

Kean University

Kean Digital Learning Commons

Middle States Information and Publications

2012

Visiting Team Report (Campus Visit April 12-13, 2012)

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kean.edu/middle_states_information_and_publications

Recommended Citation

on Higher Education, Middle States Commission, "Visiting Team Report (Campus Visit April 12-13, 2012)" (2012). *Middle States Information and Publications*. 17.
https://digitalcommons.kean.edu/middle_states_information_and_publications/17

This University Document is brought to you for free and open access by Kean Digital Learning Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Middle States Information and Publications by an authorized administrator of Kean Digital Learning Commons. For more information, please contact learningcommons@kean.edu.

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of
Kean University
Union, NJ

By
A Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a Visit to
the Campus on
April 12 - 13, 2012

The Members of the Team:

Prof. Robert Albrecht, SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor – English &
Humanities
SUNY College of Technology at Alfred
Alfred, New York

Dr. Mark Curchack, Assistant Provost for Planning and Assessment
Arcadia University
Glenside, Pennsylvania

Dr. Debra G. Klinman, Vice President, Middle States Commission on Higher
Education

INTRODUCTION

The team offers its sincere appreciation to Kean University for hosting this monitoring report follow-up visit. The team notes that considerable effort went into the production of the monitoring report, and we thank the members of the Kean community for their honesty, openness, and commitment to the processes of self-appraisal and self-improvement.

REASONS FOR THE VISIT

Kean University underwent self-study in 2010 - 2011. Peer evaluators visited the institution and submitted a report to Kean, and the institution prepared its institutional response. These materials were considered by the Committee on Evaluation and by the Commission at their June 2011 meetings.

On June 23, 2011, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted as follows:

To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) and Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due March 1, 2012, documenting that, including but not limited to the development and implementation of (1) steps taken to promote an institution-wide culture of assessment and evidence; (2) an organized and sustainable assessment process, including direct measures, to evaluate and improve institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used to gain efficiencies in programs, services, and processes; and (3) an organized and sustainable process to assess the achievement of student learning goals at the course and program levels, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning (Standards 7 and 14). To direct a prompt liaison guidance visit to discuss the Commission's expectations. A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. The due date for the next Periodic Review Report will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed.

The team reminds the institution that, in accordance with federal regulations, any institution that is placed on Warning by its regional accreditor must fully resolve all relevant issues and have its accreditation reaffirmed within two calendar years. MSCHE sets the dates for reports and institutional visits to accommodate this federal time frame, and to allow for the full deliberation of peer evaluators, appropriate Committees, and the full Commission.

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

During their visit, the small team met with a number of individuals and groups, including these individuals:

1. Team with President Dawood Farahi
2. Team with the Board of Trustees Executive Committee
 - Ms. Ada Morell
 - Mr. Donald Soriero, Esq.
 - Mr. Michael D'Agostino
 - Mr. Eugene C. Enlow, Esq.
 - Ms. Barbara Sobel '71, '73
 - Jonathan Lopez - student
 - Ms. Audrey M. Kelly, Executive Director, Board of Trustees
3. Prof. Albrecht with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Acting Assistant VPAA, Deans
 - Jeffrey Toney, VPAA
 - Joy Moskowitz, Assistant VPAA
 - Susan Polirstok, Dean, College of Education
 - Kathryn Martell, Dean, College of Business and Public Management
 - George Chang, Acting Dean of the College of Natural and Applied Health Sciences
 - Steve Lorenzet, Dean, Nathan Weiss Graduate College
 - Holly Logue, Acting Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts
 - Suzanne Bousquet, Acting Dean, College of Humanities and Social Science
4. Dr. Curchack with faculty from across the colleges
 - Dr. Craig Donovan – Public Administration
 - Dr. Brid Nicholson -- History
 - Dr. Lyn Schraer-Joiner -- Music
 - Dr. Brian Baldwin – NJ Center for Science, Technology, and Mathematics
 - Dr. Dil Ramanathan - NJ Center for Science, Technology, and Mathematics
 - Dr. Sally Chandler – English
 - Dr. Paul Croft - Geology
 - Dr. Brian Regal - History
 - Dr. Shangyan Rhee - Business
 - Dr. Linda Cahir – Secondary Education
 - Dr. Zandra Gratz – Psychology
 - Dr. Blaire Cholewa -- Counselor Education
 - Dr. Maureen Himchak -- Graduate Social Work
 - Dr. Christopher Lynch -- Communications
5. Team with the Office of Accreditation and Assessment (including Jo Hoffman)
 - Jo Hoffman, Acting Director and Ian Klein, Associate Director
6. Prof. Albrecht with the Executive Directors, and Chairs

