

Academic Senate

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Middle States – Site Visit – March 24-27, 2019

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is Middle States?

A1: The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is one of seven regional accrediting agencies in the United States, each authorized by the U.S. Department of Education to grant accreditation to institutions in the agency's region. Accreditation authorizes institutions to disburse federal financial aid and to transfer academic credit that is recognized among accredited institutions.

Q2: Who are the members of the evaluation team?

A2: The evaluation team consists of colleagues from peer institutions in the Middle States region. The team members, who volunteer to serve in the reaccreditation process, represent Middle States; they do not work for Middle States.

Q3: What areas of compliance are involved in the reaccreditation process?

A3: In the reaccreditation process, the college seeks to demonstrate compliance with [eight federal regulations](#), [fifteen requirements of affiliation](#), and [seven standards of accreditation](#). The college has submitted an Evidence Inventory to demonstrate compliance with all the criteria of the fifteen requirements of affiliation and seven standards of accreditation. It has submitted a Verification of Compliance to demonstrate compliance with the eight federal regulations.

Q4: How is the self-study report different from past versions?

A4: Unlike past documents, the [self-study report](#) adopts an institutional priority approach. The two institutional priorities that are featured in the report are the Queensborough Academies and faculty and staff development. Whereas past reports demonstrated comprehensive compliance with the requirements of affiliation and the standards of accreditation, the current report is focused instead on the two institutional priorities, each discussed in the context of the individual standards. Comprehensive compliance with the standards of accreditation and the requirements of affiliation is demonstrated in the Evidence Inventory.

Q5: How will the site visit work? Who arranges the meetings and with whom?

A5: The itinerary for each evaluation team member will be developed in advance of the site visit. The evaluation team chair will notify the self-study executive co-chairs about a week before the visit of departments or offices or programs with which team members wish to meet. During the course of the visit, it is possible that meetings may be canceled or rescheduled. It is also possible that some meetings may be scheduled the morning of the meeting, but the team chair has made assurances that this will be kept to a minimum, if it happens at all. No meeting will occur, however, without previous arrangement. Team members will not show up at your office or class unannounced.

Q6: Given that the self-study report features the Queensborough Academies as one of the institutional priorities, describe your experiences with the Academies and the impact on student outcomes?

A6: The Queensborough Academies seek to promote student success. They offer intrusive advisement to students to support them from start to finish of their academic career. Starfish is the technological tool the campus uses to notify students who may have attendance or performance issues; faculty referrals to the learning centers are intended to encourage students to address performance issues early and regularly to promote better course outcomes. Students who are referred to tutoring and have taken advantage of the services have demonstrated better course outcomes than those who choose not to take advantage. Faculty have adopted one or more high impact practices to engage students in course content: academic service learning, common read or common intellectual experience, global and diversity learning, SWIGs (students working in interdisciplinary groups), undergraduate research, and writing intensive. The impact on overall student outcomes has been trending upward: credit accumulation by year is up, graduation rates have trended up (the latest three-year rate at 22.6%).

Q7: Give that the self-study also features faculty development, in what ways has faculty development supported you as a faculty member?

A7: This is an opportunity to speak to your own faculty development experiences. New faculty members attend the New Faculty Orientation and New Faculty Institute and participate in the New Faculty Mentoring Program. Faculty members are invited to participate in the Assessment Institute. There are workshops on achieving tenure and on promotion to associate and to full professor. CETL offers regular workshops on pedagogy, including workshops on each of the high impact practices. Faculty are supported in their research, including pedagogical research, and in publishing their scholarship.

Q8: In what ways have assessment processes impacted student learning?

A8: Since the last self-study, the college has sought to promote a culture of assessment. The Academic Senate created a committee, following the self-study process, to oversee assessment processes on campus: the Senate Committee on Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness. In the years since, the Assessment Institute was established, at the request of this committee. Over 170 faculty have participated and completed course assessment reports on student outcomes. The college has robust general education outcomes assessment. Each semester, student artifacts are collected in response to an assignment that addresses one of the general education outcomes. A General Education Working Group has developed rubrics for each of the outcomes and scores the student artifacts collected. Each year, an overall report on student outcomes is submitted to the Academic Senate. In addition, each faculty member who has submitted student artifacts receives a report on the outcomes for his or her students, prompting reflection and individual changes in pedagogical practice. Academic departments assess courses each year, and reports are posted to the website for use in program review. Academic departments conduct a review of their programs on a five-year cycle. Departments whose programs are accredited conduct reviews according to the official schedule of the accrediting agencies. Program reviews have led to course revision, development of new courses, curricular revision, and the renovation or construction of facilities.

QCC Mission & Goals

Mission

Queensborough Community College is dedicated to academic excellence and rigor and to providing an affordable, high-quality education to pre-college, college, and lifelong learners. Our faculty and staff are committed to the holistic development of today's students in a nurturing and diverse environment that prepares them to be successful in a dynamic workforce. The College affirms its open admissions policy and its strong support of critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, global awareness, civic responsibility, and cultural and artistic appreciation.

