Foundations for Student Success 4.1: Closing the Assessment Loop

Monroe Community College
June 2015
College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee
Report to Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee

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# Table of Contents

College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee  
Report to Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee........................................... ii

**Introduction**..................................................................................................................1

**Overview: History of Assessment at MCC** .................................................................1

SUNY’s Role in Assessment.........................................................................................3

MCC’s Shift in Assessment Focus..................................................................................3

**Accountability: General Assessment Stakeholder Expectations** .........................4

**THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT** ..........................................................................................4

Middle States Commission on Higher Education......................................................4

Impact of MSCHE standards and compliance..............................................................5

The United States Department of Education (ED).........................................................6

State University of New York (SUNY) ........................................................................7

SUNY Faculty Senate / Faculty Council of Community Colleges................................8

New York State Education Department (NYSED) .......................................................9

Specialized Accrediting Bodies...................................................................................9

Other External Stakeholders.......................................................................................10

**THE INTERNAL CONTEXT** ......................................................................................10

**Improvement: Assessment Policies and Practices at the College** ......................11

Institutional Framework for Academic Assessment Activities................................12

Mission.......................................................................................................................12

Strategic Plan.............................................................................................................13

Board of Trustees Policies and Faculty Senate By-laws/Resolutions........................13

Administrative Leadership.........................................................................................14

Academic Program and Department Faculty..............................................................15

Institutional Principles Guiding Assessment Activities.............................................15

Current Assessment Practices at MCC.......................................................................16

Specific Assessment Practices at MCC........................................................................16

Leadership of Academic Assessment Projects by Faculty Members.........................16

Assessment of Course Learning Outcomes Using Embedded Tools........................17

Focus on Follow-Up....................................................................................................17
Support and Involvement of Academic Leadership.................................................................18
“High Stakes vs. Low Stakes” Projects ..................................................................................19
Indirect Measures of Student Success..................................................................................20
Assessment Projects at MCC: Program Evaluation .........................................................20
Assessment Projects at MCC: SUNY General Education (SUNY-GER) Courses ..........22
Assessment Projects at MCC: Local General Education (MCC-GER) Courses ............23
Assessment Projects at MCC: Special Initiatives ..........................................................24
Moving Forward: Closing the Loop in Assessment at MCC ..............................................24
Building on Past Successes ...............................................................................................25
New Directions for Assessment and Evaluation at MCC ..................................................25
Additional Principles Guiding Assessment at MCC ..........................................................25
MCC’s Ongoing Commitment to Full-Circle Assessment ..................................................26
  Continuing Faculty Senate Involvement ......................................................................27
  Accomplishments in Assessment Over the Past 5 Years ..............................................28
Moving Forward: Next Steps in Assessment and Evaluation at MCC .............................28
Concluding Remarks .........................................................................................................28
Appendices ..........................................................................................................................29
Appendices

Appendix I – Monroe Community College Program Evaluation Process Guidelines ..........31
Appendix II – SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution 2010-39.............................................42
Appendix III – Faculty Senate Actions in Assessment .........................................................44
Appendix IV – Academic Assessment & Program Evaluation Project Schedule .............50
Appendix V – Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education
   Requirement Courses ........................................................................................................52
Appendix VI – Degree Requirements: Liberal Arts Content & General Education ..........58
Appendix VII – Academic Assessment of Student Learning and Program Evaluation:
   Faculty/Department Rights and Responsibilities.............................................................59
Appendix VIII – CAPE Committee Membership Archive ..................................................61
Introduction

Academic assessment and program evaluation at Monroe Community College have continued to progress since the publication of Foundations for Student Success IV: Closing the Assessment Loop (Foundations IV) in 2009. MCC’s faculty, staff, and administration have capably followed through on the College’s assessment plan, demonstrating an ever-increasing commitment to a system of continuous improvement among the institution’s academic departments and degree programs.

This document, hereafter referred to as Foundations 4.1 serves as 1) an update to Foundations IV regarding activities that have taken place and 2) the basis for MCC’s next steps in assessment and evaluation. The reader will have an understanding of the evolution of academic assessment at the College, including both a background history of assessment, and a full documentation of MCC’s current assessment policies and practices. More importantly, this report provides the MCC community with a basis for moving academic assessment and evaluation forward, ensuring the processes associated with assessment and evaluation continue to benefit the College through improvements made to individual courses, and to program design.

