Monitoring Report

Presented by: California University of Pennsylvania

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Introduction

California University of Pennsylvania is one of the 14 members of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. The university, founded in 1852, is located in the borough of California, Pennsylvania, nestled along the banks of the Monongahela River in southwestern Pennsylvania. The main campus consists of 38 buildings on 98 acres. The Carnegie Classification for the university is Master's – Larger Programs. Our mission is "Building Character, Building Careers". Character education is embedded throughout the university. One example is the provision of Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" training to every student, faculty and staff member. California University of Pennsylvania has been a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education since 1951.

Currently the university's enrollment is 6769 undergraduate and 2040 graduate students. There are 320 FTE faculty employed at the university. Since the last Middles States team visit in 2010, the look of campus has changed with the completion of the Convocation Center, adorning the eastern portion of the campus. California University of Pennsylvania is a member of the NCAA Division II, sponsoring 7 men's and 9 women's sports.

California University of Pennsylvania, along with the other members of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, faces an unprecedented economic challenge. For fiscal year 2011-2012, the Commonwealth's allocation to the System was cut 23%. The proposed Commonwealth budget for 2012-2013 offers additional challenges, proposing a further 20% reduction in funding to the 14 state owned universities. Although tuition was increased for academic year 2011-2012, it was not enough to keep pace with the reduction in state support.

The following monitoring report documents the university's efforts for:

(1) further implementation of a comprehensive, organized and sustained process for assessment of institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used in planning and allocating resources at the institution and unit levels (Standards 2 and 7);

(2) implementation of a documented assessment process for general education (Standard 12); and

(3) steps taken to improve institutional support for assessment activities (Standard 14).

1. **<u>Further implementation of a comprehensive, organized and sustained process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness with evidence that assessment information is used in planning and allocating resources at the institution and unit levels (Standards 2 and 7)</u>**

The current University Strategic Plan (2009-2012) is nearing its terminus. The next University Strategic Plan will cover from fall 2013 through spring 2016. The 2012-2013 academic year will be used to assess progress on the current strategic plan and to develop the next one. A new development in this process will be the Office of the Provost assuming responsibility for assessing the accomplishments of the current plan and formulating the new plan for Presidential approval. The Provost will work collaboratively through The President's Cabinet (all direct reports to the President), the Administrative Council (representing all areas from mid-level management to the President), the Academic Affairs Council (all areas reporting to the Provost) and the Provost Council (all Academic Departments).

The following data will be used to assess the effectiveness of the current University Strategic Plan, and serve as the basis for formulating the new strategic plan:

- progress on the University Strategic Plan including
    - area strategic plans in alignment with the University Strategic Plan, e.g., that of Academic Affairs (appendix 1a)
    - various continuous improvement assessments (appendix 1b)
        - ACT Student Satisfaction Survey
        - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
        - Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)
        - On-campus surveys of student satisfaction
        - PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Performance Indicators
            - Degrees Awarded
            - Second Year Persistence
            - Accreditation
            - Graduation Rates
            - Faculty Productivity
            - Distance Education
            - PRAXIS Aggregate Passing Rates
            - Internships
            - Diversity of Entering Class
            - Enrollment Diversity
            - Degree Programs with Few Graduates
            - Personnel Ratio
            - Institutional Costs
            - Faculty Terminal Degrees
            - New PA Community College Transfers or Associate Degrees Awarded
- Annual and Five-Year Program Reviews for all areas
- Targeted assessments by committees of the University Forum, e.g., the Budget, and the Planning and Priorities Committees
- Targeted assessments by the Faculty Senate

Use of Assessment Information in Planning and Allocating Resources at the Institution and Unit Levels.

Institutional-level Linkage of Assessment of Effectiveness to Resource Allocation

The institutional-level budgetary process in effect is:

- All areas are provided with an historic base-budget amount,
- Departments inform their respective deans or directors of budgetary enhancements needed based on objectives proposed for the forthcoming year,
- Deans or directors inform their vice presidential areas of budgetary enhancements needed based on college and university emphases (detailed in the University and Academic Affairs Strategic Plans, Annual Reports or Five-Year Program Reviews),
- Vice Presidents/Provost inform the President through the President's Cabinet,
- President makes final decisions concerning allocation of resources to the various vice presidential areas.