Goals

Shaping the Student Experience

Through a nurturing and diverse environment and commitment to academic excellence and rigor, the college seeks to promote critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, global awareness, civic responsibility, and cultural and artistic appreciation.

To help to promote these values and support the holistic development of students, faculty and staff with the Queensborough Academies seek to:

- Improve student readiness for the academic excellence and rigor of the college experience
- Leverage best practices and technological solutions to provide personalized advisement and comprehensive support (academic, personal, financial) for degree completion

Supporting Faculty and Staff: Professional Development and Curricular Innovation

Through commitment to academic excellence and rigor and a nurturing and diverse environment, the college seeks to:

- Improve and enhance comprehensive faculty and staff development and promote community-building practices across campus
- Support curricular innovation and strive for better alignment with baccalaureate programs and the demands of a dynamic workforce

Shaping Planning, Process, and Practice: Supporting and Sustaining the Environment

In support of college priorities and student success, the college seeks to provide a nurturing and diverse environment characterized by:

- Integrated planning, supportive technology, and sound infrastructure
- Fiscal responsibility, institutional advancement, and grant-funding
- Pre-college, continuing education, and workforce development offerings
- Cultural and artistic forums and events for the campus and its local communities

MSCHE 2019 Self-Study Conclusions, Suggestions, & Recommendations

Standard 1: Mission & Goals

CONCLUSIONS

The college meets all of the criteria of Standard I and the related Requirements of Affiliation. It upholds its mission through the implementation of activities in support of its college goals, as exemplified by the two institutional priorities addressed in this self-study, the Queensborough Academies and faculty and staff development. These serve as organizing principles for the college and inform planning at all levels, thereby demonstrating the college's commitment to the holistic development of its students, its ongoing support of an engaged faculty and staff, and its engagement with the community.

Review of the mission and college goals is scheduled to occur on a regular schedule, every eight years and in advance of reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission of Higher Education. Review will ensure that the mission and goals are relevant and achievable. Through periodic review, the mission and goals may be understood as a more current or "living" statement that is meant not only to guide the institution, but also to evolve in response to the needs of its stakeholders and constituents. This is embodied in the new strategic planning format described earlier, which is now explicitly aligned with the mission and goals. This mission-centered planning process more clearly builds on previous years' outcomes and also charts a course for the future.

Standard 2: Ethics & Integrity

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the evidence presented above, the college meets the criteria of Standard II. To address the absence of a rigorous and systemic plan or protocol to conduct periodic assessment of ethics and integrity relative to the functioning of the college as an institution **(II.9)**, the college should designate or establish a group comprising faculty and staff to conduct such periodic assessment.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure periodic and systematic assessment of ethics and integrity at the institution, establish a representative body charged with the periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as such principles and matters relate to the operation of the institution at every level in the service of mission and goals.

Standard 3: Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

CONCLUSIONS

The college is in compliance with all the criteria of Standard III and the related Requirements of Affiliation 8, 9, 10 and 15. The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes **(RofA 8, 9, 10)**. The institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality. Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement. Consistent with the institution's [mission and goals](#), the college continuously strives to improve and enhance comprehensive faculty and staff development to ensure effectiveness in teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service **(RofA 15)**.

A critical aspect of faculty professional growth involves periodic reflection on the feedback offered through peer observation. The open-ended nature of the current peer classroom observation form is less than clear about what constitutes "rigorous and effective teaching" **(III.2a)**. Establishing clear and consistent language related to college-wide—perhaps even departmental—description of the

characteristics of effective teaching would serve to build community among those charged with the design and delivery of the student learning experience. It would allow for the provision of far more substantive feedback with the intent of fostering more evidence-based reflection and possible goal articulation, including faculty choice of optional professional development offerings. In addition, establishing more specific guidelines for what constitutes effective teaching would provide faculty with guidance related to teaching as specific as that for scholarship and service.

SUGGESTION

Modify the official Peer Observation Form so that it takes into account pedagogical strategies that may be germane to the type of course section being observed (e.g., course sections featuring a specific HIP, honors experience, etc.) and ensures that any criteria that may be germane (e.g., college policy relative to WI instruction or Quality Matters for online modalities) are being met.

Standard 4: Support of the Student Experience

CONCLUSIONS

The college is in compliance with the criteria of Standard IV and the related Requirements of Affiliation (8, 10). As an open access institution, QCC is strongly committed to student retention, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals that enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success. The institution systematically evaluates its student support programs, makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes through the results of support services assessments, and aligns the mission and goals of the student support system with the college's mission and goals, assuring that student achievement of educational goals is an institutional priority.