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

School of Criminal Justice and Public Administration, Dr. James Drylie

School of Accounting & Finance, Dr. Steven John

School of Management, Marketing, International Business, Dr. Sucheta Ahlawat

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

School of Curriculum and Teaching, Dr. Gilda Del Risco

(Early Childhood & Family Studies, Elementary & Bilingual Education, Middle & Secondary Education)

School of Communication Disorder and Deafness, Dr. Martin Shulman

School for Global Education & Innovation, Dr. Michael Searson

Department of Physical Education, Recreation, and Health, Dr. Richard Bakker

Department Special Education and Literacy, Dr. Joan Kastner

COLLEGE OF NATURAL, APPLIED AND HEALTH SCIENCES

School of Environmental & Life Sciences, Dr. William Eaton

Center for Sustainability Studies, Dr. Nicholas Smith-Sebasto

School of Nursing, Dr. Minnie Campbell

School of Natural Sciences, Dr. Roxie James

Department of Mathematics, Dr. Susan Hahn

Department of Computer Science, Dr. Patricia Morreale (Acting)

COLLEGE OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

Robert Busch School of Design, Professor Rose Gonnella

Department of Music, Dr. Anthony Scelba

Department of Theatre, Professor Holly Logue (Acting)

Department of Fine Arts, Dr. Marguerite Mayhall

NEW JERSEY CENTER FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & MATHEMATICS

Dr. Laura Lorentzen, Executive Director

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of General Studies, Dr. John Dobosiewicz

School of Psychology, Dr. Suzanne Bousquet

School of Social Sciences, Dr. Jose Sanchez

(Economics, Political Science, Sociology & Anthropology)

Department of Communication, Dr. Christopher Lynch

Department of History, Dr. Christopher Bellitto

Department of English, Dr. Daniel O'Day

NATHAN WEISS GRADUATE COLLEGE

Counselor Education, Dr. Barry Mascari

Educational Leadership, Dr. Efthimia Christie

Advanced Studies in Psychology, Dr. Frank Gardner

Graduate Management Studies, Dr. Veysel Yucetepe

Occupational Therapy, Dr. Laurie Knis-Matthews

Graduate Social Work, Dr. Josephine Norward (Acting)

- 7 Dr. Curchack with the University Planning Council
Chairperson: Suzanne Bousquet, Executive Director, School of Psychology
Vice-Chair: Joy Moskovitz, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs
Adriana Brennan, Director of Alumni Relations

