Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

Community College of Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA

By

A Team Representing the

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a Visit to

the Campus on

March 31 – April 1, 2015

The Members of the Team:

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INTRODUCTION

The team offers its sincere appreciation to Community College of Philadelphia for hosting this small team visit. The team notes that considerable effort went into the production of the monitoring report, and we thank the members of the CCP community for their honesty, openness, and commitment to the processes of self-appraisal and self-improvement.

The team reminds the institution that, in accordance with federal regulations, Community College of Philadelphia must have its accreditation reaffirmed within two calendar years of the date when its warning was first issued (i.e., no later than June 2016). MSCHE sets the dates for reports and institutional visits to accommodate federal regulations, and to allow time for institutional due process and for the deliberation of peer evaluators, appropriate Committees, and the full Commission.

REASONS FOR THE VISIT

Community College of Philadelphia hosted its decennial evaluation visit in spring 2014. On June 26, 2014, the Commission acted as follows:

> To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due March 1, 2015, documenting that the institution has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standard 14, including but not limited to (1) implementation of a documented and sustained assessment process, in all programs, that uses multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of student achievement of key learning outcomes; (2) steps taken to promote a culture of assessment, including evidence of support and collaboration among faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results; and (3) evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). To direct a prompt liaison guidance visit to discuss the Commission's expectations. A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. The due date for the next Periodic Review Report will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed.

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

During their visit, the small team met with a number of individuals and groups as shown in the schedule below.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education Visit March 31-April 1, 2015		
8:30 – 9:15 a.m.	Dr. Donald Generals, President	M2-2
9:30 – 10:15 a.m.	Monitoring Report Group Ms. Abbey Wexler, Department Head, Psychology, Education & Human Services Dr. Judith Gay, Vice President, Academic Affairs Mr. Joseph Kenyon, Assistant Professor, English Mr. Cory Ng, Assistant Professor, Business Administration Ms. Margaret Stephens, Associate Professor, Social Science Ms. Charlene Truex, Assistant Professor, Dental Studies Mr. John Moore, Director of Assessment	M2-34
10:30 – 11:15 a.m.	Dr. Judith Gay, Vice President for Academic Affairs	M2-34
11:30 – 12:15 a.m.	CAT Coordinators Dr. Sharon Thompson, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs, Dean of Liberal Studies Mr. John Moore, Director of Assessment CFT Coordinator Dr. Amy Birge, Associate Professor, English IWAC Coordinators Dr. Dawn Sinnott, Director, Institutional Research Mr. John Moore, Director of Assessment	M2-34
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	Academic Deans Dr. Sharon Thompson, Liberal Studies Dr. Mary Anne Celenza, Math, Sciences and Health Dr. Joan Bush, Educational Support Services Ms. Susan Hauck, Dean, Flexible Learning Options Dr. David Thomas, Adult and Community Education	M2-34
2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.	Ms. Christine McDonnell, Academic Assessment Coordinator Mr. David Presjnar, Assistant Professor Dr. Jeffrey Berger, Professor Dr. Joel Tannebaum, Assistant Professor Dr. Nicholas Molnar, Assistant Professor	M2-34

TEAM FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)

The institution was asked to provide documentation of the following:

- *implementation of a documented and sustained assessment process, in all programs, that uses multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of student achievement of key learning outcomes;*
- *steps taken to promote a culture of assessment, including evidence of support and collaboration among faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results; and*

- *evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning*

In the team's judgment, Community College of Philadelphia does not meet this standard.

The Team has organized this report to individually cover each requirement that was stipulated in the monitoring report:

(1) Implementation of a documented and sustained assessment process, in all programs, that uses multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of student achievement of key learning outcomes;

Assessment of student learning outcomes operates as a cycle of continuous improvement, and each cycle should produce improvements in the curriculum as well as improvements in the assessment process to make it more efficient and meaningful.
Community College of Philadelphia previously demonstrated that it has course-level outcomes, program-level outcomes, and curriculum maps aligning the two for virtually all courses and programs. It also has a well-written Manual for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes at the Course, Program and Institutional Levels. More recently, the college implemented a SharePoint system to systematize the reporting of assessment results, and there is evidence of considerable assessment activity at both course and program levels in the semester since it was implemented.

Standard 14 also requires the process to be sustained and to use multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of key learning outcomes. The visiting team carefully reviewed the program audits that were provided, the course- and program-level reports in the SharePoint Evidence Libraries, and the curriculum maps in SharePoint, and could not find evidence that the level of quality was sufficient to provide direct evidence of key learning outcomes. Quality often improves with practice, and the visiting team

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recognizes that much of the assessment process is relatively new, so this finding does not imply that the process as designed is flawed, but rather that the faculty and administration need the benefit of sustained practice to achieve the quality that the standard requires.

