

*Progress Report* to the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
from  
THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK  
New York, NY 10031

*Dr. Robert E. Paaswell*  
Interim President

*Ms. Leslie Galman*  
Accreditation Liaison Officer

*March 25, 2010*

Subject of the Follow-Up Report:

*To reaffirm accreditation and to request a progress letter, due April 1, 2010, documenting implementation of an organized, sustained process for the assessment of institutional, program-level, and general education student learning goals, including evidence that student learning assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). The Periodic Review Report is due June 1, 2013.*

Date of the Evaluation Team's Visit: April 13-16, 2008

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# THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

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## PROGRESS REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

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In its letter of June 26, 2008, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education requested that The City College of New York (CCNY) report its progress on the implementation of an organized, sustained process for the assessment of institutional, program-level, and general education student learning goals, including evidence that student learning assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14).

This report responds to the Commission's request.

### DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE MIDDLE STATES VISIT IN APRIL 2008

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Since the last Middle States visit to CCNY in April of 2008 there were a number of major changes in CCNY's management and in other areas:

- CCNY's president left for a position elsewhere and has been succeeded by an interim president. A search for a new president is in progress;
- The acting dean of Science and the deans of Social Sciences and Humanities & Arts at the time of the visit have left their positions and were succeeded by new deans in the divisions of Science and Social Sciences and an acting dean in Humanities & Arts, who used to be the H&A divisional assessment coordinator. The new deans and acting dean are very proactive in promoting learning outcomes assessment;
- The faculty advisor to the provost in charge of general education and its assessment has also left CCNY and the chair of the general education committee has taken over her responsibilities in general education;
- CCNY's admissions criteria were changed based on analyses of entry characteristics (SAT scores and high school GPA) and their impact on enrollment;
- CCNY has developed its strategic plan for 2009-2013, and out of the five strategic priorities, three are relevant to, and influenced by, learning outcomes assessment;
- CUNY has included learning outcomes assessment in its performance management process and goals & targets (PMP-G&T), and CCNY has included it in its PMP-G&T (i.e., the institution's annual performance evaluation reports);
- The division of Worker Education (DWE) changed its name to "Division of Interdisciplinary Studies (DIS) at the Center for Worker Education (CWE)";
- The granting of Ph.D. degrees in Engineering transitioned from the CUNY Graduate Center to CCNY and Ph.D. degrees in Science will be conferred jointly with the Graduate Center, which will have consequences for the responsibility for learning outcomes assessment;
- CCNY's enrollment has grown substantially, which increases pressure on resources.

## PROGRESS TO DATE AND CURRENT STATUS

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This section addresses the organizational structure and resources for a sustained and organized learning outcomes assessment process, CCNY's progress in formulating and implementing multi-year assessment plans, the current state of affairs, the evidence showing the use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning, and challenges and how they are addressed.

### SUBSTANTIVE SUMMARY

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CCNY has a strong organizational structure and provides ample resources to support a sustained and organized learning outcomes assessment process at all levels of the institution.

The College of Liberal Arts and Science and the new General Education Requirement have made excellent progress in formulating, updating and implementing multi-year assessment plans, including for graduate programs where applicable. A number of programs in the divisions of Social Sciences and Science require additional improvements which will be accomplished by the end of the academic year 2009-2010.

The current state of affairs shows a substantial integration of learning outcomes assessment in areas such as course and curriculum renewal, institutional planning, and faculty professional development. The emphasis is moving from trying to convince faculty that learning outcomes assessment is useful and mandated by Middle States, to supporting divisions, departments and individual faculty members in carrying out faculty-driven learning outcomes assessment, including the use of results to improve teaching and learning.

The evidence shows that assessment results are being used increasingly in many areas of teaching and learning, such as new course and curriculum proposals, providing guidance to adjuncts, course sequencing, and resource allocation.

A considerable challenge to faculty involvement in assessment consists of the added reporting requirements necessary to enable the office of assessment to determine progress and generate overviews to inform the college administration and Middle States representatives. CCNY is exploring creative ways in which to address this challenge.

### DISCUSSION

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*“CCNY has a strong organizational structure and provides ample resources to support a sustained and organized learning outcomes assessment process, at all levels of the institution.”*

The assessment of student learning in the College of Liberal Arts and Science (CLAS) and General Education at CCNY is organized and sustained through a stable structure consisting of the provost, the four deans of the CLAS divisions and the chair of the general education committee. Learning outcomes assessment is part of the deans' annual performance evaluation, and to meet their responsibilities they are supported by CCNY's office of assessment (OA), the divisional and general education assessment coordinators, and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The offices of testing and institutional research provide valuable support in collecting and providing data that are relevant to learning outcomes assessment (e.g., course and teaching surveys, results of the CUNY proficiency exam).

The divisional and general education coordinators are experienced faculty and staff who work collegially with faculty assessment coordinators in the departments and with the general education committee to carry out student learning assessment. The coordinators, together with the director of CETL, meet once a month with the director and assistant director of assessment to discuss progress and new developments and to share ideas and experiences. The minutes of these meetings capture the state of affairs from month to month (Appendix 1. IDEAS Meetings). As part of the overall institutional assessment, the director of assessment reports each semester in the CCNY Review Committee - the institutional P&B committee consisting of the deans, vice presidents and faculty representatives, chaired by the provost - on the state of affairs and findings in learning outcomes assessment (Appendix 2. RC Presentations). The office of assessment offers assistance to any unit or individual requesting support, e.g., in formulating assessment plans, developing assessment instruments, and collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. The OA also offers workshops on learning outcomes assessment for faculty each semester, in close cooperation with CETL and faculty members who have developed good practices (Appendix 3. Workshops). The OA conducted a CUNY-wide workshop in 2009 under the auspices of the CUNY Assessment Council. It will take part in another one in April 2010, together with Math and Science faculty from CCNY and sister institutions Hunter College and John Jay College, who have developed good practices in assessment. Future plans are for Humanities & Arts and Social Sciences CUNY-wide workshops in the fall of 2010.