Linda Cahir, Assistant Professor, Middle and Secondary Education, Faculty Senate Appointment for the College of Education
Matthew Caruso, Director, Media and Publications
James Castiglione, KFT President; Department of Chemistry and Physics
Amy Castillo, Center for Academic Success, Transfer Admissions
Philip Connelly, Executive Vice President of Operations
Joseph Cronin, Managing Assistant Director, Research and Sponsored Programs
John Dobosiewicz, Director, General Studies
Tracie Feldman, Managing Assistant Director, Campus Planning
Kimberly Fraone, Associate Director, Library
Kathleen Mary Henderson, KUAFF President; Department of Physical Education, Recreation and Health
Henry Kaplowitz, Human Rights Institute and School of Psychology
 Faculty Senate Appointment for the College of Business and Public Administration
Steven Lorenzet, Dean, Nathan Weiss Graduate College
Kerrin Lyles, Director, University Center
Joseph Marinello, Director, Information Technology
Janice Murray-Laury, Vice President of Student Services
Steven Pinto, IFPTE President and Office of Facilities
Andrew Rettberg, CWA President and Office of Facilities
Shiji Shen, Director, Institutional Research, Ex Officio Member
Adam Shubsda, Associate Director, Public Safety – Police
Jeffrey Toney, Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs
Monique Wood, Undergraduate Student Representative
Veysel Yucetepe, Director, Global MBA
 Faculty Senate Appointment for the Nathan Weiss Graduate College
Maria Zamora, Assistant Professor, Department of English
 Faculty Senate Appointment for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

8. Prof. Albrecht with the Faculty Senate Executive and Assessment Committees

Dr. Barry Mascari, Chairperson
 Dr. Connie Hassett Walker, Vice Chair
 Dr. John Dobosiewicz, Secretary
 Dr. Laura Lorentzen, Board of Trustees Representative
 Dr. Charles Nelson - English
 Dr. Julie Harris – Fine Arts
 Dr. Adrienne Garro – Advanced Studies in Psychology, Chair
 Dr. Marjorie Kelly – Early Childhood
 Dr. Brian Teasdale - Biology

9. Dr. Curchack with the Non-academic Vice Presidents

Phillip Connelly, Division of Operations
 Audrey Kelly, University Relations
 Janice Murray-Laury, Student Affairs
 Kristie Reilly, Institutional Advancement

10. Team in an Open Meeting with the faculty, alumni, and students

TEAM FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

What was the team looking for?

The university was obligated to do the following:

- Document that the institution has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standards 7 and 14
- Document steps taken to promote an institution-wide culture of assessment and evidence
- Create and implement an organized and sustainable assessment process, including direct measures, to evaluate and improve institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used to gain efficiencies in programs, services, and processes;
- Create and implement an organized process to assess the achievement of student learning goals at the course and program levels, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning.

STANDARD 7 -- Institutional Assessment

The institution does not yet meet the standard.

FINDINGS

In the year since its decennial reaccreditation, Kean University has been hard at work establishing a system for the sustained measurement and improvement of institutional effectiveness. All administrative units have created statements of mission, with goals, objectives, and “measurements of assessment.”

A plan for collecting, analyzing, presenting and acting upon assessment data through the University Planning Council is in place. A report detailing the many initiatives of the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan lists many accomplishments, thought not always as outcomes and not often in measurable terms; it is also silent on some initiatives that failed to occur. Now the plan is for unit reviews to be presented to the Council for evaluation and/or recommendation. The present Council is uncertain of how this process will transpire, or how this will feed directly into resource allocation; a plan for this has been laid out, but has not yet been implemented. The form for reporting assessment data has been standardized in ways that should facilitate the job of filing reports, though it may be inadequate for measuring accomplishment (see page 8).

Some units (Athletics, CAS, EOC, Financial Aid, Human Resources, Library, Premiere Stages, the McNair Scholars Program, and Theatre Management/Kean Stage) have identified ways that their programs support the core learning goals of the University. This is a good exercise for those units that have direct contact with students, but it does not necessarily get to the issue of how effectively the unit carries out its mission or what can be done to improve its function. An ambitious Program Review process has begun, with a three-year cycle and with a strong emphasis on assessment. The Team was concerned lest the process become too onerous and thus lose value. For instance, much of the requested input data is most likely available in deans’ offices and the like; compiling these data in a report could divert the needed focus on outcomes. The process should be regularly assessed to assure its utility.

An “Institutional Score Card” has been created as a component of a new strategic plan that is being written this semester. Such a scorecard is an important step both in accountability and in monitoring the key data elements for the University. In thinking about this Score Card, Kean should be aware of the Federal regulations about what data should be publically available, and should endeavor to collect those data in a timely way.

