Monitoring Report to the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
from
COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA
Philadelphia, PA 19130

Donald Generals, President

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November 25, 2015

Subject of the Monitoring Report:

Documentation that the College "has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)," including but not limited to "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)."

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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 31,000 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 54% 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 are Pell eligible.

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 at the end of June 2015. The new Director of Assessment and Evaluation starts December 7, 2015. The College was able to continue progress on assessment seamlessly because of the

systemic changes the College made during 2014-2015. For example, the College added a position, Coordinator for Assessment, to the Office of Assessment and Evaluation. The Coordinator reported directly to the Director of Assessment and Evaluation. The Coordinator assumed additional responsibility for assessment work in the absence of a director. Also during 2014-2015, the College established a Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT) from a range of academic departments to provide collegial support for faculty. The Visiting Team recognized the College's creation of the CAT as a resource for peer-to-peer work on assessment (p. 5). The College's Coordinator of Curriculum Development worked closely with the Director of Assessment and Evaluation during 2014-2015 to align responsibilities related to curriculum development/revision and assessment and she was able to assume increased responsibility related to assessment, working with the Coordinator for Assessment. To ensure that there were sufficient resources 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, particularly for the assessment of general education/core competencies. Appendix A shows the College's organization for oversight of assessment activities. Thus, the College's commitment to assessment of student learning at the course, program and institutional levels continued uninterrupted.

Overview

In the summer of 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. In addition to the Visiting Team Report, the College used resources from MSCHE, including *Characteristics of Excellence*, *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources*, and *Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Student Learning Assessment Processes* to guide its work.

Other resources included information from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), materials from other institutions, articles and assessment conference presentations.

Finally, the College has achieved a level of maturity commensurate with the highest expectations of MSCHE in matters related to the assessment of student learning and the improvement of teaching and learning.

Responses to Visiting Team Suggestions and Recommendations

<u>Response to Suggestions</u>

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 on a survey 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 of 2015 there were sessions that included quality of assessment and closing the loop, particularly for improvements to teaching and learning. The Coordinator of Curriculum Development (a faculty member) and Coordinator for Assessment developed 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 Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT). They worked together to train CAT members on using the templates and then they and the CAT members reviewed information in SharePoint, the College's electronic repository, using a "[prescription pad](#)" to help department heads understand how they could improve the assessment work by faculty in their departments. Training sessions have been provided to improve the quality and types of assessment. A concentrated effort on understanding the difference between direct assessment and indirect assessment was offered to faculty groups and departments. The faculty engaged in discussions centering on the various types and methods for direct assessment. Led by the CAT, the Coordinator for Assessment and the Coordinator of Curriculum Development, workshops were offered to discuss the value of embedded questions, the use of rubrics for assessing particular aspects of the curriculum, and the use and purpose of standardized tests. Each session concluded with reflection on outcomes data for the purpose of improving instruction.

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 included: (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 twice each month. In addition, the facilitators for the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, both members of the Curriculum Assessment Team, 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 (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching), 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. In addition, a box was added that allows faculty to specify unique situations and strategies they have developed in response to outcomes.

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 of the timeframe for assessment. 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 greater emphasis on assessment of student learning outcomes. 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 of 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 all program learning assessments (Student Outcomes Committee of the Board Minutes). The requirement became effective for audits for fall 2015.

Second, the Visiting Team recommended that "careful attention be paid to the quality of student learning outcomes and assessment efforts" (p. 7). 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. Programs are refining their assessment approach to include

additional direct evidence of assessment.

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" (p. 7). Faculty understand the centrality of their role in the assessment of student learning outcomes. This responsibility is explained to prospective faculty during 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
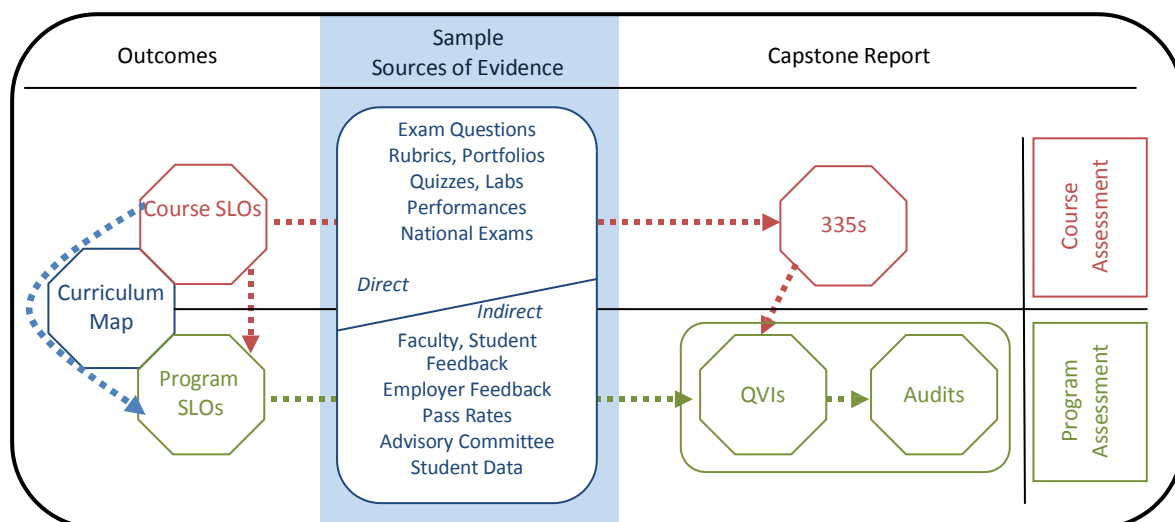
by clearly listing the roles and responsibilities of the faculty, department chairs, deans, and vice president for academic and student success. The roles and responsibilities of the Assessment Office and other resources were also communicated. Assessment responsibilities were clarified in the position description for new deans and assistant deans and will be included in end of the year evaluations.