Three departments in CLAS (Biology, Economics, and Foreign Languages and Literatures) and three more in the professional schools are taking the lead in implementing the CCNY strategic plan 2009-2013 (Appendix 6A. Plans). In order to do this, they have received additional staff support whose duties include assisting with routine tasks associated with learning outcomes assessment, such as collecting data and reporting.

The office of assessment was expanded in December of 2008 to include an assistant director of assessment, who has greatly facilitated the day to day management of the many aspects of learning outcomes assessment. Among her responsibilities has been to reach out to students, develop Blackboard sites to facilitate sharing of assessment resources and discussion groups around learning assessment, conduct several well-attended workshops on designing syllabi and surveys, and implement a program-specific on-line version of the Graduating Senior Survey (Appendix 6G. Assessment Tools), in close cooperation with departments and programs.

The offices of institutional research, recently expanded to include an associate director, and testing support learning outcomes assessment by providing the office of assessment with easy access to existing data that are relevant to learning outcomes assessment, such as the detailed scores on each trait (learning outcome) of the CUNY proficiency exam (CPE). The CPE measures important academic skills that faculty and employers consider necessary to have mastered after completing the first two years in college, regardless of major (Appendix 6G. Assessment Tools).

*“The College of Liberal Arts and Science and the new General Education Requirement have made excellent progress in formulating, updating and implementing multi-year assessment plans, including their graduate programs where applicable. A number of programs in the divisions of Social Sciences and Science require additional improvements which will be accomplished by the end of the academic year 2009-2010.”*

To date, all programs in the divisions of Humanities and Arts (H&A), Science, Interdisciplinary Studies (DIS), and the General Education Requirement, have developed, updated, and implemented two- to five-year assessment plans (Appendix 6A. Plans), organized around assessment of program learning outcomes

on a cyclic basis (H&A, Science, General Education), or areas of concentration (DIS), using a variety of methods and assessment tools. The plans cover both undergraduate and graduate programs, where applicable.

The division of Social Sciences has lagged behind in developing and implementing such plans, largely due to gaps in both leadership and assessment coordination at the divisional level and in a number of programs. There were assessment activities, but there wasn't much progress in making assessment more organized and sustainable, and some programs stopped altogether after the Middle States visit. The programs in Social Sciences started assessment planning in May of 2009 in a workshop mandated by the provost, guided by the office of assessment and the newly appointed divisional assessment coordinator. In September 2009 a new dean was appointed, who now provides the strong leadership necessary to complete and implement the plans.

The Ph.D. programs in Engineering have very recently transitioned from the Graduate Center to CCNY. The office of assessment works with the dean of Graduate Studies at the Grove School of Engineering and the assessment coordinator for the CUNY Graduate Center on continuing assessment of the Ph.D. programs in Engineering after the Middle States visit to the CUNY Graduate Center in April 2010. Information about initial assessment in the Engineering Ph.D. programs is included in Appendix 6H. Use of Results & Reports.

To date, all programs in the divisions of Humanities and Arts, Science, Interdisciplinary Studies and the General Education Requirement have continued reporting on their assessment activities to the office of assessment, at first on a semesterly, and at present on a yearly basis (Appendix 6H. Use of Results & Reports). The division of Social Sciences is expected to submit the first reports since the accreditation visit in April of 2008, after the spring semester of 2010.

*“The current state of affairs shows a substantial integration of learning outcomes assessment in areas such as course and curriculum renewal, institutional planning and faculty professional development. The emphasis is moving from trying to convince faculty that learning outcomes assessment is useful and mandated by Middle States, to supporting divisions, departments and individual faculty in carrying out faculty-driven learning outcomes assessment, including the use of results to improve teaching and learning.”*

The overall planning, management and tracking of learning outcomes assessment in a complex, diverse organization like CCNY is not an easy task, especially when trying to communicate and summarize the state of affairs to internal and external audiences. Program assessment in the performing arts looks very different from program assessment in math or physics; some programs focus on using assessment to improve retention in early courses, other programs on assessing the extent to which students meet graduation standards, and yet others find assessment useful to ensure that core learning outcomes are met across multiple sections of the same course.

In conversations with coordinators and faculty it has also become clear to the office of assessment that many programs already carried out activities that could be termed “assessment”, but that they didn't recognize it as such, and that there was a need for more clarification and specification of what was expected of them. An example is provided by the excellent capstone experiences (thesis sequence) in CCNY's highly regarded International Studies program (Appendix 6G. Assessment Tools).

To address the needs in planning, summarizing and clarifying the assessment process, the office of assessment, with feedback from the divisional coordinators and others, developed an “Assessment

Progress Rubric” (Appendix 4. Progress Rubric & Evidence), addressing the nine areas recommended by Middle States to organize supporting documentation for Standard 14, the quality of: A) Assessment Plans, B) Policies and Guidelines, C) Recognition and Rewards, D) Learning Outcomes, E) Syllabi, F) Professional Development, G) Assessment Tools, H) Use of Assessment Results and I) Course and Teaching Surveys (MSCHE: SELF STUDY, *Creating a Useful Process and Report*, p. 43). These nine areas were also used to organize the evidence for learning outcomes assessment on CCNY’s Middle States web site and in the Middle States resource room, thus showing continuity and a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning at all levels.

