Monitoring Report to the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
From

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"At its sessions on June 23-24, 2004, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to reaffirm the accreditation on the Community College of Philadelphia and to request a monitoring report by April 1, 2006 documenting further implementation of the plan for the assessment of student learning, including general education outcomes, and the completion of technology improvements impacting financial aid and other student service functions."

The purpose of this monitoring report is to document progress: (1) implementing a plan for assessment of student learning, including general education outcomes; and (2) completing technical improvements impacting student services, particularly financial aid services. The team report submitted by President Jerry Sue Thornton following a Spring 2004 visit to Community College of Philadelphia details the issues related to these two topics. For Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning), the visiting team recommended building on the strengths of the College's Institutional Research Office and curriculum facilitation process to develop an assessment plan that defines student learning outcomes for general education and all curricula; that uses appropriate measures; and that includes faculty development to support an effort to develop a "culture of assessment." For Standard 9 (Student Support Services), the visiting team recommended finalizing "the implementation of corrective actions for the Financial Aid area based on the findings cited in the Title IV Student Financial Assistance Programs Audit report dated January 23, 2004." As this monitoring report shows, the College is making progress on both recommendations.

Institutional Context

Two factors are noted as part of the current institutional context. The College has made progress in responding to the visiting team recommendations in spite of current challenges. The first factor is the College's implementation of the Banner student/administrative system (Banner Student). The College was successful in implementing both the financial and human resources modules of Banner by the time of the Self Study team visit. Only minor adjustments have been necessary to maximize use of Banner in these two areas. The implementation of Banner Student is requiring greater

effort by the College to meet target dates, train employees and minimize disruption. It has been a challenge for the College community to move from a customized legacy system to the integrated Banner system. Similar to accounts of implementation efforts at other institutions that are detailed in the higher education literature, Community College of Philadelphia students, faculty and staff have experienced some frustration related to the implementation. The most recent issue concerns confusion over whether students were dropped during Fall 2005 and Spring 2006 semesters legitimately or because of technical errors. To support improvements in this area, the College increased personnel related to the implementation, particularly in the division of Information Technology Services and the division of Student Services. We established an Enrollment Assistance Office to facilitate resolution of individual student issues and established an interdepartmental team that includes broad College representation to troubleshoot systemic issues related to registration, financial aid and payment. Registration during Spring 2006 demonstrated that a number of Banner issues experienced in Fall 2005 were resolved.

The second institutional context factor is the 13% drop in student enrollment the College experienced for Fall 2005. The College anticipated the possibility of a small decline in enrollment related to the economy. The improving local economic condition, predictably for a community college, resulted in reduced part-time student enrollment. Multiple other factors contributed to the more severe decline in enrollment: improvements in management of financial aid programs; the increase in tuition and fees because of a decrease in public funding; difficulties implementing Banner Student for processing applications; restructuring developmental program options at the College; and personnel changes in Student Affairs. During Fall 2005, President Curtis asked the Vice

President of Finance and Planning to lead a small team of senior College officers in weekly meetings to address issues related to the decline in enrollment. As a result of those meetings, instead of the typical decline in enrollment between the Fall and Spring semesters, the College stabilized enrollment for Spring 2006 at the Fall 2005 level. That team continues to meet approximately every other week to address issues as they develop.

Though the implementation of the Banner Student modules and the Fall 2005 decline in enrollment both had an effect on the College, the College did act to mitigate the potential impact. Despite challenges in the context of the institution, there is progress in response to the recommendations from the team report.

Progress to Date

Assessment of Student Learning

The College has taken a number of steps to increase assessment of student learning outcomes and to work toward improvements in general education. As recommended by the visiting team, some of the College efforts build on the work of the Institutional Research Office and Curriculum Facilitation Team. Several recent research reports inform the broader College community of student learning outcomes. In particular, the following reports address College effectiveness in preparation of students: Report 153 (December 2005) documents outcomes for 2004 career program graduates; Report 152 (December 2005) documents outcomes for 2004 transfer program graduates; Report 151 (December 2005) documents academic performance and persistence of Community College of Philadelphia students who enrolled in our most frequent transfer institution, Temple University; Report 149 (July 2005) and 146 (June 2005) document

general education outcomes for 2003; Report 148 (June 2005) and 147 (June 2005) document disparities in student outcomes based on race/ethnicity, gender, and age. All of the College research reports are available online at http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/index.HTM. Professional Development sessions at the College have been used to reinforce the importance of the information and to engage faculty in conversation about student learning outcomes. For example, for Fall 2005, an audience response system was used to test faculty knowledge of student learning outcomes from recent Institutional Research reports in preparation for discussions around the theme for the year, improving student retention.

