

## **Introduction**

Founded in 1964, Community College of Philadelphia is the only public institution of higher education in the city of Philadelphia. Since its founding, the College has served over 685,000 individuals and currently has an enrollment of over 34,000 students. The College serves a diverse, non-traditional population: approximately 76% of students are persons of color (53% African-American, 12% Hispanic, 10% Asian) and 53% are older than 25. A substantial portion of the College's students are low-income and first-generation students. Community College of Philadelphia offers more than 80 degree and certificate programs in Business, Humanities, Health, Science, Technology and Social/Behavioral Sciences at the Main Campus, three Regional Centers and at various neighborhood sites. The College also provides special programs and support services that are tailored to the needs of the student population and designed to help students overcome obstacles to success. Approximately 73% of full-time students and 62% of all students receive some type of financial aid.

The start of the 2015-2016 academic year has been one of significant change in leadership for the institution. Effective July 1, 2015, the College administration was reorganized with a goal of achieving greater student success and completion. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs were merged under a Vice President for Academic and Student Success. A Chief of Staff/Vice President for Strategic Initiatives position and a Vice President for Workforce and Economic Innovation position were created. Responsibilities were realigned in multiple areas to be consistent with the new directions for the College. The College's Director of Assessment and Evaluation accepted an opportunity at another institution, but the College was able to continue progress on assessment seamlessly with the system the College already had in place while searching for a new Director of Assessment and Evaluation. The College added a position to the

Office of Assessment and Evaluation during 2014-2015, Coordinator for Assessment, and the Coordinator was able to assume increased responsibility for assessment work. Also during 2014-2015, the College established a Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT) that continued providing peer-to-peer support for faculty. The College's Coordinator of Curriculum Development had worked closely with the Director of Assessment and Evaluation during 2014-2015 to align responsibilities related to curriculum development/revision and assessment and thus was able to assume increased responsibility related to assessment. To ensure that there was enough support for all assessment activities, the College hired the retired Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and the retired Assistant Dean for Liberal Studies part-time to provide additional support. The College's Office of Institutional Research was reorganized for 2015-2016 to begin the process of integrating the College's research and assessment activities into an institutional effectiveness team. Institutional Research staff also supported the College's assessment activities. Thus, the College's commitment to the work on assessment of student learning at the institutional, program and course levels continued uninterrupted.

### **Overview**

In summer 2015, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) informed the College that it will continue to warn the institution because of insufficient evidence that it is in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). The specific issues identified in the MSCHE action from June 2015 were: The need for documentation showing that the College “has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)” and “documentation of an implemented, organized, systematic, and sustainable process to assess the achievement of student learning goals in all programs that (1) uses multiple measures of sufficient quality to provide direct evidence of student achievement of key learning outcomes;

and (2) provides clear evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14).” The purpose of this monitoring report is to inform MSCHE of additional improvements to the processes used to assess student learning at Community College of Philadelphia to ensure compliance with Standard 14. Further, the College affirms its commitment to the use of student learning outcomes for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Immediately following the Team visit, the College started addressing the suggestions, recommendations and requirements that the Team Chair delivered in her oral report and continued that effort once the written report was available. Community College of Philadelphia has responded to all of the suggestions, recommendations and requirements identified by the Visiting Team and the requirements identified by the Commission.

### **Responses to Visiting Team Suggestions and Recommendations**

#### Response to Suggestions

The Visiting Team made four suggestions (p.7). First they suggested that the annual assessment conference in January be used to share results and demonstrate how assessment has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Faculty and administrators worked collaboratively to refocus the second conference for January 2016 to emphasize sharing results and to highlight improvements to teaching and learning. This change is consistent with the statements in the *Characteristics of Excellence* that “...programs and resources are organized and coordinated to achieve institutional and program-level goals (p. 64)” and professional development is organized to help “...faculty learn how to assess student learning, how to improve their curricula, and how to improve their teaching (p. 67).” Faculty will provide feedback after the conference on the impact of the experience.

