

## Excerpts from Middle States' Final Report

Prepared after a study of the institution's self-study report  
And a visit to the campus on April 3-6, 2005

### **Standard #7: Institutional Assessment**

The institution does not meet this standard.

Since 1998 the Planning and Institutional Research department has developed numerous assessment measures in a variety of areas designed to assess the effectiveness of College programs, services and students outcomes. Although the College is making progress towards formalizing a systematic plan for assessing institutional effectiveness, the plan is as yet incomplete (Self-Study 38).

The Team found a variety of assessment activities being conducted by the College. Noteworthy among these activities were the Program Evaluation system and the development of Effectiveness Indicators for Institutional Assessment. However, as the College's Self-Study states, most of the assessment "is done without the benefit of a written plan and structured processes" and "assessment appears episodic rather than periodic and systematic" (37).

The Characteristics of Excellence is clear when it states that "The Commission on Higher Education expects institutions to assess their overall effectiveness, with primary attention given to the assessment of student learning outcomes," and that "...outcomes assessment should be linked to an institution's ongoing planning and resource allocation processes" (21). While the Team recognizes that the president is placing greater emphasis upon assessment, the Team could not affirm compliance with Standard 7 due to the absence of "a written assessment plan", "the absence of evidence of periodic assessment of institutional effectiveness that addresses the total range of educational offerings, services, and processes", "the lack of evidence indicating the use of assessment results to improve and gain efficiencies in administrative services and processes;" and "the absence of a written institutional (strategic) plan that reflects consideration of data use from assessment outcomes" (22).

As recognized by the Self-Study document, much work remains to be done in the area of assessment and strategic planning. To this end, the president is to be commended for his desire to have an open, transparent and inclusive planning process. He is aware that overall formal, systematic plans for institutional and student learning outcomes assessment do not yet exist. The development of the strategic plan is in progress and will not be fully completed until 2006. With this in mind, it is imperative that appropriate metrics are developed for strategic initiatives, that strategic planning and budgeting are clearly linked, that processes be put into place to ensure that strategic planning translates into appropriate tactical and operational plans at the unit level and that the effectiveness of the strategic planning process itself be assessed.

### Recommendations

1. Give a high priority to developing an Institutional Assessment Plan that will include details as to how the College will assess its institutional effectiveness as well as the effectiveness of its educational offerings and support services.
2. Develop a comprehensive method of institutional assessment that effectively incorporates measures of student learning outcomes so that appropriate resources can be dedicated towards positive change.