The nine areas form the “traits” or elements of the rubric and the rubric defines the standards for each element (e.g., assessment plans), scored as 1: “Initial / Needs work”, 2: “In Progress / Emerging”, 3: “Developed”, 4: “Highly Developed / Good Practice”.

Figure 1 shows an example of what the rubric looks like. Appendix 4 contains the whole rubric.

**Figure 1: Rubric Element H - Use of Assessment Results**

H	Use of Assessment Results (“Closing the Loop”)
Definition	<i>This step involves an instructor’s or unit’s interpretation (analysis) of the information from data summaries, and making recommendations, supported by the data, for course and program changes that will improve student learning. The use of assessment results also involves summarizing, reporting and publishing the findings and recommendations for internal and external purposes.</i>
1	Assessment results, if any, do not play a role in curricular decision-making, resource allocation and improvement efforts, or are used selectively, e.g., only when they confirm desired outcomes and/or help make a case for desired resources, and/or are used punitively to deny resources, promotion or tenure, or otherwise inappropriately
2	(Some) Individual faculty use assessment results to improve (student learning in) their own courses
3	Assessment results are used most of the time to guide course and curriculum changes and to measure if changes have the desired effect
4	As 3, and results are also used systematically in resource allocation and curricular planning, and relevant results are reported in an accessible manner for accountability purposes and shared with stakeholders

1=Initial/Needs Work. 2=In Progress/Emerging. 3=Developed. 4=Highly Developed/Good Practice.

In its current form, the rubric serves multiple purposes:

- The “definition” clarifies assessment expectations, a need that was expressed by departmental and divisional coordinators and faculty;
- The scores encourage reflection and discussion on the assessment process, especially when departments are asked to score themselves;
- Used more than once over time (e.g., once yearly), the rubric keeps track of progress and/or continuation in learning outcomes assessment;
- The scores, accompanied by interpretive comments, generate an organized overview of strengths and weaknesses on the unit and institutional levels.

We applied the rubric as follows: at first, during the summer of 2009, the assistant director of assessment scored each unit based on the information available at that time. Then, in October of 2009, departments were asked if they agreed to that “baseline” and asked to provide any corrections, if necessary. They were again asked to update their scores after completion of the fall 2009 semester, to determine if progress had been made or assessment continued. Units had to be able to support their scores with evidence (Appendix 4. Progress Rubric & Evidence).

Table 1 shows for each unit, including General Education and the institutional level, the state of affairs in assessment as of January 31, 2010. The units were also asked to indicate what evidence they could produce in support of a particular score. Appendix 4 contains overviews and appendices 6A to 6I contain examples of the evidence submitted by the units.

Table 1 also indicates changes compared to earlier scores based on assessment activities through the 2008 academic year. A “+” means that the activity made progress over the fall 2009 semester, a “-”, that the activity was discontinued or emphasized less in that semester. No sign means no change took place, which is often the case if an activity was well developed already and the department (unit) continued the activity in the same way. The second lowest row shows that the institution, as an aggregate over the divisions, made progress in seven of nine areas.

The scores should be interpreted in the context of a unit. That is: within a unit we can see which assessment activities are relatively weak and which are relatively strong. We cannot compare units very well to each other, because we haven’t validated the rubric across units, but we can add and average the scores over all units and conclude which elements are relatively well implemented throughout the institution, and which elements may need more attention.

Institutional level assessment is not only an aggregate over units, but also consists of the centralized activities and support an institution provides, so there are two independent sets of scores for the institutional level.

The comments that we received from assessment coordinators and faculty members add further context and depth to the numerical scores (Appendix 5. Narratives).

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“I ALSO WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR INCLUDING ME IN THIS ASSESSMENT STUDY. IT HAS BEEN VERY HELPFUL FOR ME AS AN INSTRUCTOR TO SEE A SAMPLING OF STUDENT PAPERS FROM THE DIFFERENT FIQWS (FRESHMAN INQUIRY WRITING SEMINAR) CLASSES. IT'S GIVEN ME A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT COMPOSITIONAL NEEDS THE INCOMING FRESHMEN HAVE IN GENERAL. IT WILL DEFINITELY INFLUENCE MY LESSON PLAN THE NEXT TIME I TEACH A FIQWS CLASS.”

(General Education, Appendix 5. Narratives - Use of Assessment Results)

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“THE EAS DEPARTMENT WILL QUALIFY FOR A 3.5 RATING, BECAUSE THE EAS DEPARTMENT IS REVISING THE MULTI-YEAR PLAN. THE REVISIONS WILL BE BASED ON WHAT THE SCIENCE DIVISION HAS REQUESTED FOR A 3-YEAR STANDARDIZED COURSE SEQUENCE.”

(Earth & Atmospheric Science, Appendix 5. Narratives - Assessment Plans)

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“...DEPARTMENT CHAIR USES COURSE & TEACHING SURVEYS TO HELP UNTENURED FACULTY IMPROVE TEACHING.”