Second, the Visiting Team stated that more training should focus on the quality of assessment methodologies and closing the loop. During the summer 2015 there were sessions for department heads that included quality of assessment and closing the loop, particularly for improvements to teaching and learning. Starting in summer 2015, the College started the process of modifying the SharePoint electronic repository to better demonstrate the assessment work done and to make it easier to use. In addition, the Coordinator of Curriculum Development (a faculty member) and Coordinator for Assessment created templates for programs to use for an [Assessment Overview](#) and to document [Improvements to Teaching and Learning](#).

The Coordinator of Curriculum Development and Coordinator for Assessment created the *CAT Guide to Updating Program Assessment* for members of the CAT. They worked together to train CAT members on using the templates and then they and the CAT members reviewed information in SharePoint and used a “[prescription pad](#)” to help department heads understand how they could improve the assessment work by faculty in their departments. During the fall 2015 semester, the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, one of the main vehicles for faculty professional development, offered an [Assessment Refresher Series](#). Topics for the series were: (1) Creating Quality Assessments; (2) Building Assessment into the Curriculum; (3) Collecting and Analyzing Data; and (4) Improvements to Teaching and Learning. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning has been scheduling an “assessment-focused” topic at least a couple of times each month. In addition, on Wednesdays the facilitators, both psychology faculty members, have informed faculty that they are available to assist with assessment questions as well as other topics related to teaching and learning. The College also has a Professional Development Office with a variety of resources related to assessment that are available for faculty, including, Magna Webinars; Merlot; Rubistar (to assist with creating

rubrics); and NEXT (Narratives Supporting Excellent Teaching). From May 2014 to May 2015 there were over 4,000 views of professional development resources.

The third suggestion was to have accredited programs “...use the learning outcomes and assessment data from their specialized accreditors in SharePoint (p. 7).” All of the accredited programs have used their required accreditation templates and have uploaded the information in SharePoint.

The last suggestion was to eliminate the “No action required” option in SharePoint and replace it with “...an option that encourages continuous improvement.” The “No Action Required” was removed as an option moving forward effective summer 2015 and replaced with an option for describing efforts for continuous improvement.

#### Visiting Team Recommendations

The Visiting Team made three recommendations. First, they stated that program audits need to “...represent a completion of all assessed program objectives with recommendations for actions that will improve teaching and learning (p 7).” The process for assessing program objectives begins with an explication of the program objectives and the alignment between those individual learning objectives and expected program outcomes. The faculty engage in a curriculum mapping process that outlines the relationships between the course level learning objectives and the program learning goals. An assessment methodology and process is determined by the faculty. The faculty then make a determination relative to timeline. Upon completion of the assessment process – and the availability of results – the faculty reflect on the outcomes and debate significance and strategies for improvement. An action plan is developed and implemented. The cycle is continuous. Faculty review and reflect on the next cycle of assessment, analysis and reflection before beginning the cycle anew.

The program [audit guidelines](#) were updated to place a greater emphasis on assessment. Assessment overviews and recommendations related to assessment of program learning outcomes are now included in the audit document. Because of this shift, faculty and administrators fully understand that all program learning objectives must be assessed within the timeframe for the audit. In addition, the Student Outcomes Committee of the Board of Trustees is requiring a follow up report in one year if a program is not in compliance in terms of completing program learning assessments ([Student Outcomes Committee of the Board Minutes](#)). The requirement became effective for audits for fall 2015 (e.g., Art).

Second, the Visiting Team recommended that “...careful attention be paid to the quality of student learning outcomes and assessment efforts (p7).” As mentioned earlier, the College has increased professional development for faculty and academic administrators on the topic of quality assessment. As a result some programs are re-writing their course and program student learning outcomes following the established process in the Office of Curriculum Development. Most programs are refining their assessment approach to include additional direct evidence of assessment (e.g., Theater; Art).

