



Assessment in Action @ Providence College

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Assessment & Accreditation

Providence College is set to begin the self-study process leading to institutional reaccreditation in Fall 2007

The Steering Committee for Providence College's NEASC reaccreditation effort, chaired by Dr. Sheila Adamus, associate professor of chemistry and chair of the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department, and Dr. Brian Bartolini, associate vice president for academic affairs, held its first meeting on February 22, 2006.

The New England Association of Schools & Colleges, or NEASC, revised its standards for accreditation this past year. The College will be evaluating itself against these new standards in preparation for a comprehensive visit by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) in Fall 2007.

The eleven standards are the following:

1. *Mission and Purposes*
2. *Planning and Evaluation*
3. *Organization and Governance*
4. *The Academic Program*
5. *Faculty*
6. *Students*
7. *Library and Other Information Resources*
8. *Physical and Technological Resources*
9. *Financial Resources*
10. *Public Disclosure*
11. *Integrity*

The accreditation process has three distinct components: (1) self-study, (2) on-site evaluation, and (3) Commission review and action.

"Self regulation obliges institutions to adhere to the Standards as a condition of their accredited status; accredited colleges and universities demonstrate their integrity through their continued voluntary compliance to these criteria. Adherence to the Standards is periodically reviewed through peer evaluations that are preceded by self-studies directed toward demonstrating that the institution meets the Standards and that it has effective means to ensure institutional improvement. This system of accreditation is based on institutions agreeing to participate in and profit by an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses."

NEASC Standards for Accreditation
2006, Preamble, p. 2

Self-study (*PC's draft is due to CIHE by 5/31/2007 and its final report is due to CIHE/visiting team by 8/20/2007*). To become accredited, and periodically thereafter, institutions are asked to engage in comprehensive and rigorous self-examination. Usually lasting a year to 18 months, self-study involves the college or university community in measuring and verifying its achievements and identifying ways in which the fulfillment of institutional objectives can be improved, using the Standards for Accreditation as a guide. Thus it serves the dual purposes of accreditation. The findings, as well as priorities and strategies for quality enhancement identified through the process, are summarized in a self-study report.

On-site evaluation (*PC's visit is scheduled for 10/14-17/2007*). Following its completion, the self-study report serves as a basis for evaluation by an on-site team of peer evaluators, who are administrators and faculty from other accredited colleges and universities. The on-site evaluation seeks to assess the institution in light of the self-study against the Standards for Accreditation.

Review and action (*PC will receive its preliminary report 10/17/2007*). The Commission reviews the self-study, the team report, and any response an institution may make to its report. It also meets with the chief executive officer of the visited institution and the team chair. In addition, in keeping with federal regulations, the Commission seeks and considers third party comment regarding each evaluated institution. With this information, the Commission takes action on each institution's accreditation status. The Commission also specifies areas where an institution should endeavor to improve its effectiveness.

The assessment of student learning and the assessment of institutional effectiveness have assumed even greater importance in the revised standards (see Page 2 for details).

"To Do" LIST

ASSESSMENT
COORDINATORS

- *Continue data collection and prepare for submission of your 2005-2006 report by June 30, 2006.*
- *Review your department's assessment outcomes.*
- *Consider new measures for each of your intended outcomes.*
- *Submit any assessment survey plans to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources prior to designing and administering your survey.*
- *Contact Brian Bartolini, associate vice president for academic affairs, if you have any questions or assessment needs.*

NEASC Standards & Institutional Effectiveness Objectives

Standard 1: Mission & Purposes

1.5 (Std 1, Obj 5) The institution periodically re-evaluates the content and pertinence of its mission and purposes, assessing their usefulness in providing overall direction in planning and resource allocation. The results of this evaluation are used to enhance institutional effectiveness.

Standard 2: Planning & Evaluation

2.7 The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives.

Standard 3: Organization & Governance

3.12 The effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review.

Standard 4: Academic Program

4.51 The institution's principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings and student learning.

Standard 5: Faculty

5.22 The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for the faculty and the effectiveness of the faculty in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution's mission.

"The institution that meets the Standards has clearly defined purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning; has assembled and organized those resources necessary to achieve its purposes; is achieving its purposes; and has the ability to continue to achieve its purposes."