(Physics, Math, Appendix 5. Narratives - C&T surveys)

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**Table 1: State of Affairs and Progress in Learning Outcomes Assessment by Academic Unit**

Unit	Element	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
BA Art, BFA Electronic Design & Multimedia		3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	2	
BA Area Studies: Asian Studies		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	
BA Communications, MCA Ad-PR		3	2	3	4	3	3	4+	3	3+	
BA Comparative Literature		3+	3+	3+	3+	3	n/a	4+	3+	1-	
BA English		3	3	3	3.5+	3	3	4	4	2	
BFA Film & Video		3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	
BA Romance Languages		3	2	3	4	3	3	3.5	3	3	
BA, BA/MA, MA History		4+	3	3	4	4+	3	3.5	4	2	
BA Area Studies: Jewish Studies		3	3	2-	2-	3+	1-	3-	2-	1-	
BA, BFA, MA Music		3	3+	2	3	3.5+	2-	4+	2-	1-	
BA Philosophy		3	3+	3+	3	2.5+	3	4+	2+	2	
BA Theatre		3.5	3.5	3	3.5	2.5	3	3.5	3.5	2	
MA/MFA Creative Writing		3	3	3	3.5+	3	3	4	4	2	
MA Language & Literacy		3	3	2	2	3-	2	4+	3-	2	
MFA Media Arts Production		3+	4+	2	4+	4+	2-	4	3	1-	
<b>Division of Humanities &amp; Arts</b>		<b>3.2+</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8+</b>	<b>3.5+</b>	<b>3.2+</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.8+</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>2.1</b>	
BS, MA Biology		2	2	2	2.5	3.5+	3.5+	1.5	2.5	2	
BS, MA Chemistry		3	2	2	3	4	1	4	2	2	
BA, BS, MA Geology (Earth & Atmospheric Science)		3.5+	3.5+	3+	3.5+	3.5+	3.8+	3.5	3.5	3+	
BA, BS, BA/MA, MA Math		3+	2.5	2	3+	4+	2-	3+	2.5+	1.5-	
BS, MA Physics		4	3.5	3	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.8	4	3	
<b>Division of Science</b>		<b>3.0+</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.1+</b>	<b>3.8+</b>	<b>2.5-</b>	<b>3.1+</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	
BA Anthropology		2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	
BA Area Studies: Black Studies		<i>mainly interdisciplinary (Soc., Psych., etc.)</i>									
BA Economics, BA BMA, BA/MA Economics		3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	2.5+	3.0	3.5	2.0+	2.0	
BA International Studies		2.5+	2.0	n/a	3.0	3.5+	n/a	3.5+	2.5+	2.0	
BA Area Studies: Latin American & Latino Studies		<i>mainly interdisciplinary</i>									
BA Political Science		2.5+	2.0	3+	2.5+	3+	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	
BA Pre-Law		<i>included in BA Political Science</i>									
BA, BS, BA/MA Psychology		3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	2.5	
BA Sociology		3.0	2.0	1.0	4.0	4.0	3.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	
<b>Division of Social Sciences</b>		<b>2.5+</b>	<b>2.2+</b>	<b>2.3+</b>	<b>2.6+</b>	<b>2.7+</b>	<b>2.8+</b>	<b>2.5+</b>	<b>2.1+</b>	<b>2.0</b>	
General Education Requirement		3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	
<b>General Education</b>		<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	
BS Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences		3.0	3.5+	2.5	3.0+	4.0+	3.5	2.5	3.0+	3.0+	
<b>Interdisciplinary Arts &amp; Sciences at CWE</b>		<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.5+</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0+</b>	<b>4.0+</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0+</b>	<b>3.0+</b>	
<b>Institution, Aggregated over Divisions</b>		<b>3.0+</b>	<b>2.7+</b>	<b>2.7+</b>	<b>3.1+</b>	<b>3.2+</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.2+</b>	<b>2.9+</b>	<b>2.2</b>	
<b>Institution, Institution Level Activities &amp; Support</b> (see page 9, etc., for explanation)		<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>2.0</b>	

A) Assessment Plans, B) Policies and Guidelines, C) Recognition and rewards, D) Learning Outcomes, E) Syllabi, F) Professional Development, G) Assessment Tools, H) Use of Assessment Results, I) Course & Teaching Surveys.

**Score: 1=Initial/Needs Work. 2=Emerging/In Progress. 3=Developed. 4=Highly Developed/Good Practice.**

Note. Scores for divisions are weighted by size (in FTE) of units.

Note. Overall scores for Division of Social Sciences adjusted for Master's assessment (mostly 1=Initial/Needs Work).

Master's assessment in Social Science is now included in assessment planning.



## CLARIFICATION OF THE SCORES IN THE BOTTOM ROW OF TABLE 1

At the institutional level, *planning* (A) for learning outcomes assessment is now incorporated in CUNY's and CCNY's performance management process and goals & targets (PMP/G&T). Learning outcomes assessment is also considered an important tool to measure and foster achievement of educational goals in the strategic plan 2009-2013 (Appendix 6A. Plans).

We started formulating *institutional policies and guidelines* (B) for assessment by introducing the "Progress Rubric", and formulating reporting requirements (how often, what to include and what not). More needs to be done in this area, also based on the questions and needs we encounter among units and individual faculty. Learning outcomes assessment is now a required element in the templates for requesting a new course or changes in existing courses and programs (Appendix 6B. Policies & Guidelines).

A *recognition and rewards system* (C) is under construction, and planned to be fully implemented as part of CCNY's PMP/G&T 2009-2010. At the institutional level, it contains the following elements, some of which are subject to financial ability:

- Deans' performance evaluation;
- Small stipends for extra work by contingent faculty;
- Course releases for substantial coordinating responsibilities;
- Funds for assistance with incidental extra work, e.g., updating web sites, collecting data;
- Letters & certificates of recognition signed by the provost and/or president for individual faculty;
- Celebratory events upon achieving a particular milestone;
- Funds for attending professional development opportunities and conferences;
- A new award to recognize scholarship of teaching and learning, including assessment (under discussion).