Finally, the Visiting Team stated that “...the central role of faculty in assessing student learning needed to be clearly communicated and that oversight of the quality of assessment by Chairs, Deans and the VPAA be similarly well defined (p7).” Faculty understand the centrality of their role in the assessment of student learning outcomes. This responsibility is expressed through the interview process. It has been articulated to the faculty union (Faculty Federation) and reinforced at College-wide meetings and forums. For example, the central role of faculty was emphasized in a town hall meeting September 1 at the College’s annual fall professional development week. This meeting was supported by the College President, faculty union and

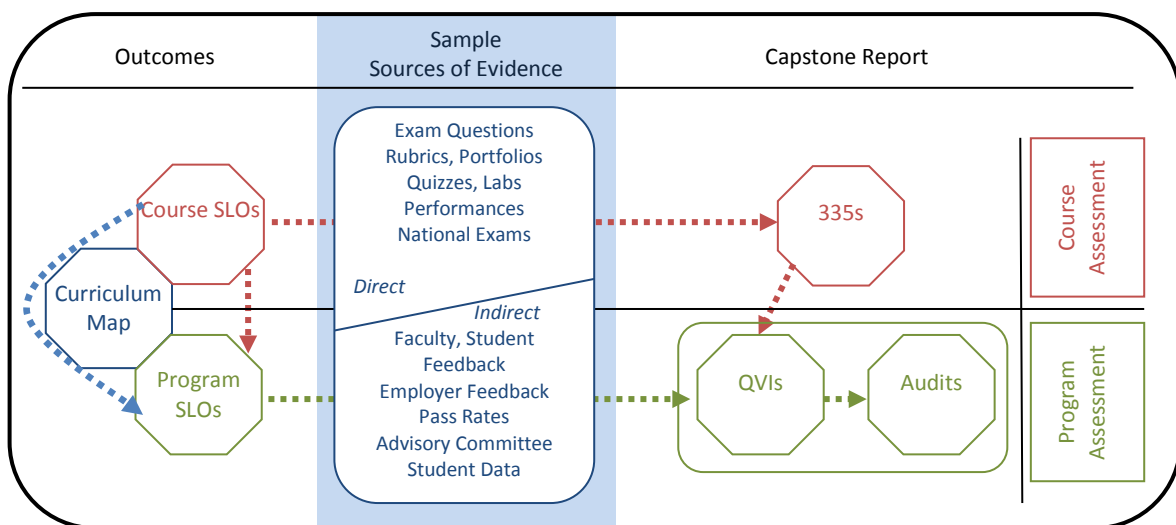
other faculty groups. More than 300 faculty and administrators were present for the session. In addition, the College's [assessment manual](#) was revised to strengthen the information on assessment responsibilities by clearly listing the roles and responsibilities of the department faculty, department chairs, deans, and vice president for academic and student success. The roles and responsibilities of the Assessment Office and other resources were also communicated. Assessment responsibilities were clarified in the position description for new deans and assistant deans.

**Implementation of an Organized, Systematic, and Sustainable process to Assess the Achievement of Student Learning Goals in All Programs That Uses Multiple Measures of Sufficient Quality to Provide Direct Evidence of Student Achievement of Key Learning Outcomes and Provides Clear Evidence That Student Learning Assessment Information is Used to Improve Teaching and Learning**

As the Visiting Team noted, Community College of Philadelphia documented that there are course-level outcomes, program-level outcomes, and curriculum maps that align courses with program objectives. The Visiting Team stated that this was the case for “virtually all courses and programs (p 4).” The College is able to document that there are course level and program level outcomes for all current programs and curriculum maps that align relevant courses to program level outcomes. In addition, as the 2014 Visiting Team reported, “curriculum maps suggest that the faculty have been engaged in thoughtful discussions about how the general education curriculum relates to program learning outcomes (p.28). In the College’s system, each program outcome is embedded in courses that make up the program. Those program outcomes are at times embedded in single courses or in collections of multiple courses. The program faculty determine the skills, knowledge and/or beliefs essential for course and program competence, and they decide in which courses students are expected to acquire them. Faculty also make plans for the direct and indirect assessment of program learning outcomes. Course outcomes are now

included as part of the Commonwealth required [Chapter 335 documents](#). Program learning outcomes are now required as part of the College’s annual program review documents (Quality/Viability Indicators or [QVIs](#) for short) and part of the five-year program audit.

The figure below illustrates the relationship between course and program assessment processes at the College.