The Institutional Research Office also publishes information on academic performance and persistence of all academic programs for use in academic audits. In Fall 2004, Academic Affairs revised the documents used for preparation of audits to clarify expectations on reporting outcomes and assessing performance.

The curriculum facilitation process was noted in the team report as important for improving student learning assessment. The Curriculum Facilitation Team is a group of College faculty who work with faculty colleagues to facilitate the development and revision of courses and programs. The curriculum facilitation process works both as a means of creating thoughtful materials that identify learning objectives at the course and program level as well as a means of providing one-on-one professional development for faculty on course and program development. The documents used to support this process were revised, in part, to clarify expectations for assessment of student learning. The two course development models were revised September 2004. The degree and certificate program revision model was revised March 2005. The degree and certificate program

development model was also revised March 2005. The Curriculum Facilitation Team issues a monthly report that documents department review of course outcomes on a five-year cycle. According to the February 2006 Curriculum Facilitation Team report, more than 96% of courses are on schedule for timely review.

Three areas in which the College has been experimenting with use of learning outcomes to create a cycle of improvement are Career program retention (supported by Perkins funding); distance learning; and CAP A (the lowest level of developmental education at the College). The CAP A initiative is the most recent, starting Summer 2005. Based on Institutional Research data documenting student outcomes that are less positive than desired, a required pre-college experience was created for students who test at the CAP A level. Students are required to either complete the pre-college experience or to start their association with the College by attending the institution's non-credit adult basic education courses. The analysis of outcomes for students from Fall 2005 was completed in February. The Director of Developmental Education will meet with faculty to review the preliminary outcomes and identify next steps. Similar processes of gathering data, interpreting outcomes and implementing next steps are being used for career program retention and for distance education. In the process, the College is learning how to engage faculty in the process of assessment of student learning outcomes.

In an effort to improve coordination of efforts in Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Academic Affairs appointed faculty and administrators to a committee to create the College's first Academic Master Plan. The committee met during Spring 2005 and Fall 2005 and was charged with reviewing College data, current College plans (e.g., Strategic Plan, Technology Plan, Diversity Plan), and outside data to support their

recommendations. The committee was told that they had to include assessment of student learning and identification of next steps for general education at the College as part of their report. A draft of the report was completed at the start of the Spring 2006 semester. The final version will be distributed to the College community in April 2006. The plan includes a recommendation for an Assessment Committee; a recommendation that all departments identify student learning outcomes for their programs, review outcomes on an annual basis and post their finding in an electronic portfolio; and a recommendation for a faculty vote on competing general education proposals.

While the College has made progress in working on assessment of student learning outcomes, there continues to be a need to create the "culture of assessment" recommended in the team report. The Academic Master Plan is intended to be the vehicle for moving the College beyond experimentation and dialogue to success in documenting improvements in student learning in all academic departments and programs.

Student Services

At the time of the team visit in Spring 2004, the College was in the early stages of implementing Banner Student; Banner Finance and Banner Human Resources having been implemented in July 2003 and January 2004 respectively. The College's Self Study acknowledged deficiencies in the management of financial aid programs and stated the expectation that Banner Student, once fully implemented, would be instrumental in resolving existing student service and regulatory-compliance issues. The team concurred with observations in the College's Self Study on the need to strengthen the College's management of Title IV programs, and emphasized the need to address the issues

outlined in a January 23, 2004 letter to the College from the US Department of Education. This letter cited several needed changes in the College's financial aid program management. These findings and the steps taken by the College to resolve them are contained in Appendix A.

While still a work-in-progress, the College has made great strides in addressing all of the issues in the January 2004 letter and in strengthening the quality and efficiency of student services in general. Full resolution of all of the Title IV issues was not possible until Banner Student went live as of Fall 2005. However the 2004-05 A-133 audit report issued for the year ending June 30, 2005 demonstrated that all of the major Title IV regulation issues were fully being addressed. In presenting the results to the College's Board of Trustees, the auditors publicly acknowledged the significant improvements that had been made by the College in Title IV program management. On December 30, 2005 the Department of Education sent a letter to the College which recognized the progress that had been made and providing the College with Provisional Certification to participate in the Title IV programs through September 30, 2008. Through full implementation of Banner Student and companion efforts to realign and professionally develop the financial aid staff of the College, we are confident that past issues will be fully resolved.