Institutional level *learning objectives* (D) are addressed in CCNY's mission statement, and the general education outcomes and program outcomes are aligned with the institutional objectives;

Many programs are reviewing their program outcomes based on the first round of assessment. The CCNY *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletins* (E) are being migrated to a web-based system. They will gradually incorporate updated program learning outcomes and syllabi as they become available. The current program outcomes and curriculum grids can be found on the Middle States web site: [http://extranet.adm.ccny.cuny.edu/middlestates/14\\_4\\_2\\_deptgrids.cfm](http://extranet.adm.ccny.cuny.edu/middlestates/14_4_2_deptgrids.cfm);

CCNY offers excellent *professional development* (F) opportunities for the improvement of teaching and learning, including assessment, through its Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL);

Institution level *assessment tools* (G) are well developed, but many suffer from low response rates:

- The CUNY proficiency exam (mandatory, direct, high stakes);
- The CCNY course and teaching (C&T) survey (voluntary, indirect, very low response);
- The CCNY graduating senior surveys (voluntary, indirect, better response than C&T);
- The NSSE and CUNY student experience surveys (voluntary, indirect, sample, low response).

The *use of results* (H) on the institutional level is guaranteed through:

- Requirements for new course and curriculum proposals (Appendix 6B. Policies & Guidelines);
- Presentations and discussions in the Review Committee each semester;
- Incorporation of supporting evidence in external review reports, grant applications, etc.

CCNY's *course and teaching survey* (I) was renewed and piloted in the summer of 2008, and is better validated than before, but recently response rates have plummeted to the low 10's after implementation of on-line delivery and a series of technical problems. The office of assessment works with institutional research, student representatives, divisions, and the Faculty Senate's Educational Policy Committee on ways to improve the situation.

### MASTER'S PROGRAMS

During the visit in April 2008, the team asked about assessment of CCNY's master's programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Table 2 shows the undergraduate and graduate FTEs by school and division in fall 2008 (from: CITY Facts, fall 2008). The divisions in CLAS are indicated in bold.

**Table 2: Undergraduate and Graduate (Master's) FTE's by Division, Fall 2008**

DIVISION	BACHELORS	MASTERS	FTE DIVISION	MASTERS AS % OF FTE DIVISION	MASTERS AS % OF TOTAL FTE
CUNY HONORS COLLEGE	19	0	19	0	0
ARCHITECTURE	249	102	351	29	6
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	150	740	889	83	44
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING	851	270	1121	24	16
SOPHIE DAVIS SCHOOL OF MED.	285	0	285	0	0
<b>INTERDISC. ARTS &amp; SCIENCE (DIS)</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>HUMANITIES and ARTS</b>	<b>3691</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>3933</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>SCIENCE</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>2154</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SOCIAL SCIENCES</b>	<b>1780</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL FTE</b>	<b>9401</b>	<b>1683</b>	<b>11084</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows that master's students form a small percentage of the total students in CLAS, ranging from none in DIS to 9% in Social Sciences (second column from the right). The rightmost column shows that CLAS serves 33% of all 1683 FTEs in master's programs.

CUNY's Ph.D. programs in Humanities & Arts and in Social Sciences, and until recently, the Ph.D. programs in Science and Engineering, are administered by CUNY's Graduate Center, which is accredited by Middle States separately. The Graduate Center expects an upcoming visit in April 2010. Where master's courses are also part of a Ph.D. program, they fall under assessment in the Graduate Center, but CCNY has taken up assessment of its master's programs as well.

The programs in the division of Humanities & Arts have made the most progress in assessing their master's programs. All but one of the master's programs in Humanities & Arts started their assessment at the same time as the bachelor's programs, before the Middle States visit of April 2008. The Foreign Languages & Literatures department has reviewed and refined its program learning outcomes for the master's (28 FTE) and will start collecting data in the spring of 2010. We have no doubt that the department will do so in the same great spirit of collegiality that characterized the assessment of its undergraduate program.

New and/or proposed master's programs (e.g., in Art, Ad-PR, History and DIS at CWE) are carefully designed based on educational needs & goals assessments and assessment of resources, and will include learning outcomes assessment from the start.

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“THE AD-PR FACULTY ARE CREATING A NEW MA IN BRANDING AND INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS. WE STARTED THE PROCESS BY THINKING ABOUT COURSES IN TERMS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES, AS A MEANS TO DIFFERENTIATE EACH COURSE. ALL NEW SYLLABI FOR THE MA HAVE BEEN REVIEWED FOR OUTCOMES THAT CAN BE EVALUATED.”

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(Advertising & PR, Appendix 5. Narratives - Syllabi)

The division of Science has plans in which program learning outcomes and courses addressing those outcomes are assessed on a rotating basis over a period of several years, and the programs included both undergraduate and master's levels in their assessment plans and reports. At present, the actual assessments focused mainly on the undergraduate programs in Science, but graduate courses are being added as planned.

The division of Social Sciences has also included master's level courses in their plans of May 2009 and the dean indicated that the master's programs undergo regular external review. The division still needs to establish to what extent these reviews also satisfy Middle States expectations, in particular for learning outcomes assessment.