To ensure that the assessment process is systematic and sustainable, an annual timeline for course, program and general education/core competency assessment was established during 2014-2015 and included in the February Monitoring Report. This timeline provides a calendar for systematizing assessment activity at the College. During fall 2015, a calendar was created specifically for program level assessment.

The College also shifted the major focus of its 2014-2015 program assessment work. During spring 2015, faculty concentrated on uploading historical documents in the electronic repository, SharePoint. During summer 2015, there was an increased emphasis on improving the quality of



assessment work and on documenting improvements in teaching and learning related to the outcomes of assessment work.

While the Director of Assessment and Evaluation was at the College (through June 30, 2015), workshops were held for department heads to assist them in leading assessment work in their departments and to provide additional professional development on quality assessment and using results to improve teaching and learning. After the Director of Assessment & Evaluation left the College, the Coordinator for Assessment (who reported to the Director) and the Coordinator of Curriculum Development (who had worked closely with the Director) assumed additional responsibility for the College's improvement work. They met with the Vice President for Academic and Student Success and the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives/Chief of Staff to plan the work that would occur during the summer 2015 and beyond.

During the summer 2015, the Coordinator for Assessment and Coordinator of Curriculum Development conducted an extensive review to ensure that the College's assessment efforts aligned with best practices used by other institutions and the MSCHE requirements. This review focused on two areas: quality assessment and teaching and learning improvements. Based on the findings, materials were specifically created to guide faculty in designing and reporting their ongoing assessment work in a clear and systematic way. The materials included a [rubric](#), a "[prescription pad](#)," [Assessment Overviews](#), and [Teaching and Learning Improvement documentation](#). The rubric helped the CAT to identify quality assessment and teaching and learning improvement and to identify areas that required attention. The CAT members were trained in the use of the new documents and were assigned programs to review in SharePoint. The SharePoint repository was modified to include two new tabs: one for the "Assessment overview" and one for "Improvements to Teaching and Learning." In addition, as the Visiting

Team suggested (p. 5 and p. 7), the “no action necessary” option was removed from SharePoint to ensure that faculty always put a focus on improvements to teaching and learning. The Coordinator for Assessment, the Coordinator of Curriculum Development and the CAT completed prescription pads for targeted programs in each department to serve as models, identify areas of weakness, and suggest improvements. After the rubrics and prescription pads were completed, the CAT, Coordinator for Assessment, and the Coordinator of Curriculum Development met with department heads, program coordinators, and curriculum coordinators in groups and individually to review the prescription pads and rubrics, strategize about how each program could improve their assessment of student learning, and reinforce their role in leading the assessment work in their departments.

The Coordinator for Assessment, Coordinator of Curriculum Development and the Vice Presidents for Academic and Student Success and for Strategic Initiatives/Chief of Staff worked together to plan an assessment day during the College’s Professional Development Week (August 31-September 4). The Assessment Day on September 1, 2015 was supported by the faculty union, Faculty Center on Teaching and Learning, and Faculty Council on Education. The day included an opening session by the College President who reviewed the Visiting Team findings, suggestions, recommendations and requirements. He also emphasized the central role of faculty in the assessment of student learning and responded to questions. After the opening session, small teams of faculty entered program data in SharePoint with assistance from the Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT). The Visiting Team recognized the College’s creation of the CAT as a resource for peer-to-peer work on assessment (p 5). During the summer the CAT continued to provide support for faculty, particularly to increase attention to quality assessment and the link to teaching and learning improvement. In the afternoon, the Coordinator for

Assessment and Coordinator of Curriculum Development gave an update on the College's progress. The day ended with department meetings so that departments could discuss program results from Spring 2015 and discuss their plans for Fall 2015. For example, the English Department discussed the outcomes of their pilot on qualitative assessment and integrating assessment into their established practice of teaching circles. Some departments continued that discussion the next day at their regularly scheduled department meetings. The Tuesday of both the Spring and Fall Professional Development Weeks now serve as an assessment day/assessment conference day on an ongoing basis to ensure that faculty have dedicated time to develop their understanding of assessment, learn from the practices of colleagues and have time to discuss assessment results and plan for improvement.