*NEASC Standards for Accreditation
2006, Preamble, p. 1*

Standard 6: Students

6.18 Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these goals and services and improve their achievement.

Standard 7: Library & Other Information Resources

7.12 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy, utilization, and impact of its library, information resources and services, and instructional and information technology and uses the findings to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services.

Standard 8: Physical & Technological Resources

8.6 The institution's ongoing evaluation of its physical and technological resources in light of its mission, current needs and plans for the future is a basis of realistic planning and budget allocation.

Standard 9: Financial Resources

9.14 The institution has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management and to maintain its integrity. The institution uses the results of these activities for improvement.

Standard 10: Public Disclosure

10.14 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its print and electronic publications are complete, accurate, available, and current. The results of the review are used for improvement.

Standard 11: Integrity

11.11 The pursuit of institutional integrity is strengthened through the application of findings from periodic and episodic assessments of the policies and conditions that support the achievement of these aims among members of the institutional community.

...and Assessment of Student Learning Objectives

Selected excerpts:

4.44 The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program.

4.48 The institution's system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students learn as a result of the program.

4.49 The institution ensures that students have systematic, substantial, and sequential opportunities to learn important skills and understandings and actively engage in important problems of their discipline or profession and that they are provided with regular and constructive feedback designed to help them improve their achievement.

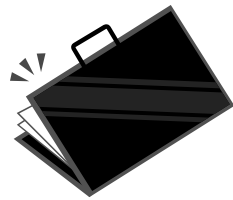
4.50 The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students.

Profile: Portfolios and Student/Program Assessment

Definition: A portfolio is an outcomes- or standards-based collection of work.

Purpose: Portfolios enable the systematic evaluation and/or presentation of progress, development, and/or performance at the individual, group, program, or institutional level.

Types: Student portfolios allow individual students (and their instructors) to chart their progress against pre-determined standards, over time. Not only do they make student evaluation possible, but also, when aggregated, they allow programs to evaluate their performance against intended outcomes. Similarly, entire institutions may create portfolios in order to demonstrate success in fulfilling plans, meeting goals, or achieving desired outcomes.



Portfolios are one of the most powerful means by which student learning and/or program outcomes may be assessed.

Common Elements: The following items are commonly included in portfolios:

1. *General information (e.g., name, program, etc.)*
2. *Table of Contents*
3. *Standards, Goals, and/or Outcomes*

4. *Evidence/Work Products (also known as "artifacts")*
5. *Process Descriptions (i.e., means by which work products were developed)*
6. *Reflections (i.e., context, value, and/or meaning of work product and/or process)*
7. *Feedback (by a reviewer, such as a faculty member)*
8. *Rubrics (i.e., standards by which work products, process descriptions, and/or reflections are evaluated)*

In order to expand and enhance their assessment activities, departments and programs might consider the benefits of developing a portfolio-based system for assessing student and/or program outcomes. Successful models already exist at the College, most notably, in its education programs.

Selected Portfolio/Rubric Resources—Electronic

- Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU) Portfolio Assessment: <http://www.aacu.org/issues/assessment/portfolio.cfm>
- California State University System: <http://www.calstate.edu/acadaff/sloa/links/rubrics.shtml>

Selected Portfolio/Rubric Resources—Print

- Banta, T. W. (2004). *Portfolio Assessment Uses, Cases, Scoring, and Impact: Assessment Update Collections*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2004). *Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Electronic Portfolio Exploratory Group (EPEG)

As described above, portfolios may be paper-based or electronic. Technological improvements have made electronic, or *e-portfolios*, increasingly attractive. In the e-portfolio environment, archiving is improved, as are accessibility, portability, and the ability to handle multimedia artifacts.

A group of faculty, students, and administrators has convened to explore e-portfolio packages for use at the College. Chaired by Charles Haberle, assistant vice president for academic affairs, the Electronic Portfolio Exploratory Group, or EPEG, has been charged to explore the introduction of e-portfolios as a tool to support teaching, learning,

and assessment at the College from a variety of perspectives—institutional, department/program, and individual.

EPEG will invite selected vendors to demonstrate their products in April. The group will solicit feedback from attendees and file a report, including recommendations, to the College's Instructional Technology Committee (ITeC) in May. In turn, ITeC will provide a final recommendation to Dr. Hugh Lena, vice president for academic affairs.