### USE OF RESULTS

*“The evidence shows that assessment results are being used increasingly in many areas of teaching and learning, such as new course and curriculum proposals, providing guidance to adjuncts, course sequencing, and resource allocation.”*

Table 3 shows for each program, including general education and the institutional level, how assessment results were used from the start of planned outcomes assessment through fall 2009. Each department was asked to indicate for each possible use listed below, “yes”, “no”, or “does not apply”:

- a. We made changes in course content
- b. We made changes in course delivery/pedagogy
- c. We added/deleted courses
- d. We made changes in pre- and co-requisites
- e. We made changes in degree requirements
- f. We made changes in the emphasis for new/vacant faculty positions
- g. We developed and/or implemented guidelines for adjuncts, teaching assistants, and other contingent faculty
- h. We included assessment results in faculty meetings, curriculum committee meetings, and faculty retreats
- i. We made changes in degree programs and the development of new degree program options
- j. We were able to justify past curriculum changes and show program improvement resulting from those changes
- k. We made changes in the advising processes
- l. We developed academic services for students

- m. We developed new career explorations and/or career services for students
- n. We made changes to student academic facilities such as computer labs, science labs, and study areas
- o. We developed program-based web sites to provide students with academic and program information
- p. We shared assessment information with alumni and industrial review boards
- q. We further refined the assessment methods or implemented new assessment methods
- r. We made changes in instructional emphasis for current faculty

**Table 3: Use of Assessment Results**

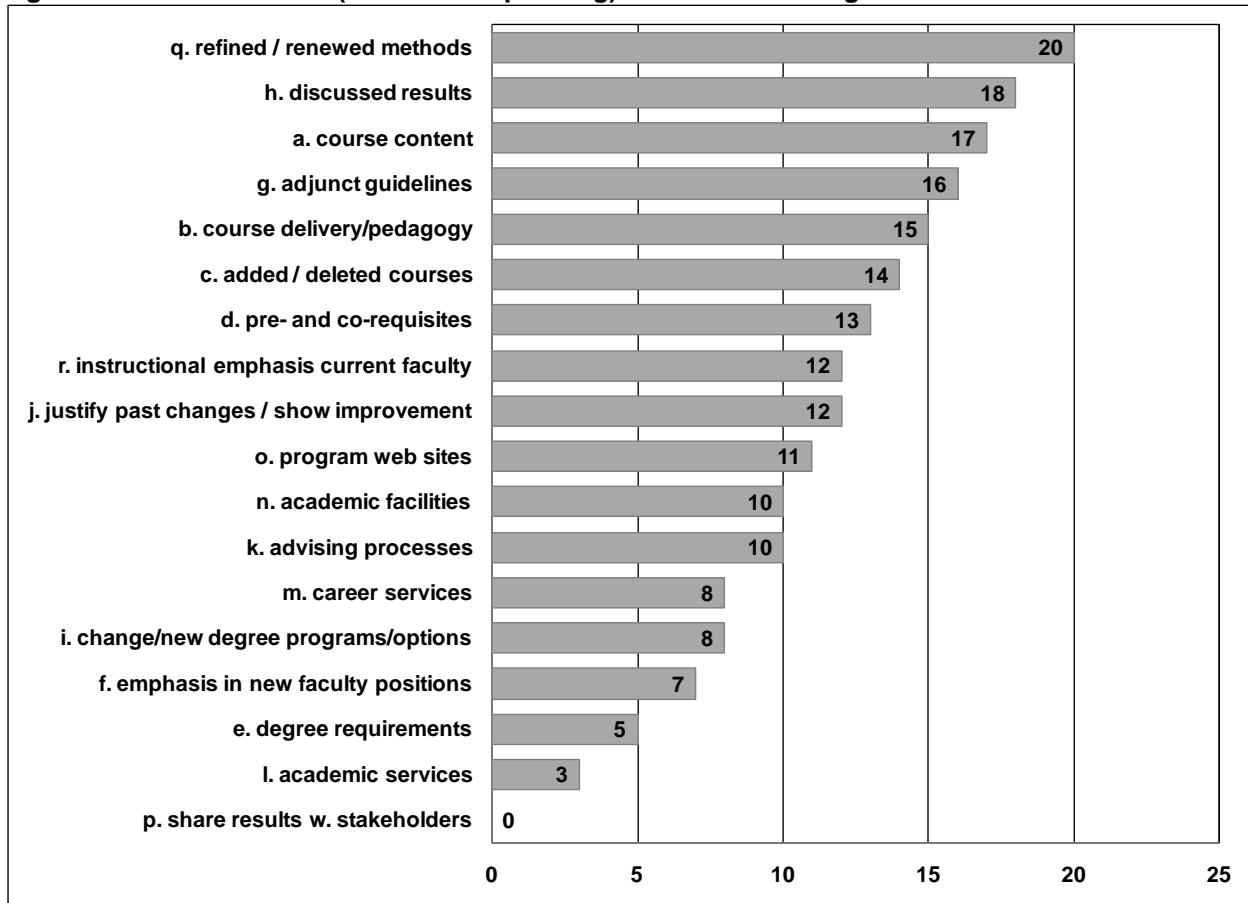
Unit	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
BA Art, BFA Electronic Design & Multimedia			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
BA Area Studies: Asian Studies																		
BA Communications, MCA Ad-PR	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓
BA Comparative Literature							✓	✓										✓
BA English	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓								✓
BFA Film & Video																		
BA Romance Languages	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
BA, BA/MA, MA History	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓
BA Area Studies: Jewish Studies	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓								
BA, BFA, MA Music	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓
BA Philosophy	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓
BA Theatre	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
MA/MFA Creative Writing	<i>see BA English</i>																	
MA Language & Literacy	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			✓		✓		✓	✓
MFA Media Arts Production			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					✓
<b>Humanities &amp; Arts</b>																		
BS Biology																		
BS Chemistry	✓	✓		✓				✓										✓
BA, BS Geology (Earth & Atm, Science)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
BA Math								✓										✓
BA Physics	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓						✓			✓
<b>Science</b>																		
BA Anthropology																		
BA Area Studies: Black Studies	N/A																	
BA Economics, BA BMA, BA/MA Economics	✓		✓	✓	✓									✓	✓			✓
BA International Studies (1)					✓	✓												
BA Area Studies: Latin Am. & Latino Studies	N/A																	
BA Political Science	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
BA Pre-Law	N/A																	
BA, BS, BA/MA Psychology	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
BA Sociology	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓							✓
<b>Social Science</b>																		
General Education Requirement		✓		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
<b>General Education</b>																		
BS Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
<b>Interdisciplinary Arts &amp; Science</b>																		