If a major area needs additional revenues for program reviews, accreditation, instrumentation, etc., the requests follow the administrative chain from the deans or directors to the vice presidents and decisions are made at the Cabinet-level with the President's decision as final. The approval of requests for additional funds is based, primarily on alignment with University goals and objectives (University Strategic Plan), and area goals and objectives, but also in part by a perception of entrepreneurial advantage, (e.g., in program development and marketing).

Unit-level Linkage of Assessment of Effectiveness to Resource Allocation

Academic Affairs and the Provost's Office have taken the lead in both expanding and refining a process which has existed informally for several years. The process is outlined as follows:

- Annual Reports are required of all departmental areas. Within the Annual Report is a summary of accomplishments for 'Academic Year Objectives' and projections of objectives for the forthcoming year. In addition:
- Guidelines for Annual Reports for Academic Affairs have been refined with the modification of two items : (appendix 1c)
    - In reporting on Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) departments are to emphasize use of data collected and the results of any changes implemented to promote student learning (added March – 2010). Resource needs identified in ASL are reported in the budgetary section.
    - In reporting on budgets, departments must assess how budgets were used for the current year and project budgetary needs for the forthcoming year (added March, 2012).
- Each Annual Report within a 5-year cycle contributes to the 5-Year Program Review. Within the 5-Year Program Review is an action plan for improvement which must

be linked to resources of the department or to additional resources needed to accomplish objectives. (appendix 1d)

- Budgetary (and other) components of Annual Reports and 5-Year Program Reviews are evaluated by the Deans of the colleges, the Provost, and shared at Deans/Provost meetings annually.
- Allocations for departmental budgets will be discussed at the Deans/Provost summer retreat and needed allocations will be made.
- Requests for additional funds must be tied to one or more of the following: the University Strategic Plan, Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, Annual Reports and/or 5-Year Program Reviews.
- Approved requests for additional funds will be submitted to the Deans by the departments and funded by the deans, or referred to the Deans/Provost for possible funding by the Provost. Requests exceeding the budgets in Academic Affairs are presented by the Provost to the President's Cabinet or in person to the President. The decision to allocate additional resources to Academic Affairs is made by the President. (appendix 1e).

2. Implementation of a documented assessment process for general education (Standard 12)

Introduction: Since 2008, the general education curriculum structure has been under review by the General Education Committee. A proposal was presented to faculty and management and presentations by members of the General Education Committee occurred at the departmental and college council levels. The proposal was submitted to the University-Wide Curriculum Committee and all representatives of that committee were asked to test it for advisor and student understanding and ease of use in the advising process. The University-Wide Curriculum Committee approved the newly modified general education curriculum at its Feb. 27, 2012 meeting; it was approved by the Provost March 15, 2012. The newly modified format with guidelines makes assessment of individual courses more manageable. The implementation date for the modified General Education curriculum is fall 2013. (appendix 2a)

Course-level Assessment

In the fall of 2010, members of the General Education Committee began responding to the recommendations of the Middle States Commission. Under the leadership of two faculty members (the chairperson of the general education committee and the assessment of student learning sub-committee chair), a method of collecting data for assessment of student learning from all courses listed on the General Education Menus was developed. In February of 2011, one of the faculty members shared with management the progress made with the General Education Committee in two primary documents: "Assessment of Student

Learning Plan" and the "General Education Menu Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Report Form." Additionally, the faculty member shared an example of a completed report and two-page "instructions sheet," used to assist faculty members in the assessment process (appendix 2b, 2c)

All academic departments with courses on the General Education Menu were to submit an "Assessment of Student Learning Plan" for each course by fall term 2011.

- Each menu has educational goals approved by the General Education Committee, University-Wide curriculum Committee and the Provost.
- Departmental faculty will develop measurable objectives for each course designed to assess the specific goals for each menu; measurable objectives must be clearly linked to the goal(s) of the specific menu.
- Each objective will have at least two means of measurement, an objective (direct), and a subjective measurement (indirect), and criteria for success.
- These objectives will be submitted in the "Assessment of Student Learning Plan."
- Each course on a menu must be assessed at least once in a 5-year period beginning fall 2011 and ending spring of 2016.

In brief, the newly designed assessment process:

- Integrates well with the program-level assessments with which faculty members are familiar,
- Allows departments to choose when they will assess within the 5-year period,
- Provides plans which are easy to follow,
- Provides a framework for completing the plan on the currently approved Learning management System (D2L),
- Is easy to track, and
- Makes assessment of individual courses more manageable. (appendix 2d)

Assessment of Student Learning Plans were submitted during fall 2011 for approximately 40% of all General Education courses: the assessment group is reviewing these. The first assessment data will be available at the end of spring term 2012. The guidelines for evaluating assessment results are being developed with appropriate recommendations. Courses for which Assessment Plans are not received will not be included on a General Education menu. (appendix 2e)

<u>Institutional Assessment of General Education</u>

In compliance with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), California University is participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA).

PASSHE furnishes persistence and graduation data for VSA. In April of 2012, senior-level students who began as first-time freshmen at California University will be tested using the ETS Proficiency Profile which is a national normative, integrated test which measures college-level proficiency in critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics. Senior capstone courses across the curriculum will be used to administer the examination. A minimal sample of 250 is the goal. In the fall of 2012, entering freshmen will be tested as well. Thus, the initial study will be representative and cross-sectional with a longitudinal study (pre to post) developing over time. (appendix 2f)

As suggested by the Middle States Visiting Team, in addition to using the VSA, components of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) are being used to evaluate improvements in student engagement and perception of academic rigor. These data are made available to faculty and managers through the Provost Council (all academic departments), and the Deans/Provost Group, as well as other committees and councils, e.g. University-Wide Curriculum Committee, the General Education Committee. (appendix 2g)

In summary, the methods of assessment of student learning through the University's General Education Program are conducted at the course, program and institutional levels. Data generated will be used to improve program delivery, teaching within the program, and student learning.

3. Steps taken to improve institutional support for assessment activities (Standard 14)

The Standard 14 committee membership was pleased with the Commission's position on Institutional support for assessment of student learning. The University-wide Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) Committee began in May of 2010 to address the recommendations of the Middle States Visiting Team of April 1, 2010. The following has occurred:

- A list of recommendations from the Standard 14 Committee was discussed by members of the University-wide ASL Committee on May 20, 2010. A draft document was prepared and distributed to committee members on June 2, 2010. (appendix 3a)
- Over the fall term 2010, the draft document prepared earlier was developed further and formatted to reflect an addendum to the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan: The addendum expands on Objective A.9 "Complete a successful 10-year Middle States Review," and Activity A.9.5 "Prepare responses to Middle States Report, e.g. recommendations on General Education, assessment of student learning, etc." (appendix 3b)
- The draft document was revised by the University-wide ASL Committee and approved. (appendix 3c)

- The document was subsequently shared with the Provost in March and with the Deans/Provost Group in April.
- The approved document including accomplishments to date was shared with the Deans/Provost group at the Academic Affairs retreat in May of 2011. An updated document with accomplishments to date was prepared in March of 2012. (appendix 3d) . A synopsis follows:
    - ASL recommendations from the Middle States Standard 14 Committee were incorporated into the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan as an addendum. Activities proposed and indicators of accomplishments were included in the addendum.
    - A position description was drafted for the coordinator of ASL. It was discussed at Deans/Provost and at the Academic Affairs retreat in May 2011. Due to downturns in projected enrollments for the 2011-2012 academic year and a 23% reduction in allocation to the PA State System of Higher Education by the Commonwealth, some adjustments have been made in assignments to temporarily meet this need. (appendix 3e)
    - The University-wide ASL Committee modified and improved materials for program-level ASL. These were distributed in May of 2011. Academic programs submitted year-end reports in September of 2011. These were evaluated by the University-wide ASL Committee in December. All academic programs are now on 5-year assessment plans. (appendix 3f)
    - Guidelines for the Annual Reports for academic departments were modified with addition of an element addressing ASL (modified spring 2011). In the future, Annual Reports are to emphasize use of learning data to improve the teaching-learning process. Concurrently, the Provost's representative to the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) requested a similar inclusion in mandated, 5-year program reviews. These changes will provide direct evidence of the effect of the ASL process on student learning. This evidence can also be used to support budgetary requests to augment the process, and thus provides a direct link to the budgeting process.
    - The Annual Reports serve as a foundation for the 5-Year Program Review. Within the 5-Year Program Review is a request for an action plan. The action plan should be tied to analysis of ASL, improvement of student learning and the budgeting process. Thus, both Annual Reports and Five-Year Program Reviews will provide a link of ASL to decisions on allocation of resources. (refer to #1 of this monitoring report for more detail).
    - The Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) was adopted by the PASSHE. Data on first-year persistence, graduation rates, costs, etc., have been shared with VSA. Cal U plans to test seniors using the ETS Proficiency Profile this April and freshmen in August (refer to General Education #2 for more detail).
    - In the last four years there have been budgetary augmentations for programs with well developed and implemented ASL plans at the program level. These augmentations were from budgets of the academic deans and were funded from PASSHE Productivity funds, earned primarily through high faculty productivity at Cal U. With the change in productivity awards from the