Please feel free to contact Chuck Haberle with any questions or comments (x1154, chaberle@providence.edu).

Survey Guidelines-Assessment @ PC

The following guidelines have been established for the administration of assessment surveys at the College:

1. *The Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources (CAIR) is the designated clearinghouse for all College assessment surveys (Note: CAIR is not the clearinghouse for faculty research surveys).*
2. *All surveys should be sent to the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources for review before they are administered. The committee will provide feedback about any potential problems or conflicts about which the department or program may be unaware.*
3. *The proposed date of administration should be clearly indicated in order that the committee can determine if it will conflict with any other proposed survey(s).*
4. *After the survey is administered, generally, its results should be shared with the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources.*

Assessment surveys should be sent to CAIR for review before they are administered.

The rationale for these guidelines relates to the need for (a) administering surveys in a coordinated fashion, (b) encouraging collaboration among departments and programs when appropriate, and (c) preventing excessive demands being placed on students, faculty, or staff.

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

FROM DATA TO DECISIONS AT PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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Coming this Summer !!!

*The Providence College
internal assessment
Web site – the site will
include assessment
reports and datasets.*

Coming this Summer !!!



PROVIDENCE
COLLEGE

Assessment Program History—Providence College

The formal, college-wide assessment process began in 1999, with the appointment of a special assistant to the VPAA for assessment, the establishment of the Committee on Assessment Issues & Resources, and Jim & Karen Nichols' assessment consulting visit. Since 1999, the College has staged the introduction of assessment along the following timeline:

- 1998/99, 1999/00 ...: Academic Majors
- 2000/01 ...: Administrative/Educational Support Units
- 2002/03 ...: Academic Minors
- 2003/04 ...: Core Curriculum

Note: assessment of the Core has been postponed until review is completed

Reasons to Assess—Connecting Purpose and Performance

While there are many important reasons to engage in assessment, the following are the most fundamental from the Providence College perspective:

1. **Identifying Purpose**—determining how actions help to fulfill institutional and departmental missions
2. **Building Evidence**—evidence-based answers to questions such as: are we doing what we say we do; are we doing well what we say we do?
3. **Formal Linking of Mission, Goals, and Outcomes**—connecting purpose and performance
4. **Regional Accreditation/Governmental Mandates**—responding to external mandates and recommendations
5. **Competition**—constituents are demanding evidence of success and positive outcomes

Data Spotlight—Enrollment and Graduation Rates in Postsecondary Institutions (excerpted with slight changes)



Colleges and universities in the United States (those receiving Title IV federal student financial aid funds) enrolled nearly 18 million students in fall 2004. Of these, nearly 11 million (61%) were enrolled in 4-year institutions, more than 6.6 million (38%) were enrolled in 2-year institutions, and just over 300,000 (2%) were enrolled in less-than-2-year institutions. Graduate and first professional students comprised 14% of total enrollments.

During fall 2004, more than 13 million students (74%) were enrolled in public institutions, nearly 3.5 million (19%) were enrolled in private not-for-profit institutions, and almost 1.2 million students (7%) were enrolled in private for-profit institutions.

Net migration is the difference between the number of students entering the state to attend school and the number of students who leave the state to attend school elsewhere. In fall 2004, Florida had the highest net migration, with 19,786 more first-time undergraduate students entering the state than leaving the state to attend college. New Jersey had the lowest net migration, with 26,584 more first-time

undergraduate students leaving the state than entering the state to attend college. Rhode Island had 6,835 more first-time undergraduate students entering the state than leaving it to attend college.

Graduation rates of bachelor's-seeking students at 4-year institutions (as of August 31, 2004, for the first-time, full-time cohort entering fall 1998) increased significantly when measured after 6-years, rather

than after 4-years, from time of entry. The 4-year graduation rate of bachelor's-seeking students was 35%, but the 6-year graduation rate was 56%. The 6-year rate at public institutions was 53%, whereas it was 64% at private not-for-profit institutions, and 25% at private for-profit institutions.

Providence College's 6-year graduation rate for this cohort was 83%; the 4-year rate was nearly identical at 82%.

Knapp, L. G., Kelly-Reid, J. E., and Whitmore, R. W. (2006). Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2004; Graduation Rates, 1998 & 2001 Cohorts; and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2004 (NCES 2006-155). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved March 17, 2006 from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006155>