(1). The program used feedback from alumni and employers from the external review in 2008 to improve staffing and curriculum, as indicated in the table.

## ANALYSIS OF ACTIONS

An analysis of the actions shown in Table 3 and Figure 1 shows that assessment results were used most often to further refine assessment methods or implement new assessment methods, followed by discussing the results in meetings, changes in course content, developing/implementing guidelines for contingent faculty and changing course delivery and pedagogy. Implementing (better) guidelines for contingent faculty is promising for improvement of teaching and learning, and it often resulted from the recognition that to properly assess learning outcomes in multi-section courses, it would be necessary to give contingent, mostly new, faculty better guidelines for the department's expectations for the course, e.g., in the form of providing and explaining an assessment rubric. Other course related uses (adding/deleting a course and adjusting requisites) were also mentioned fairly often.

**Figure 1: Number of Units (out of 23 responding) that made a change based on assessment**



“...WE HAVE RESPONDED TO EARLIER ASSESSMENT (I.E., MIDDLE STATES REPORT, 2007) THAT IDENTIFIED STUDENT WRITING AS AN AREA IN WHICH IMPROVEMENT WAS NEEDED. IN TWO COURSES, WE HAVE PILOTTED THE USE OF WRITING RUBRICS, AND SESSIONS ON WRITING MECHANICS. ONE OF THESE COURSES REQUIRED A JOURNAL OF STUDENTS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR WRITING...”

(Political Science, Appendix 5. Narratives - Use of Assessment Results)

None of the programs mentioned sharing assessment information with alumni and industrial review boards, a practice that is more common in professional programs. Assessment results were used by three programs for the development of academic services for students, and changes in degree requirements weren't mentioned that often as a result of assessment as well: five programs mentioned this use.

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“DATA REVEALED ONGOING CONCERNS WITH THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT WRITING: WRITING CENTER VASTLY IMPROVED; TUTORS EXTREMELY WELL QUALIFIED. CENTER HEAVILY BOOKED BY STUDENTS. BOTH DIRECT AND INDIRECT ASSESSMENT TOOLS CONFIRM SUCCESS IN THIS AREA.”

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(Interdisciplinary Studies, Appendix 5. Narratives - Use of Assessment Results)

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“IN ADDITION, ENGLISH 22000 HAS BEEN MADE A PREREQUISITE TO 30000-LEVEL CREATIVE WRITING COURSES. IN THE PAST, STUDENTS COULD SIGN UP FOR ENGLISH 32000 AND 32100 WITHOUT FIRST HAVING TAKEN ENGLISH 22000. THEY CAN NO LONGER DO THAT. FINALLY, IN THE GRADUATE MA PROGRAM IN LITERATURE, THE SPECIAL SUBJECT EXAM HAS BEEN ABOLISHED.”

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(English, Appendix 5. Narratives - Use of Assessment Results)

The Math department proved rather weak in using results from learning outcomes assessment, and has until now only discussed them and refined assessment instruments. The major problem in math is not so much that their (few) graduates do not achieve the program outcomes, they are generally quite brilliant students, but the retention rates in foundational math courses. The college is in the process of applying for a large grant, in which curriculum improvement and learning outcomes assessment in math “killer courses” will be integrated.

The Biology department hasn't provided information on the use of results, and has been the most reluctant to engage in learning outcomes assessment of all Science programs. To speed up the process, the department recently appointed a new departmental coordinator and charged the curriculum committee with overseeing learning outcomes assessment.

A number of very small programs in Social Sciences didn't do much or anything at all in learning outcomes assessment, notably Black Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies, Pre-Law. These programs are often interdisciplinary in character and are built on offerings from the large departments that do have assessment plans. Anthropology did not provide information on the use of results.

The areas a. to r. apply more to programs and courses than to the institution as a whole, but that does not mean that the institution does not make use of results of assessment of learning outcomes, or other indicators of student achievement, in its decision-making. Recent examples are:

- New admissions criteria, based on analyses of SAT scores, high school GPA, and high school Math & Science GPA's;
- Changes in policies and guidelines, e.g., F-repeat policy, based on analyses of how often students have to take a course before passing;
- Providing supporting evidence for grant proposals aimed at improving retention and student learning in Math and writing, based on analyses of passing rates in the Math sequence, and CPE scores on the separate skills tested in the CPE (in progress).

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## CURRENT STATUS

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The current status shows a well developed assessment process throughout the divisions of Humanities and Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies, considerable progress in the division of Science under its new leadership, and a promising new start in the division of Social Sciences under its very recent new leadership and assessment coordination. The new General Education Requirement has continued its strong assessment program as planned under its new leadership. Master's programs are now included in learning outcomes assessment as well. Learning outcomes assessment is incorporated in institution-wide planning and procedures.