The Curriculum Assessment Team is a faculty-driven group that supports assessment across the campus through peer-to-peer consulting. In our interviews we heard instances where CAT members partnered with program faculty, especially in Tier 3 programs, to improve understanding of assessment and identify assessment resources. The visiting team recognizes the CAT for encouraging the central role that faculty play in the assessment of learning and the growth of a culture of assessment. On the other hand, the visiting team is concerned that faculty and administrators are not making a sufficiently clear distinction between the assessment of student learning and the assessment of other program characteristics that are the focus of 335's and QVI's. As a result faculty may think they are fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to the assessment of student learning when in fact their evidence is neither tied to student learning nor used to motivate curricular improvement. The visiting team noted that over half of the course-level assessment reports in SharePoint for Fall 2014 indicated "no action necessary." The visiting team was expecting to find evidence of some reflection on the results and a discussion of how the course or program could be improved even in cases where benchmarks were met.

Standard 14 requires that the *quality* of student learning assessment must be sufficient to provide direct evidence of student achievement of learning goals. In our review of the documentation provided on SharePoint and through interviews, the visiting team found a few examples of good quality assessment that led to curricular improvement. The quality of the evidence in SharePoint is uneven, and in our interviews it became clear that while the college has made impressive progress since last summer, there is still a lot of work required to bring the quality of assessment up to the level that is expected in Standard 14.

(2) Steps taken to promote a culture of assessment, including evidence of support and collaboration among faculty and administration in assessing student learning and responding to assessment results;

CCP has taken numerous steps to promote a culture of assessment. The College has made a commitment to utilize SharePoint to store assessment results which can then be viewed and shared. A detailed manual has been prepared for SharePoint, and training sessions (with documented invites and a record of attendance) have occurred since the March 2014 site visit. The College held its first assessment conference in January 2015 with numerous sessions by faculty. Although there were few results shared around assessment activities at the course and program level that resulted in improvements to teaching and learning, the team feels that these sessions could be extremely useful in communicating and responding to assessment results in the future. CCP includes assessment updates in the newsletter from the academic division. Additionally, the website has information specific to assessment including the assessment manual, calendars, forms, and other updates.

A Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT), modeled after the College's well established Curriculum Facilitation Team, was created to add peer-to-peer support for assessment. Assessment work is highlighted as a new and permanent feature in the Academic Affairs newsletter, Academically Speaking@CCP.

Conversations have led the team to believe that SharePoint will facilitate the assessment culture at the College; however the team would like to see the use of SharePoint expand to demonstrate a level of quality around assessment and to improve teaching and learning.

The assessment culture will be difficult to sustain without clear lines of accountability around assessment. It was unclear to the team where the real accountability lies. It is important to underscore the responsibility of faculty in not only contributing to the assessment process but more importantly in determining how the results are used to improve teaching and learning.

(3) Evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning

CCP has created a structure where assessment information can be shared and discussed. The team recognizes that the emphasis has been on getting data in SharePoint; however, the team is concerned that there is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that assessment is used as a tool for improvement of teaching and learning. In reviewing SharePoint and program audits, assessment results were generally discussed as a way to demonstrate that the SLOs and PLOs were being met. There was little mention of results being used to improve teaching and learning; rather, if there was a discussion about results, it generally focused on the assessment methodology and not pedagogy.

When changes have been implemented or suggested as a result of course or program level assessments, the recommendations could not be tracked consistently to assessment results (Digital Forensics and Youthwork for example). Several of the assessment methods make it difficult to relate specific results to a specific outcome. The College will need to make a concerted effort to fully examine the assessment results, discuss the results with colleagues, and implement recommendations to improve teaching and learning.

Significant Accomplishments

CCP has accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time since the Commission's findings in June 2014. The College has demonstrated a commitment to resources in both software and personnel, and has restructured lines of responsibility to support academic assessment. A solid effort to educate and train faculty on SharePoint has been demonstrated. The College has a structure in place supported by software and staff with the potential to create sustainable faculty-driven assessment.

Suggestions

1. The Team suggests that the annual assessment conference in January should be used to share results and demonstrate how assessment has led to improvement in teaching and learning.
2. The Team suggests that more training should focus on the quality of assessment methodologies and closing the loop.
3. The Team suggests that programs that are accredited by specialized accrediting agencies should be encouraged to use the learning outcomes and assessment data from their specialized accreditation in SharePoint.
4. The Team suggests that the "No action required" option in SharePoint be replaced with an option that encourages continuous improvement; for example, "Benchmarks met; continuous improvement recommendations are provided."

Recommendations

1. The Team recommends that program audits represent a completion of all assessed program objectives with recommendations for actions that will improve teaching and learning.
2. The Team recommends that careful attention be paid to the quality of student learning outcomes and assessment efforts.
3. **The Team recommends that the central role of faculty in assessing student learning be clearly communicated and that oversight of the quality of assessment by Chairs, Deans and the VPAA be similarly well defined.**

Requirements

1. Implementation of a documented and sustained assessment process, in all programs, that uses multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of student achievement of key learning outcomes.
2. **Evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning.**

CONCLUSION

The team again thanks everyone at Community College of Philadelphia for their hospitality, time and dedication. The team reminds the institution that the information contained in this report, along with the institutional response to these findings, will be reviewed first by the Committee on Follow-Up and then by the full Commission. The

team hopes that the College community will be open to the findings contained in this report, all of which are offered in the spirit of collaboration and peer review.