However, ten month’s time is insufficient for judgment about whether Kean has achieved a culture of assessment, as the Monitoring Report asserts. Evidence that the assessment loop has been closed is uneven. Among the administrative units, about half report improvements based upon assessment, but it was generally difficult to discover what data constituted the grounds for change. Other units report that the work is “in process,” usually, with results anticipated in 2012 or 2013. In a few instances, the responses on the assessment reports are repetitive, or very non-specific, raising concern about the self-perceived value of the exercise.

It is not yet certain that Kean will have the kind of data it needs to plan improvement even when those steps in the process are concluded. The standardized Unit Assessment Plans have a column for “measurement of assessment,” but what are characteristically listed are activities, or action plans, not measurements or outcomes. In some instances, the items read as if they are the duties of the unit. Subsequent columns for “results” and “closing the loop”, read, in essence, “we did it” and “keep doing it.” These are not outcomes that can lead to improvement.

Perhaps those who completed the forms were thinking to answer a question about where they would look to measure an objective, though generally no measures are stated. Overall, there is very little sense of the importance of focusing on the outcomes of actions as the key to assessment for improvement. Without identifying the outcomes of their activities and actions, it will be hard to know, or demonstrate, whether any plan, initiative, or even business as usual has the desired effect. Kean should make a clear distinction between assessing unit outcomes and performance review.

Much that we read and heard left us with the impression that Kean views assessment as important chiefly for accountability, for proving that the University does what it says it does. These are important matters, but not as important as the role assessment can play in institutional improvement. It is not until that role is understood, until units learn that they can become better in this way, that assessment will be fully embraced by the institution.

The team was made aware that resource constraints, loss of personnel, increases in enrollments and general multiplication of responsibilities, may make it hard to find the wherewithal for assessment. In an era of scarcity, however, planning becomes ever more important, and the best planning is premised on data from assessment.

Commendations

- Kean University has spent a prodigious amount of time compiling assessment plans for its non-academic units.
- Kean has created and staffed an Office of Assessment. The Acting Director has done an excellent job of establishing the basis for a successful program. She was also extremely helpful to the visiting team.
- A common format has been developed that allows both for ease of completion and comparison among units, as well as having the capacity for units to report on their specific accomplishments. Each unit has its goals and objectives and “measures” of achievement, though many of the measures are actually actions.
- Some units showed evidence of having “closed the loop”—using assessment results to make adjustments and improvements. Among the best examples are the several units within Student Affairs, Undergraduate Admissions, the CAS, the University Center, Alumni Relations, Premiere Stages, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, and the Student Government. Even in these cases, however, outcomes were rarely explicated.

- The University Planning Council is in place to make strategic choices based upon assessment data, and is in the position to create a new strategic plan that can be easily assessed. The system for collecting, assembling and utilizing assessment data has been clearly laid out and, if implemented regularly, could prove sustainable.
- In several instances, units have mapped their activities against the Standard Learning Outcomes of the university. These units, like all others, must also evaluate their overall effectiveness in supporting the university.
- A program review process has been initiated.

Suggestions

- Assure that the data elements of the Institutional Scorecard are available, and are useful both for institutional monitoring and regulatory reporting.
- Assess the program review process now getting underway both to assure its value and to structure it to facilitate subsequent accreditation reports such as the PRR. Consider whether paring down the numbers of questions asked and/or re-thinking the timing of the reviews might result in a more sustainable process.

Recommendations

- Revise the many assessment plans and reformulate them according to the outcomes of units' objectives. If necessary, recast objectives so that they are measurable.
- Create the means by which to measure those outcomes, so that the data may be used in planning.
- Clarify the role of the University Planning Council

Requirement

- Complete the first cycle of institutional assessment and planning, document this with the data that were gathered and used, and articulate the linkage of this work to resource allocation.

