about our data and progress to all constituencies, including making assessment a regular feature of Academically Speaking @CCP. We need everyone’s best thinking about other steps we can take to show a sustained commitment to having a culture of assessment that can impact student achievement. I am confident that with everyone’s support and ideas, we can meet this challenge and even go beyond it to documenting that we are innovators in the use of data to improve teaching and learning.
NEW GRANT-FUNDED INITIATIVES

The College was selected for participation in two grant-funded initiatives and received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant. The College submitted an application to participate in an opportunity developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). The project involves the investigation and implementation of competency-based education. Authors of the CAEL submission were John Moore and Sharon Thompson.

The College was selected to participate in an Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) initiative: Advancing Underserved Student Success Through Faculty Intentionality in Problem-Centered Learning. The purpose of the project is to further understanding of a high impact practice, problem-based learning. Authors of the proposal were John Moore, Dawn Sinnott, and Sharon Thompson.

Finally, the College received an Advanced Technological Education grant from the National Science Foundation to create a Biomedical Equipment Technician Program. The grant will make it possible to design a lab that simulates the environment in hospitals and finalize program development. Authors of the grant were Randy Libros, Tammy Wooten and Mozhgan (Maggie) Bahadory.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ASSESSMENT REPOSITORY

One of our strategies for documenting our use of data is to create an easy-to-use, centralized repository for our assessment information. The College has engaged a consultant, Deborah Kell, to assist us in using Microsoft SharePoint to create a customized repository. Ms. Kell has worked with several community colleges to develop such a system, including Luzerne Community College and Harrisburg Area Community College in Pennsylvania.

There was a kickoff meeting with Deborah Kell on September 5, 2014. Participants in this immersion meeting were: Amy Birge, Arnold Dibiasi, Deirdre Garrity-Benjamin, Miles Grosbard, Steve Jones, John Moore, Dawn Sinnott, Laura Temple (ITS), Sharon Thompson, and Abbey Wexler. Sharon Thompson and Laura Temple are serving as co-leads for the initiative.

The proposed date for pilot testing is the week of November 10th with a release date later that month. Information can then be loaded into the repository.
Assessment Showcase

Art and Design

A new feature of Academically Speaking @ CCP will be an Assessment Showcase. The goal is to provide examples of approaches to assessment that may be beneficial to others at the College. The first Showcase provides a brief description of the Art and Design program’s use of portfolios.

At the program level, Middle States expects us to use multiple strategies and measures of assessment. They want us to provide indirect and direct evidence of student learning, with an emphasis on direct evidence. Indirect evidence includes: course grades, enrollment, retention, number of graduates pursuing further education, reputation of institutions accepting graduates, employment rates, etc. The College has a long history of gathering such information and department heads are asked to review that information on an annual basis using the Quality and Viability Indicators (QVI). Direct evidence includes: capstone projects, internships, graduate skill ratings by employers, writing samples, portfolios, etc.

Many people know that the Art Department has had tremendous success in student transfer to competitive art programs at well-regarded institutions with financial support—indirect evidence of program success. Behind that success is attention to student learning outcomes at the course and program levels emphasizing the use of a portfolio review with a rubric. The department gathered data in Fall 2011 and 2012 and engaged in data analysis and review in Fall 2013 and Spring 2013. Course level outcomes map to program level outcomes. Full and part time faculty rated non-graduating students using a rubric during a portfolio review. Students were rated as outstanding, in-good-standing, or does not meet outcome. The program set a high benchmark for achievement—90% of the students were to reach the level of in good standing. Program faculty found that the students met the benchmark, but they also want to increase the number of students whose work is rated as outstanding (13% in one case). In terms of their indirect assessment, the department has been working on retention and graduation, both of which exceed the College averages.

Please send ideas for the next issue of Academically Speaking @ CCP to Judy Gay (jgay@ccp.edu).