Overview: History of Assessment at MCC

Over the past few decades, the College has been involved in the process of outcomes assessment. This commitment had its inception with the development of the 1990–1995 Comprehensive Assessment Plan. This plan, endorsed by the College and the State University of New York (SUNY), provided the impetus for a college-wide approach for identifying and measuring student learning outcomes with the ultimate goal of improving institutional effectiveness. The plan focused upon four major categories: academic majors, basic skills, general education, and personal/social growth. The College designed a multi-step process for implementation, established timelines, and assigned responsibilities.

The Vice President for Academic Services and the Faculty Senate appointed the college-wide Assessment Task Force in late fall of 1999. Its charge was to develop an assessment framework and link that framework to institutional effectiveness and improvement. The goal was to develop a systematic integrated process for measuring the overall institutional effectiveness of the College and to use these findings to better achieve MCC’s mission and serve the expressed needs of the College’s students, various stakeholders, and constituents. Six members of the task force were named by the Faculty Senate, with six others appointed by the Vice President of Academic Services. The complete findings and recommendations of the Assessment Task Force were included in the group’s final report, Foundations for Student Success: Learning and Assessment (hereafter referred to simply as “Foundations I”). This document has provided the primary context for all faculty assessment projects and activities since its completion and activation in 2001.

A summary of the significant outcomes of the task force’s work included:

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1 Foundations IV refers simply to this document being the fourth volume of the Foundations series. The expectation is ongoing updates to Foundations IV will be made and named progressively as Foundations 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, etc. until or unless a more significant revision might be required.
Establishment of an Outcomes Assessment Office within the Academic Services division, hiring a designated full-time assessment professional (then the “Coordinator of Academic Assessment”), September 2000;

Revision and update of the MCC Assessment Framework and the development of an implementation and communication schedule;

Design of a framework and cycle for piloting assessment activities and initiating future programmatic reviews;

Specific establishment of faculty-led assessment and evaluation projects, which included the creation and naming of faculty assessment leaders who would act as project managers. These individuals are identified and appointed based on input from the assessment professional, division dean, and department chair.

- Program Assessment Liaisons (PALs) were to act as the primary coordinator, coach, and representative of program assessment activity working with the College’s designated full-time assessment professional (current title “Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment”) for each program. The appointed PAL would receive release time for service during the three-semester project.
- Discipline Assessment Liaisons (DALs) were to serve as the primary organizer, coach, and faculty representative for the assessment projects in general education, also working with the designated assessment professional. The appointed DAL would also receive release time for service during the academic year.

After engaging in several annual assessment cycles, it became apparent to the faculty, staff and designated assessment professional that the Faculty Senate Resolutions 2.6 Guidelines for Program Review 2003 required significant revisions. Thus, starting in 2007-08, the Ad Hoc Assessment Committee, appointed by the Faculty Senate, engaged in lengthy discussions to update the review process from a four phase process to a seven step process that provided faculty with a more descriptive and detailed process. The outcome of two years of effort was approval of the Monroe Community College Program Review Process Guidelines by the vote of the Faculty Senate in May 2008 and the Academic Services Vice President in October 2008. An archived copy of this document can be found on the MCC Assessment website.

Reflecting continuing changes in process, practice and focus, this document was updated in 2012, including a title change from “Program Review” to “Program Evaluation”, and can be found in Appendix I. These revised guidelines place more emphasis on identifying a purpose for each program evaluation project as a way to make each project useful and relevant beyond the mechanical collection of information. The guidelines also include a report of the findings and recommendations resulting from the identification of this purpose. Although seemingly minor, these changes 1) acknowledge the shift in focus from review to evaluation and 2) reinforce the premise that inquiry is most effective when faculty ask the questions they want answered.

The revised guidelines have also strengthened the action phase of each program evaluation project, which occurs when the department and program faculty focus their attention on their findings and recommendations. These “closing the loop’ activities include at present a “moving
forward forum” attended by both faculty and administrators and the development of a timeline for the implementation of the project recommendations. CAPE Committee is making plans to implement the follow-up consultation regarding progress made on implementation of project recommendations.

SUNY’s Role in Assessment

As was the case for all public institutions in New York State, Monroe Community College was required to comply with a new state mandate, the “SUNY Assessment Initiative,” as of Academic Year (AY) 2001-02. While the state’s requirements (and financial support) for academic assessment formed some of the basis for assessment training and practices at the College, individual campuses in the SUNY system had some latitude as to the local policies and processes they could embark upon in support of the initiative. MCC was one of the leading institutions in assessment in the SUNY system both in terms of the level of leadership and acceptance of assessment by the institution’s faculty and in terms of the resources allocated to assessment.

SUNY’s role in assessment changed significantly in March 2010 when the SUNY Board of Trustees passed SUNY Resolution 2010-039, which is based on a set of proposals from the SUNY Chancellor scaling back the accountability role of SUNY System Administration. (See Appendix II.) Although the SUNY Assessment Initiative (and corresponding mandate) was still in place, SUNY System Administration would no longer require annual reporting of assessment results by campuses and would scale back its specific requirements for assessment in the areas of Basic Communication, Mathematics, and Critical Thinking. At the same time, SUNY eliminated its financial support of campuses in assessment and is presently transitioning its role to be consultative.

MCC’s Shift in Assessment Focus

Concurrent with the decrease of oversight from SUNY has been the rise of interest in assessment from MCC’s regional accrediting body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE, or simply, “Middle States”). Starting in AY 2009-10, MCC shifted its attention from its prior SUNY-centered approach to assessment and began constructing its updated model of assessment that more completely focuses on MSCHE assessment standards and practices. This shift in assessment focus has led to a number of small but important changes in assessment:

- Within the assessment and program evaluation process, the institution and its faculty now place greater emphasis on curriculum and program design and the analysis of information gleaned from the process. This represents a change from what had been a process driven more by the mechanical aspects of assessment, such as the successful collection of data and the calculation of statistics to verify reliability;
- Assessment and program evaluation processes have been more fully integrated into the institution’s well-established curriculum process;
- Programs and departments are engaging in increased levels of follow-up activity in assessment (known in the profession as “closing the loop” actions);
Faculty members have been encouraged, as part of their assessment and program evaluation projects, to adapt the process as appropriate to ensure the usefulness of the exercise;

In September 2010, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee approved the formation of the College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee as a permanent subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

Clearly, Monroe Community College’s faculty members have increased their level of engagement in assessment activities over time. It is expected this trend will continue as the faculty recognizes and experiences the practical gains the efforts associated with assessment bring to programs and to general education.

Accountability: General Assessment Stakeholder Expectations

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Within the broader scope of education, assessment as a “movement” over the past two decades has developed on two separate tracks: assessment for accountability, and assessment for improvement. External stakeholders (predominantly government agencies and accrediting bodies) have tended to stress assessment as a means for ensuring accountability, whereas academics and non-profit educational research organizations have focused on the benefits assessment brings for educational improvement.

In this section, the standards and expectations of the external stakeholders are presented with the focus on how these standards and expectations have (and should) influence the formulation of assessment and evaluation strategies at MCC.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is MCC’s regional accrediting body. The role of MSCHE in the accreditation process is to establish a target set of expectations (or “Standards”), and then to periodically verify that member institutions are meeting those expectations. Over the course of time, these expectations tend to increase as institutions are expected to demonstrate progress in providing students with improvements in their college or university experiences.

The College’s cycle of accreditation includes two major benchmark activities: a decennial self-study, which is a major review and evaluation of all operations at the College; and a periodic review report (PRR), a smaller-scale project engaging the college community in a kind of “check-up” in between self-studies. The College submitted its last PRR report in June 2012 and began another self-study in AY 2013-14, which will be submitted to Middle States in January 2016.

The MSCHE standards most closely associated with academic assessment are:
• Standard 11 – Educational Offerings. The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

• Standard 12 – General Education. The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

• Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities. Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

• Standard 14 – Assessment of Student Learning. Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals, and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.²

For a full list of the MSCHE Standards, visit www.msche.org. Middle States has recently revised their accreditation standards; however, the new standards have not reduced in any way the focus on assessment.

Impact of MSCHE standards and compliance

MCC’s membership in the MSCH is standard practice for institutions of higher education, both as a means for ensuring high institutional academic standards, and for maintaining the College’s eligibility for federal financial resources (such as Title IV funding) that are contingent upon external accreditation. MSCH as an organization acts as a kind of intermediary between institutions of higher education and the federal government. In principle, when MCC and other member colleges and universities endorse and comply with MSCH standards, the result should be a lower level of intrusiveness from federal or state government interventions than would otherwise occur without the presence of an active regional accrediting body.