Implementation of an Assessment Process Consistent with MSCHE Requirements

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

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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 learning objectives are expected to be introduced, reinforced and mastered. 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](). The College added a specific section to guide faculty in the inclusion of their assessment of student learning outcomes at the course level and plans for improvement. Program learning outcomes are now required as part of the College's annual program review documents (Quality/Viability Indicators or [QVIs]() for short). A specific section was added to the document to require an annual report on assessment of student learning outcomes at the program level and plans for improvement. Likewise, the five-year program audits now have a specific section that requires information on assessment of program learning outcomes and improvement actions.

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

Outcomes	Sample Sources of Evidence	Capstone Report

Exam Questions
Rubrics, Portfolios
Quizzes, Labs
Performances
National Exams

Direct

Course SLOs

Curriculum Map

Indirect

Faculty, Student Feedback
Employer Feedback
Pass Rates
Advisory Committee
Student Data

Program SLOs

335s

QVIs → Audits

Course Assessment

Program Assessment

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 the 2014-2015 academic year and included in the February Monitoring Report. This timeline provides a calendar for systematizing all assessment activity at the College. During fall 2015, a calendar was created specifically for program-level assessment. The calendar provides a tool for faculty to guide the assessment process so that the assessment cycle is ongoing and clarifies when the various stages in the cycle must be completed. The calendar has been distributed to faculty and administrators and posted on the College's assessment web page.

During summer 2015, there was an increased emphasis on improving the quality of assessment work and documenting improvements in teaching and

learning related to the outcomes of assessment work. The Coordinator for Assessment and Coordinator of Curriculum Development conducted an extensive review of program materials 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 Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT) members identify quality assessment and teaching and learning improvement and 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 College's electronic repository. The SharePoint repository was modified to include two new tabs: one for the "Assessment Overview" and one for "Improvements to Teaching and Learning." This change was made to make it easier for faculty to document their assessment plans, actions and strategies. In addition, as the Visiting Team suggested (p. 5 and p. 7), the "No action required" option was removed from SharePoint to ensure that faculty always put a focus on improvements to teaching and learning. The Coordinator for Assessment, Coordinator of Curriculum Development, CAT members and academic deans all worked to make sure faculty understood the reason that the "no action required" option did not reflect the institutional commitment to continuous improvement. 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 Curriculum

Assessment Team (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 President for Academic and Student Success and Vice President 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 well attended assessment 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 CAT. 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, 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 (see p. 4-7). Each dean is responsible for ensuring that the department heads are carrying out the work of facilitating assessment activity (see p. 7-9). The Vice President for Academic and Student Success has overall responsibility for oversight of the process (see p. 9). In addition to posting the manual on the Assessment Office web page, hard copies of the document were created for distribution.

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" (p. 5). In response, the College redesigned the Chapter 335 template to include a section specifically on student learning outcomes and redesigned the QVI template to specifically include 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. 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 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 deficiencies and design plans for making changes to teaching and learning based on the assessments (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 College included Assessment as a topic for the year-long new faculty orientation to make sure new faculty are prepared to participate in the College's assessment work. 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 institutional 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 "Assessment reports show evidence that general education assessments are planned, organized, and produce results that raised some useful questions for further assessment progress" (p. 29). The College goal was to continue our organized approach to institutional assessment even as we expanded our approach to gathering 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. All faculty were informed about the assessment for fall 2015 and had an opportunity to see the rubrics for the assessment. Students were also informed of the assessment in a letter posted in the portal. Faculty who were selected to complete the rubrics were sent reminders of the students they were assessing and the timeframe for the 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 related to general education.

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, supplemented by information on best practices from a variety of resources. 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. In particular, as identified in the publication *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources* (p.54), the College has:

- Identified goals and expectations for student learning outcomes at the course, program and institutional levels;

- Published and distributed institutional guidelines;

- Increased institutional resources, particularly in staffing and engagement of faculty

- Worked in a coordinated fashion with defined roles and responsibilities;

- Created multiple means of support for faculty and administrators for assessment;

- Provided documentation of assessment activities for previous and current semesters;

- Documented evidence of student achievement of learning goals;

- Provided evidence that results are used to modify teaching and learning.

More importantly, the College faculty and academic leaders continue to improve the quality of assessment and the value added to the quality of teaching and student learning.

Appendix A: Assessment Administration

Donald Generals, President

Judith Gay, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives & Chief of Staff

Samuel Hirsch, Vice President for Academic& Student Success Initiatives

Krishna Dunston, Director Assessment & Evaluation

Part-Time Temporary Administrative

Part-Time Temporary Administrative

Dawn Sinnott, Director Institutional Research

Amy Birge, Coordinator of Curriculum Development

Sharon Thompson, Dean Liberal Studies

Mary Anne Celenza, Dean Math, Science & Health Careers

Richard Saxton, Interim Dean Business & Technology

Christine McDonnell, Academic Assessment Coordinator

Department Chairs

Department Chairs

Department Chairs

Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT)