Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness

By Amy Shelton, October 2007
Middle States Standard 7

Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.
Middle States defines a four-step planning-assessment cycle. Briefly:

1. Define goals
2. Implement strategies to achieve the goals
3. Assess the achievements of the goals
4. Use the results of those assessments to improve
Middle States Standard 7

Standard 7 builds upon all other accreditation standards, each of which includes periodic assessment of effectiveness as one of its fundamental elements. Step 3 of the process.

Self-studies can thus document compliance with Standard 7 by summarizing the assessments of each accreditation standard into conclusions about the institution’s overall achievement of its key goals.
Middle States Standard 7

Standard 7 should tie together those assessments within the other standards into an integrated whole to answer questions like:

1. As an institutional community, how well are we collectively doing what we say we are doing?
2. How do we support student teaching and learning?
Middle States Standard 7

Under Standard 7:

Useful assessment processes help faculty and staff make appropriate decisions about improving programs and services, developing goals and plans, and making resource allocations.
Middle States Standard 14

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.
Middle States Standard 14

Assessment of student learning follows the same 4 general steps from Standard 7, the third element being assessment of student learning.
Middle States Standard 14

1. Developing clearly articulated learning outcomes (measurable, Objectives)
2. Offering courses, programs, and experiences for students to achieve those learning outcomes
3. Assessing student achievement of those learning outcomes
4. Using the results of those assessments to improve teaching and learning and inform planning and resource allocation decisions.
Because student learning is a fundamental component of the mission of most institutions of higher education, the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness and is the focus of Standard 14 and the Assessment Committee.
Middle States Standard 14

Among other things, we must show Middle States how:

1. The institution is using assessment results to improve student teaching and learning and otherwise advance the institution.

2. Institutional programs and resources are organized and coordinated to achieve institutional and program-level goals.
Middle States Assessment

Effective Assessment processes are useful and we must show Middle States that they are useful.

example:

Assessment is used to improve teaching and learning
Assessment is used to improve programs and services