STANDARD 14 -- Assessment Of Student Learning

The institution does not yet meet the standard.

The Kean University community has made significant, even remarkable progress since the Commission on Higher Education issued its warning in June 2011, a warning that the university is in danger of losing its accreditation in part because it did not provide evidence that it was in compliance with Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning.

A member of the faculty provided the team with the following articulate testimony regarding Kean University faculty efforts:

“The individuals at Kean University have worked tirelessly and effectively to address the concerns raised with standards 7 and 14. Scores of faculty and administration have worked diligently since we first identified, ourselves, the weakness in our self-study in those two standards. We are going on more than 18 months of hard work and dedication to improve our efforts with meeting standard 7 and 14. . . . Much progress has been made. My colleagues and I have participated fully in the process and are committed to the momentum that has enveloped this campus.”

The visitors judge that this summary of the efforts of the Kean University faculty was affirmed in our interviews, is accurate, and is deserving of the institution’s peers’ recognition and respect.

Also during the interviews, the visitors were presented with assessment information in various forms which demonstrates much real and valuable activity on the part of the faculty. The visitors understand that by dipping into various program areas they can find various pieces of the standard assessment cycle of activities. Specifically, only in rare instances are student learning outcomes either not fully developed or not written using behavioral verbs. Also in many program areas legitimate and focused assessment activities have been selected to directly measure the program’s achievement of selected student learning outcomes. However, some confusion regarding direct measures can still be found, for instance when indirect measures such as surveys are referenced as direct measures. And in too many areas, especially where rubrics are to be used, those measures are “in progress” or “to be developed.” Also, it is encouraging that in some program areas, direct measures were taken during the fall 2011 semester with some level of institutionalization following analysis of the data occurring during the spring 2012 semester; these instances are reported infrequently however in the March 1, 2012 monitoring report. Finally, some changes in the design or delivery of course work or program requirements have been cited; yet too often this essential piece is missing or *pro forma* or not specifically related to student learning. Bits and pieces of the assessment cycle can be found, but, as presented to the visitors, those pieces do not yet add up to “an organized and sustainable process to assess the achievement of student learning goals at the course and program levels, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning.”

In examining documents and in discussions, the team was consistently told that the capstone activities in the majors and programs were the points at which assessment measures were taken. We learned that there are other instances where faculty monitor progress in learning, but there

remains the heavy reliance on the capstones. While a valuable point at which to test student learning, a capstone comes too late in a student's career to allow for revision and improvement. Equivalent assessments of learning should be in place at other levels of the curriculum.

The growing use of adjunct faculty is a source of concern for the Kean full-time faculty. It may be doubly difficult to involve adjunct faculty in the work of assessment. This might make assessment of learning, especially in the general education core, very challenging.

We strongly urge the program faculty to continue its good work, to press on, to maintain commitment to satisfying the standards, and to fully implement and then sustain the plan's assessment of student learning. The faculty should be encouraged by the visitors' findings. The work done by the faculty is correct and valuable. At the time of the visit, however, that work is incomplete. The assessment cycle has yet to be completed.

The visitors see the May 2012 end-of-semester assessment retreat as necessary, central, essential, and critical to the eventual compliance with standard 14. Please see the visitor's recommendations regarding the retreat later in this report.

However, the visiting team found that in Kean University's monitoring report of March 1, 2012, the university again failed to provide evidence that it was in full compliance with standard 14. The small team visit to the university April 11-13, 2012 confirmed this judgment of the visitors.