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“THE HUMANITIES DIVISION DEPUTY DEAN HAS PROVIDED A VERY CLEAR FORMAT AND AN OFFICIAL SET OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION. THIS EVALUATION BENEFITS FROM THE GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED IN THE HUMANITIES & ARTS DIVISION.”

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(MA Language & Literacy, Appendix 5. Narratives - Policies and Guidelines)

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## NEXT STEPS

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*“A considerable challenge to faculty involvement in assessment consists of the extra reporting requirements necessary to enable the office of assessment to determine progress and generate overviews to inform the college administration and Middle States representatives. CCNY is exploring creative ways in which to address this challenge.”*

Often there is little time left for engaging in learning outcomes assessment after faculty's absolute priorities in teaching and scholarship have been met. From a program and individual faculty perspective, it is not so much performing assessment and using its results that takes much time, but the communication and reporting of assessment processes and outcomes to external audiences, such as the departmental and college administration, accrediting bodies, and program reviewers. No matter how efficient the assessment process itself, the ongoing documentation, formulation and archiving of assessment and how it improves teaching and learning, takes extra time and coordination.

We seek to address this challenge in several creative ways, by:

- Streamlining and minimizing assessment reporting requirements as much as possible;
- Using existing data collections to gain a better understanding of where to focus assessment, and sharing and discussing the results and their implications for improvement with faculty and other relevant constituencies;
- Tweaking the grading process and making use of Blackboard to also obtain information about achievement of learning outcomes and educating faculty about how to do this;
- Judicious sampling of courses and students for data collection;
- Further integrating learning outcomes assessment in existing procedures, such as course and curriculum proposals.

Other directions and plans for the future are:

- Improving the response to the course & teaching survey;
- Aligning general education and program assessment, i.e., in the Gen Ed “Perspectives” courses following the Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar;
- Close monitoring of the programs that have lagged behind in assessment;
- Continuing assessment of Ph.D. programs in Science and Engineering based on the results of the Middle States visit to the Graduate Center in April 2010;
- Institutionally, focusing assessment on early Math courses and analytical reading and writing, as part of the strategic plan 2009-2013;
- Implementing a recognition and rewards system in the near future.

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“WE HAVE NO REMUNERATION IN PLACE FOR PERSONS CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT IN THE DEPT. SINCE IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBER, THOUGH THERE IS AN ANNUAL ONE-COURSE RELIEF FOR THAT PERSON. THE RECOGNITION THAT IS GIVEN TO OUR FACULTY OVERALL IN THE COURSE OF ASSESSMENT AND COMPLIANCE IS REALLY A JOB WELL DONE.”

(History, Appendix 5. Narratives - Recognition and Rewards)

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“OUR ASSESSMENT COORDINATORS HAVE CONDUCTED REVIEWS TO CHECK FOR INTERNAL CONSISTENCY (THROUGH CORRELATION OF ASSIGNMENTS AND THEIR PRODUCTS TO OUTCOMES), BALANCE (ASSURING THAT DEPARTMENTAL LEARNING OUTCOMES (DLOS) WERE BEING MET BY EXAMINING A WIDE RANGE OF COURSES, NECESSARY IN A LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAM), DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL (EXAMINATION OF CORE), AND VERTICAL ALIGNMENT (TO DLOS). AND WE ARE NOW WORKING ON CONCENTRATION LOS. WHEN THIS PROJECT IS FINISHED, WE WILL CONDUCT A SIMILAR REVIEW OF ALL THE CONCENTRATION AREAS TO CHECK FOR INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.”

(Interdisciplinary Studies, Appendix 5. Narratives - Learning Outcomes)

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## CONCLUSION

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CCNY has continued and intensified its learning outcomes assessment activities since the Middle States visit of April 2008. There is still room for improvement, but we can also say with confidence that we made much progress since April 2008, on “the implementation of an organized, sustained process for the assessment of institutional, program-level, and general education student learning goals, including evidence that student learning assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning”, as requested by Middle States. We have the conditions in place, and have gained deeper understanding of opportunities for improvement needed to face the considerable challenges posed by large increases in enrollment.



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“EAS 104 IS USING ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO INCREASE USE OF CLICKERS. CLICKER RESULTS DEMONSTRATE A STRONG CORRELATION BETWEEN ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS. STUDENTS WHO USED CLICKERS TENDED TO ATTEND CLASS AND SCORED ON AVERAGE ONE GRADE POINT HIGHER THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT USE CLICKERS. THIS IS GROUNDS FOR IMPLEMENTING CLICKERS IN OTHER LARGE-SECTION EAS COURSES...”

(Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, Appendix 5. Narratives - Use of Assessment Results)

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## APPENDICES OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

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The appendices of supporting information are included on the accompanying CD and contain extensive samples of evidence. The reader is welcome to browse and review the evidence as desired. Additional evidence is available.

Appendix 1: IDEAS meetings  
Appendix 2: RC Presentations  
Appendix 3: Workshops  
Appendix 4: Progress Rubric & Evidence  
Appendix 5: Narratives  
Appendix 6A: Plans  
Appendix 6B: RC Presentations  
Appendix 6C: Recognition & Rewards  
Appendix 6D: Learning Outcomes (Sample)  
Appendix 6E: Syllabi (Sample)  
Appendix 6F: Professional Development  
Appendix 6G: Assessment Tools  
Appendix 6H: Use of Results & Reports  
Appendix 6I: Course & Teaching Surveys