So, Monroe Community College takes seriously its commitment to comply with MSCH standards. Meeting MSCH expectations has a number of direct and indirect benefits to the institution:

➢ Having institutional accreditation serves as important external validation that MCC is compliant with all matters of interest to the federal government not directly regulated by the U.S. Department of Education (compliance standard);
➢ Regional accreditation of two-year institutions serves as an important minimum standard for four-year colleges and universities that the academic programs at the two-year college meet the generalized regional standards of MSCH (quality standard);

² Quoted from Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2006. Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation, pp. x-xi.
The institution’s process of undertaking systematized self-review serves as a vehicle to promote continuous improvement of academic programs, and of all supporting activities at the college or university (quality standard);

Satisfying the expectations set by the regional accrediting body (MSCHE) allows the institution to more easily and effectively communicate to institutional stakeholders (trustees, parents, local governments, alumni, donors, etc.) that the educational experience of students meets the regional standards of all similar institutions of higher education.

Institutions don’t always meet MSCHE standards, and so, varying levels of “action” by MSCHE are prescribed after a self-study or PRR is reviewed. Generally speaking, follow-up actions indicate either a problem in the documentation of compliance, or a problem with compliance itself. Colleges and universities that are non-compliant jeopardize their academic reputations, with continued non-compliance possibly resulting in the loss of federal financial resources.

**The United States Department of Education (ED)**

The federal government has become increasingly interested and involved in higher education over the past decade. During the forty-year period following the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965, federal involvement in higher education was primarily limited to the provision of financial aid funds to improve student access to higher education. However, in 2005, the George W. Bush Administration’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education (known as the “Spellings Commission”) was charged with the mission of reviewing and formulating a strategy for the improvement of the nation’s higher education system.3

The Obama administration and Congress have both expressed continued interest in and oversight of higher education. At the core of accountability measures moved forward by the federal government are concerns about the continued rising costs of postsecondary education, and the increasing debt load taken on by students directly and by the federal government indirectly. Some recent issues include:

- Increased requirements by the federal government for information collection using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Database System (IPEDS) to track for comparison purposes particular data from colleges and universities;
- Increased requirements on colleges and universities regarding distance education, including the verification of student identity and policies regarding the integrity of student work;
- Integration of secondary and postsecondary educational expectations, promoting a “smoother transition” from high school to college, as part of the “Race to the Top” federal education funding initiative and reducing the need for remedial education;
- The “Completion Agenda,” which re-emphasizes the current focus of the federal government on student retention, and adds the expectation of an increase in students’ acquisition of postsecondary certificates and degrees. This approach to measuring success in higher education based upon completion (and in some instances, job

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3 For more information and details about the impact of the 2006 Spellings Commission report, consult *Foundations IV*. 

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placement) has encouraged state governments, including New York’s, to consider adoption of performance-based funding measures as a means of creating financial leverage between governments and higher education institutions.

- Although not an actual federal government initiative, the U.S. Department of Education’s support for the “Common Core” curriculum for elementary and secondary school education has become a hot-button political issue. Its impact on higher education is uncertain, but there are ongoing implications that both Congress and the executive branch could easily pivot to promoting a common general education core for higher education institutions.

- The Obama administration has proposed higher education ought to adapt to, and accommodate for, learning adult students (most notably veterans) acquire outside of the classroom. Current trends in higher education include the consideration of “prior learning assessment,” an effort to award students academic credit and/or standing in pursuit of a degree in recognition of work- or experientially-based learning.

These areas alone do not constitute the full degree to which the federal government sets mandates on institutions of higher education, but they do show how and where the federal government’s interest in higher education is expanding.

**State University of New York (SUNY)**

Through the SUNY Assessment Initiative of 2000, Monroe Community College has developed and refined a system of assessing courses that qualify for SUNY General Education credit (SUNY-GER). From 2000-2009, MCC’s assessment of SUNY-GER courses also formed the backbone of the College’s approach to assessment. Foundations I-III all focused on how MCC’s faculty and staff should conduct assessment activities to demonstrate compliance with the SUNY Assessment Initiative. In addition, the production of reports documenting these assessment activities was based largely upon templates provided by SUNY.

Beginning in AY 2010-11, campuses within the SUNY system were advised by SUNY System Administration to revise their local assessment programs to more fully respond to the requirements of specialized accrediting bodies, and of MSCHE. In passing SUNY Resolution 2010-039 (see Appendix II) in March 2010, the SUNY Board of Trustees amended the SUNY Assessment Initiative in the following substantive ways:

- The mandate requiring the annual submission of assessment reports to SUNY System Administration was eliminated;
- All provisions related to the specialized provisions identified under the “Strengthening Campus-based Assessment (SCBA)” program were repealed;\(^4\)

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\(^4\) SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution 2004-92 enacted SCBA in 2006, and created additional requirements for the more focused assessment of Mathematics, Basic Communication, and Critical Thinking. These increased requirements were coupled initially with funding from SUNY. The elimination of SCBA meant the requirements and accompanying funds were likewise both eliminated.
The SUNY-based General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group, an unelected oversight and advisory team of SUNY faculty and administrators from around the state and working with SUNY System Administration, was disbanded;

- Campus support funding from SUNY for special assessment activities was cut;
- SUNY acknowledged that campus-based assessment programs and strategies should align the expectations of SUNY, MSCHE, and specialized accrediting bodies.