With the implementation of Banner Student modules for the Fall 2005 semester, the following improvements were accomplished:

- Financial Aid awards can now be accepted via the web-based forms provided by Banner.
- Students may review their payment and loan status and activity dynamically via the web.
- Students may apply for and accept their book vouchers via the financial aid web-based

forms.

- Students may view their class schedules via the web.
- All registered students are now provided with a College email account to enhance communication.
- Students may now request transcripts via the web.
- Through the new payment gateway, students may pay via credit card through a web form.
- Grades are now delivered via the web.

Training sessions have been available in person or online for faculty and staff to increase facility in using Banner. The College has also increased use of temporary workers during peak enrollment times. As a result, registration lines were shorter while more registrations were processed for Spring 2006 in less time than was true the previous semester.

Future goals for the implementation of Banner Student are:

- Fall 2006-Spring 2007 semesters - Students will see a new look to MyCCP, the College portal. This will include more intuitive channels for Banner self-service. These deep-dive channels will provide students with quick access to their course information and links, payment and financial aid status, and registration links.

- Fall 2006-Spring 2007 semesters - Through the implementation of a 3rd-party product from the University of Colorado, students will be able to schedule appointments with advisors, learning lab tutors and counselors via the web. This implementation will enhance the early alert system being developed by the College to increase our retention efforts.

- Fall 2006-Spring 2007 semesters - New students will be able to apply to the College via the web and the MyCCP portal.

- Fall 2006-Spring 2007 semesters - A web survey tool will be implemented to enhance the quality assurance initiatives of the College with students.

- Fall 2006-Spring 2007 semesters - A web-based evaluation tool will be implemented to replace the paper evaluation forms for faculty evaluation by students.

- Spring 2008 - Alumni will have access to the MyCCP portal to enhance our continuing communication with former students.

There are two immediate concerns related to implementation of Banner. First, there is a need to improve the process that will ensure timely submission of attendance and grade reports. Failure to secure the needed information in a timely fashion resulted in student financial aid being returned incorrectly for Spring 2006, inconveniencing students. A small team is currently working to implement new procedures. A second concern is a revision in the College's academic standing policy, based on the recommendation of Evans Consulting, the group hired to improve the College's compliance with financial aid regulations. Though the changed policy was included in the College *Catalog* (2005-2006) and *Student Handbook* (2005-2006), many students, faculty and staff reported that they were unaware of the impending change. Students were notified before the start of the Spring 2006 semester about their status based on the revised formula for calculating academic progress. There was concern about whether the calculation in Banner was accurate after students were informed that their financial aid status was in jeopardy. The College has been working to resolve the concerns of students, faculty and staff, particularly around communication of changes.

Conclusion

The College has made progress in responding to the issues identified by the visiting team. Despite a series of challenges associated with implementation of a new student/administrative system and a decline in enrollment in Fall 2005, steady progress is being made to act on issues and to increase communication of actions to the College community. An Academic Master Plan is being finalized to coordinate efforts in Academic Affairs, particularly related to assessment of student learning outcomes. The expectation is that, by the time of the Periodic Review Report in June 2009, the College

will have made even greater gains in improvement of student services and assessment of student learning.

Appendix A

Department of Education Audit Federal Funds 2001-2002	
Finding	**Institutional Response**
Finding Number 1: Failure to Award Pell to Eligible Student (also repeat finding)	The College purchased a software package PowerFaids to assist in the awarding and packaging of funds. The failure to award 1 student out of 30 in the finding was addressed and the finding was closed.
Finding Number 2: Overaward – Financial Need Exceeded	Two of 30 students were noted in the finding. Documentation was provided for student #1 to show the overaward did not exist. For student #2 the College returned the $111 overaward. This finding was closed.
Finding Number 3: Verification Violations; Number 5: Information in Student Files Missing/Inconsistent	The College addressed the missing documents required to complete verification. The completed verification resulted in no change to the EFC (Estimated Family Contribution) or student eligibility. The finding was considered closed.
Finding Number 4: Refund Made Late to Title IV Account (also repeat finding)	The College conducted a review of the 15 files in question and provided updated information where original calculations may not have been correct. The College identified an additional $7,392.72 in Title IV funds to be returned and provided documentation supporting the return of those funds. The Department of Information Technology assisted in programming an in-house solution for this repeat finding.
Finding Number 5: Excess Cash Balances Maintained	The College concurred with this finding. To address this finding the College converted to a web-based process for interacting with PHEAA to accelerate the speed of processing EFT loans.