The precise language of the Commission's charge to Kean University is the guide in the team's judgment:

- “. . . that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning”: The visitors must be guided by the verb tense of that charge. Kean University's campus-wide plan suggests that assessment of student learning is in a middle stage of design and an earlier stage of implementation. For those programs with discipline-based accreditations, the implementation of the plan is much further along. Be reminded, however, that even in those cases, the Commission's requirement of specific improvements in the design or delivery of courses and programs based on data collected through direct measures may go beyond what some other accrediting agencies require. For other programs without discipline-based accreditation, the assessment activities range from fledgling to lacking full development and implementation. Finally, by Kean University's own plan's design, the May 2012 assessment retreat will be first time that the entire plan's cycle will have been completed across the campus in every program including general education. Without the completion of the entire cycle, it is not yet possible to say that “assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning.”
- “. . . an organized and sustainable process”: There are of course encouraging signs that a momentum is being built around assessment of student learning. Kean University has indeed created an organized process to assess the achievement of student learning goals, at least at the program level. As an institution, it has begun to implement that process, but it has not completed that process fully even once. While the visitors have testimony that there is sufficient payoff for teaching faculty to sustain these efforts, the team did not find

the requisite evidence of sustainability, in large part because the institution has yet to complete the cycle and initiate the second cycle. Without that evidence, the visitors can recognize the institution's appropriate intentions but not certify that Kean University has ". . . [implemented a] sustainable process to assess the achievement of student learning goals at the course and program levels, with evidence that assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning . " Again, the May 2012 assessment retreat may provide the currently missing evidence.

Commendations

Progress in meeting the fundamental elements of assessment of student learning is worthy of notice.

- Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes are found in the vast majority of programs.
- A documented, organized, systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures was required. There is a documented and systematic plan to use data produced by direct measures of student learning. However, evidence that the plan is sustainable and useful was generally not provided in large part because the plan is so new, so recently developed, that it has yet to be implemented for one complete cycle. Phrases such as "rubrics to be developed," "will be established," "in May of 2012 faculty will spend a day," "will be updated," and "are under development for Fall 2012" are common enough in the report.
- Progress is being made in this area: "Assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes." While the collecting of this evidence is occurring at the time of the team's visit, it is not yet clear if students are achieving key outcomes according to the selected direct measures or if appropriate changes to design and delivery of programs and courses are being made routinely across the institution. Perhaps after the spring retreat, this will be much clearer. Realize though that the spring retreat or some similar activity must establish assessment goals and activities for the 2012-2013 academic year semester, and the implementation of direct measures must commence early in the fall 2012 semester.

Suggestions:

- Establish a cycle of reviewing various outcomes in different semesters or academic years. There is a difference between having a complete plan and implementing that plan completely. The institution needs to first complete its assessment plan in every area, a fundamental requirement. This way, over time, all learning outcomes will be assessed, and the plan will be implemented completely. Equally important, such a schedule will protect a heavily used full-time faculty from inordinate burdens. In turn, the assessment program will become sustainable.

- Examine the impact of its reliance on adjuncts on processes such as assessment of student learning. Does the current balance of adjuncts and full-time faculty adequately support the assessment of student learning?

Recommendations:

- Find a simple, direct, and accessible way to include the assessment activity in key courses – beyond the universally-used capstone -- within programs. Emphasize the improvements to the course or program to provide evidence that the loop is being closed.

In meetings with the deans, directors, and chairs and in materials supplied by them during the interviews, it was suggested that unreported assessment activity is occurring in some areas at the course level beyond the reliance on the capstone and just one or two other courses. This reporting opportunity should fall to the departments and program areas and likely be coordinated by the permanent director of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation. Such reporting will be noticed and appreciated by subsequent visitors and will suggest a robust and lively assessment cycle – something that points to establishing “culture of evidence.”

- Should the Commission on Higher Education choose to request an additional standard 7 and standard 14 monitoring report followed by a small team visit, be certain that evidence can be provided *early in the fall 2012 semester* that the next cycle is well underway.
- Make full use of the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee. Determine its precise function and then utilize it with confidence.

Requirements:

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the following must be accomplished:

- Complete the assessment plan. Fill in all cells.
- Make specific improvements as result of analysis of academic year 2011-12 data. Such improvements might be permanent or pilots.