In spite of these changes listed above, SUNY Resolution 2010-039 affirmed the role SUNY plays in the assessment of SUNY-GER. System Administration’s current expectations and practices for assessment include:

- Campuses continue to be required to assess SUNY-GER disciplines on a revolving 3-year cycle, as the regulations prescribed under the SUNY Assessment Initiative for regular ongoing assessment of SUNY-GER have not been repealed;
- Review of the Major (program evaluation) should also continue as required by the SUNY Assessment Initiative;
- Although campuses need not submit their reports annually to SUNY, they are subject to periodic audits for such reports; records should therefore be maintained locally on an ongoing basis;
- The procedures for approving new courses for SUNY-GER remain in place;
- The mandate that SUNY-GER courses should be assessed in accordance with the listed SUNY Student Learning Outcomes for the ten Knowledge and Skills areas and two Infused Competencies also remains in place;
- SUNY System Administration’s role in monitoring and overseeing the assessment of SUNY-GER is expected to shift to that of consultant and advisor.

**SUNY Faculty Senate / Faculty Council of Community Colleges**

The SUNY Faculty Senate plays an important role in establishing the SUNY system-wide set of educational goals and policies that create a common bond among the various member institutions. As indicated on the SUNY website, “The University Faculty Senate (UFS) serves as a resource on governance for the University. It serves as a deliberative body on educational policies for the SUNY system.” Article VII of the *SUNY Policies of the Board of Trustees* states, “the Senate shall be the official agency through which the University faculty engages in the governance of the University. The Senate shall be concerned with effective educational policies and other professional matters within the University.”

The Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC) is the official organization through which the SUNY community college faculty engages in the governance of the university. Although the FCCC is distinct and separate from the University Faculty Senate, this separate identity has not typically resulted in substantively different educational policies, as SUNY System Administration works with both groups to create unified approaches to common issues.

The SUNY Faculty Senate in 2001, in cooperation with representatives of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, revised the 1983 Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs to increase the centrality of assessment in program review. This practice is consistent
with the Characteristics of Excellence adopted by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Final Report of the Provost’s Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. In 2009-10, deliberations within the UFS and the FCCC (including a controversial 2008-09 resolution by the FCCC) resulted in the 2010 revisions of the SUNY Assessment Initiative described earlier in this document.\(^5\)

**New York State Education Department (NYSED)**

The role of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) is focused on curriculum and program structure, having only a tangential impact on assessment and evaluation processes. NYSED is responsible for setting requirements for earned degrees in New York State for both public and private schools. One of the NYSED requirements relates to the minimum amount of liberal arts content in an earned degree in New York State. Minimum requirements are as follows:

- AA degree 45 course credits
- AS degree 30 course credits
- AAS degree 20 course credits

NYSED liberal arts include the disciplines of the humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, and social sciences. NYSED provides examples of course types generally considered and not considered within the liberal arts and sciences disciplines on their website. In all cases, SUNY-GER courses may be counted as liberal arts courses.

Part of the NYSED and MCC curriculum approval process includes designating new courses as either meeting or not meeting the definition of “Liberal Arts.” The curriculum approval process also requires each degree include the mandated minimum number of Liberal Arts credits.

**Specialized Accrediting Bodies**

External specialized accreditation bodies typically are quite prescriptive in their assessment/evaluation process. There are specific standards or criteria identified by the accrediting body that the program must respond to in their written accreditation report. These assessment requirements have the effect of standardizing the program design and/or curriculum of the accredited program within particular licensure or professional degree requirements.

The following list identifies MCC’s accredited programs and their corresponding specialized accrediting bodies:

- Dental Hygiene A.A.S. (CODA)
- Electrical Engineering Technology A.A.S. (ETAC-ABET)
- Health Information Technology A.A. S. (CAHIIM)
- Nursing A.A.S. (ACEN)

\(^5\) For a complete version of the FCCC’s 2008-09 resolution to rescind the SUNY Assessment Initiative, see: [http://www.fccc.suny.edu/resolutions.html](http://www.fccc.suny.edu/resolutions.html). Select Resolution AA5.
- Paramedic A.A.S. (CAAHEP)
- Radiologic Technology A.A.S. (JR-CERT)

In addition, the A.A.S. degrees in Apprentice Training – Automotive are certified by General Motors (GM-ASEP) and by Toyota (T-TEN).