The Visiting Team noted that there needed to be "clear lines of accountability around assessment" and attention to the fact that the faculty have a role in "not only contributing to the assessment process but more importantly in determining how the results are used to improve teaching and learning (p. 6)." Roles and responsibilities were clarified orally at multiple meetings and in particular in the second edition of the College's [assessment manual](#), which was revised to include a section detailing roles and responsibilities. The role of the faculty and department heads has been clearly defined and articulated. Each dean is responsible for ensuring that the department heads are carrying out the work of facilitating assessment activity. The Vice President for Academic and Student Success has overall responsibility for oversight of the process.

The Visiting Team expressed a concern about the College's work on the Commonwealth required Chapter 335 documents and on the annual program review document, the Quality/Viability Indicators (i.e., the QVI). They noted that faculty and administrators were not

“making a sufficiently clear distinction between assessment of student learning outcomes and assessment of other program characteristics that are the focus of 335s and QVI’s (p5).” In response, the College redesigned the [Chapter 335 template](#) and the [QVI](#) template to increase attention to assessment of student learning as distinct from other aspects of assessment. The College also removed the “no action required” option in SharePoint for program reports and replaced it with an option to emphasize continuous improvement. The tabs in the database were changed to emphasize teaching and learning. Faculty moved from the SharePoint Library examples of their work that responded to outcomes for which the benchmark was met and where they had discussed pedagogical improvements to the new SharePoint tab on Teaching and Learning Improvement. The information was re-located to make it clearer that the faculty are committed to improvement, even when they have met a benchmark. In the earlier organization of SharePoint, faculty were entering data related to improvement in multiple locations. By centralizing the information, it is easier for everyone to review the work faculty are doing and to work with faculty to support and enhance their efforts.

The program audit process was also revised to place greater emphasis in the audits on completing assessment cycles and identifying plans to improve teaching and learning based on assessment of student learning. The Student Outcomes Committee of the Board stated in the October 2015 meeting that programs will be required to remedy within one year any deficiency in documenting that the program has completed a full cycle of assessments of student learning and identified changes to teaching and learning based on the assessment ([Student Outcomes Committee of the Board minutes](#)).

During the summer 2015 terms and fall 2015 semester, there were multiple efforts to inform and reinforce faculty understanding of the fundamental elements of assessment of student

learning. Actions included direct work with department heads and workshops for faculty and academic administrators by the Coordinator for Assessment, the Coordinator of Curriculum Development, and the Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT). The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning offered an Assessment Refresher Series including sessions on: Creating Quality Assessments; Building Assessment into the Curriculum; Collecting and Analyzing Data; and Improvements to Teaching and Learning. The goal is to have a consistent, College-wide understanding of how to engage in assessment work that helps the institution meet its mission and goals for students.

### **Assessment at the Institutional Level**

At the institution level, the College continued assessment of [general education/core competency requirements](#) while a department head committee discussed whether changes should be made to the general education requirements at the College based on data and feedback since the current requirements were implemented in 2009. As stated in the 2014 Team Report (p.29), “Assessment reports show evidence that general education assessments are planned, organized, and produce results that raised some useful questions for further assessment progress.” The College goal was to continue our organized approach to institutional assessment even as we expanded our approach to evidence at the program level. With support from the Office of Institutional Research, the College department heads, who serve as the general education/core competency oversight committee, agreed to the assessment of responsible citizenship and critical thinking during fall 2015. Students and faculty were informed of the general education/core competencies for fall 2015 assessment. Results will be communicated and discussed during spring 2016. Faculty will have an opportunity to reflect on whether

strategies identified earlier had an impact as well as whether there are additional strategies needed for improvement of student learning outcomes.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

The College faculty and administrators continue to work diligently to demonstrate that there is a serious and unified commitment to assessment of student learning, not just for compliance, but for continuous improvement of student learning. The College's focus has been on using the feedback from the Visiting Team to enhance our approach to assessment of student learning. Our monitoring report addresses all of the suggestions, recommendations and requirements by the Visiting Team and by MSCHE and demonstrates an organized, systematic, sustainable and collaborative approach to assessment.