System, these funds are no longer available. Periodically, there have been ASL recognition symposia where faculty representing exemplary programs presented their assessment results, received awards, a special luncheon, and publicity related to their accomplishments. These will continue. Additional means of recognizing exemplary work in ASL were discussed at the Academic Affairs Retreat in May 2011. With a decrease in enrollments for the 2011-2012 academic year and a decrease in allocations to the PASSHE by the Commonwealth (23% for 2011-2012; 20% proposed for 2012-2013), it is even more important that other methods of recognition be used. The linkage of ASL in the Annual Reports of each academic department provides for an avenue for a direct effect on budgetary allocation of the limited funds available to Academic Affairs. Situations in which a cogent argument, in alignment with University goals and objectives, can be made for additional funds, such requests will be presented to the President. Other non-budget related means of recognition are being explored by the Deans/Provost, and the University-wide ASL Committee. On September 15, 2011, all college coordinators, newly appointed coordinators for the School of Graduate Studies and a representative from Student Affairs were invited to participate in the conference on "Becoming an Assessment Facilitator" sponsored by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. A number of good ideas were generated with the group at this conference.

- The chair of the restructured University-wide Committee on ASL (refer to next bullet) met with the assessment of student learning sub-committee chair on the assessment model being developed. The new course-level assessment approach is based on the process used for program-level ASL. The timeline requires that all departments with courses on General Education Menus submit assessment plans during the fall term 2011. All courses must be assessed at least once within a five-year period. All assessments will be evaluated by the faculty of the General Education Committee (refer to #2 of this monitoring report for more detail).
- The University ASL Committee has been restructured to mirror representation from all areas identified by the Board of Governor's (BOG) Policy 1997-01: Assessing Student Learning Outcomes. Formerly the Committee consisted of coordinators for program-level assessment from the undergraduate colleges only and was chaired by the Associate Provost. The former committee served primarily to facilitate the program-level ASL. The new University-Wide ASL Committee will have membership representing:
  - -the college coordinators for program-level assessment,
  - -newly appointed coordinators for the Graduate School program-level Assessment,
  - -a representative from Student Affairs who works with assessment of extracurricular activities,
  - -a member of the Developmental Studies Assessment Committee,
  - -two members from the General Education Committee,
  - -at least one academic dean, and
  - -one graduate and one undergraduate student.

The restructured committee reports directly to the Provost (appendix 3g). The Provost has appointed the chair of the recent Standard 14 Committee for the Middle States Accreditation visit, as her designee for the new committee. The new University-Wide Committee will meet at least twice annually and coordinate all ASL efforts campus-wide. Budgetary needs of the committee will be requested directly from the Provost.

Conclusion

The preceding report documents the actions taken by California University of Pennsylvania to comply with the three areas identified after our 2010 campus visit by Middle States. These actions have resulted in a more organized, sustainable process to evaluate institutional effectiveness, assess general education, link assessment to the budgetary process and improve support provided for institutional assessment.