Either during the 2011-2012 academic year or before the commencement of instruction in the 2012-2013 year, the following must be accomplished:

- Determine which student learning outcomes will be focused on in 2012-13.
- Select direct measures and create activities around those student learning outcomes.
- Establish a schedule for the 2012-2013 assessment activities.
- To the extent feasible, should a subsequent monitoring report be required during the 2012-2013 academic year, provide evidence that data are currently being collected or analyzed at the time of any monitoring report. Avoid being only in the planning stage.

Subsequently, the following should be accomplished:

- Robustly follow through annually including during the 2012-2013 academic year. The cycle is continuous where a culture based on evidence exists.

STANDARD 12 -- General Education

During the course of this visit, the team discovered that Kean University does not meet this standard.

The Assessment Report for General Education (SKILLS) shows that assessment direct measures for critical thinking and quantitative reasoning are currently under development, spring 2012. In addition, in the knowledge area, the report's charts assert that direct measures for the scientific method, major theories in Social Sciences, historical references in literature, and major theories/concepts in the arts all still remain under development.

Further, the commission's required attribute that "consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education [exists] that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives" is entirely missing from the institution's general education plan. An institution cannot be in compliance with a standard if a fundamental element is missing entirely or if one is removed for the purposes of the team's visit.

Suggestion:

- Kean University may have an opportunity to turn a page in some fashion by having a campus-wide discussion of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives as part of the general education plan. If such a discussion can enjoy leadership at the highest levels, great progress can be made.

Recommendations:

- Come to a campus-wide consensus on which parties are responsible for general education in order to strengthen commitment to the general education learning outcomes. The ownership of general education learning objectives is frequently a source of tension at many institutions. While the role of service or core courses is usually clear enough, the responsibility of the discipline-based program areas or departments regarding general education learning objectives and their assessment is often less clearly defined. Too often, this results in a general education program that is an afterthought and in service departments and courses being seen as only ancillary.
- Clarify the use of rubrics and then implement using best practices.

The use of rubrics for either evaluation or assessment purposes is more complicated than many institutions imagine. First, the faculty needs to be clear on the purpose of the application of the rubric: Is the application to evaluate individual student performance for grading purposes or is it to assess the effectiveness of the program regarding specific learning outcomes? This confusion was evidenced in both the monitoring report and in the interviews. Evaluation and assessment are two quite different things, and clarity of purpose is required to ensure that neither the grading nor the assessing is skewed or contaminated in any way. The faculty is urged to discover and follow best practices regarding the development and application of rubrics.

- Train faculty, especially those in program areas, for careful application of rubrics. It is common that calibration and norming are part of the rubric application process. Such things require training.

Further, some appropriate level of knowledge on the part of the program faculty regarding the general education skills should be assured. Does the program faculty apply the writing rubric in the capstone with the same sophistication as instructors of writing might?

- Consider the locus of cross-program communication and enforcement authority regarding general education learning outcomes.

A distributive general education program with responsibility shared across program lines requires an especially clear organizational plan and a fully empowered director of that program. Without those elements, it is difficult to make any real progress in the delivery of instruction, assessment, or the coordination of significant improvements. Kean University has taken steps in organization design to strengthen general education; assessment of the effectiveness those steps may be in order. Has the institution done enough to support its general education program?

Requirements:

- Design a general education program of study that includes all required fundamental elements.
- Design and implement a plan to assess all general education outcomes. Establish a schedule to move through all of the fundamental requirements. Pay particular attention to the incorporation of “study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.”

ADDITIONAL AREAS

Requirements:

- The Board of Trustees resolution growing out of the Commission’s June 2011 action must be corrected as it is factually incorrect and misrepresents Kean University’s actual accreditation status. The Commission did not reaffirm the university’s accreditation for a period of ten years.
- The university’s web site reporting on its accreditation status must be revised to accurately reflect actual Commission actions. Excerpts which may be misleading may not be used.

CONCLUSION

The team again thanks the institution, and we hope that the university will be open to the ideas and recommendations contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.