Standard 5: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

CONCLUSIONS

The college satisfies the criteria of Standard V and the related Requirements of affiliation (8, 9, 10). As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, additional documentation to demonstrate compliance with the standard's criteria, particularly criteria 3e and 5, is included in the evidence inventory (documentation roadmap), under Standards V and VI. Assessment is used to demonstrate and improve educational effectiveness across campus. QCC's educational goals are clearly interrelated and support the institution's mission. Organized assessment is conducted at all levels of the institution, and the results of these endeavors are used to effect change. For example, at the institutional level, the college has an established general education protocol that has provided data demonstrating that students are achieving at a level commensurate with community college students. In addition, the data from general education assessment has provided faculty members with information they have used to make changes to their pedagogical practice. At the program level, all programs have student learning outcomes, and a process is being put in place to assess these outcomes on a more systematic basis. Since the last self-study, there is a consistent record of academic program reviews, available on the college website. Faculty and staff development and the Queensborough Academies are being assessed according to specific outcomes, and assessment results have given direction to the evolution of these areas. Finally, along with the Assessment Institute, departments are contributing course assessment to support the institution's assessment efforts.

Though assessment practices have evolved and expanded dramatically since the last self-study, there is a varied level of participation among faculty and staff and departments. On the faculty side, for successful program assessment, faculty teaching the courses within the programs are the key factors involved in the implementation of any assessment protocol. Their participation and involvement in

designing, planning, and executing the assessment activities is the driving force behind program assessment. On the staff side, a more purposeful effort to assess for student support services outcomes, guided by targeted professional development, would strengthen the non-teaching department year-end reporting process and, by extension, the development of priorities for college-wide strategic planning. The final piece of the assessment process is meta-assessment. On an annual basis, the Senate Committee on Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness reviews and evaluates the assessment practices across campus. This process results in an annual report to the Academic Senate that includes recommendations. It would strengthen the periodic review of institutional effectiveness if there were a more systematic and campus-wide effort to incorporate this senate committee's recommendations into college planning and practice.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Determine ways to involve more faculty in the assessment process.
2. Develop and implement a systematic way of operationalizing recommendations from the Senate Committee on Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide more systematic professional development to support administrative staff to assess for support services outcomes aligned with department mission and goals.

Standard 6: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

CONCLUSIONS

The college meets all the criteria of Standard VI and the related Requirements of Affiliation (8, 10, 11). QCC's processes, resources, and structures are aligned with mission and goals and strategic priorities, continuously assess and improve programs and services, and respond effectively to opportunities and challenges. Planning and resource allocation is accomplished through processes involving all constituents of the college community, and results are reported through detailed documents available on the college's website.

Standard 7: Governance, Leadership, & Administration

CONCLUSIONS

The leadership and administration of the college, commensurate with their sound credentials and skills as higher education professionals, work to ensure that the mission and goals of the institution guide questions of institutional priority and resource allocation.

Governance at QCC is alive and vibrant. Despite differences of opinion, which no vibrant institution would lack, faculty, administration, and staff remain invested in shared governance and continue to collaborate to advance the college's shared mission and goals for student success. To ensure continued effectiveness, period assessment of governance structures and processes should be considered. This could include review of committee representation, building assessment into committee practices, and ensuring that committees fulfill their charges.

Professional development remains an institutional priority. The faculty development program has been and continues to be an extremely robust program of orientations, institutes, workshops, and other activities. Though faculty and staff development is strong, both faculty and staff might benefit from additional leadership development.

Emphasis on student success is a hallmark of the institution. The Queensborough Academies provide an organizational structure that promotes and supports student retention and completion rates, with the overall goal of higher graduation rates. Through the leadership of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and with the support of the other divisions, the Academies provide novel onboarding support for

students, extensive advisement and tutorial assistance, and a wide array of academic, personal, and financial services to support student success. Guided by data and student feedback, the college leadership continues to refine the practices of the Academies, and the faculty adopters of HIPs continue to expand and improve these practices. Since the inception of the Queensborough Academies in 2013, three-year graduation rates have increased from 18.5% for the Fall 2010 freshmen cohort to 22.6% for the Fall 2014 freshmen cohort ([2017-18 Fact Book, p. 32](#)).

Despite not having been instituted through the Academic Senate, the Queensborough Academies are still subject to the processes and protocols of governance. More deliberation at the senate level concerning the Academies as they evolve would ensure stronger campus-wide commitment.

To address any concerns about a “community dialogue” that is less inclusive than its previous version, there needs to be a better way of sharing and disseminating information. Timely and widespread communication is essential both for professional development, the vitality of the Queensborough Academies, and the achievement of college mission and goals. Maintaining accurate departmental listservs and instituting a faculty-wide (opt-out) listserv would address these concerns.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Institute ways of submitting Queensborough Academies policy and practice to Academic Senate review and approval
2. Reinstitute “community dialogue” and “faculty dialogue” with an opt-out option
3. Expand professional development to include leadership development

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct periodic assessment of governance structures and processes.