Programs at MCC that receive specialized accreditation have been recognized for their achievement in meeting academic quality standards, and for promoting the transfer of students and credits in those instances when a higher degree is sought. However, in the area of assessment and evaluation, specialized accreditation often requires program faculties pursue a process that deviates from that which has been established at MCC. A specialized accrediting body may overly emphasize one area of assessment or evaluation relative to typical MCC standards, while de-emphasizing or omitting entirely other areas of significant importance to the College. Thus, assessment and evaluation activities for specialized accreditors may actually create more work for the participating department faculties.

Recognizing accredited degree programs confront unique challenges in program evaluation, particularly the duplication of efforts associated with assessment, the CAPE Committee proposed changes in March 2013 to create an alternate protocol for the evaluation of accredited programs. These changes were adopted by the Faculty Senate in October 2014.

Other External Stakeholders

Activities in assessment and evaluation should also provide information and satisfy the expectations of MCC’s other external stakeholders – those affiliated with the College, but not directly involved in the operations of the institution. These stakeholders include the County, prospective employers, four-year transfer institutions, parents, and donors. Clearly, each of these groups has an interest in the success of the College, as well as an interest in the quality of the education and training students receive. Normal assessment and evaluation processes at the College address the broad concerns and interests each of these stakeholder groups represent, and provide the various academic departments at MCC the opportunity to link educational outcomes with the interests of these stakeholders.

THE INTERNAL CONTEXT

Typically, “assessment for accountability” refers to how educational institutions demonstrate to external stakeholders students are learning certain educational concepts, acquiring particular skills and competencies, and gaining knowledge appropriate to their level of education. As institutions of higher education become increasingly familiar with the proper use of assessment data for decision-making purposes, faculty and administrative leaders recognize the process of assessing student learning has an internal context for accountability as well.

MCC’s experience with assessment and evaluation has provided the College with opportunities for reflective analysis. Fundamentally and increasingly, the faculty is becoming interested not in reviewing whether student learning meets the expectations of external stakeholders, but more
importantly, whether student learning matches the goals and aspirations the faculty has for their students.

Every academic department at the College undertaking assessment or evaluation projects actually has its own internal accountability standards. These standards, or *benchmarks*, identify the faculty’s expectation for student learning in aggregate. When undertaking an assessment of general education courses, departments report out the proportion of students who “meet or exceed” standards for specific learning outcomes. This proportion is compared against a departmental *benchmark standard* as a means of measuring whether or not student learning of each outcome is “sufficient.” In instances where a benchmark standard is not met, then in principle, that result would trigger some degree of corrective action by the department.

In program evaluation projects, program faculties may have other benchmark standards or measures that assist them in determining whether particular educational goals are being met. These benchmarks may include such areas as faculty professional development activities, enrollment and/or retention goals, and facility updates. The idea is to set some target for one or more of these areas, and work toward success in meeting those targets.

In both instances described above, the assessment and evaluation process offers department faculties the opportunity to establish their own internal accountability standards without interference from external stakeholders. This system of accountability correspondingly engenders greater success in the alternative process of assessment for improvement.

In 2012, the CAPE committee completed *Academic Assessment of Student Learning and Program Evaluation: Faculty/Department Rights and Responsibilities*, a document (see Appendix VII) outlining the set of rights and responsibilities of faculty and departments regarding academic assessment and program evaluation. The document was approved by both the Faculty Senate (November 2012) and Administration and establishes the importance of internal accountability for assessment activities. A complete version appears as Faculty Senate Resolution 2.9 on the Faculty Senate website.

At MCC, internal accountability in assessment leads directly to improvement in programs and the curriculum. And, to the extent the faculty maintains its standards of rigor in the curriculum, the result is assessment processes that will reveal the College’s standards exceeding, in most instances, those of external stakeholders. That is to say, the standards for success MCC’s faculty place on themselves and their students should strive to exceed the standards others would put on the institution.

**Improvement: Assessment Policies and Practices at the College**

Certainly, the assessment program at Monroe Community College is one that asks its program and department faculties to be accountable for student learning. However, as one might expect, the more useful function assessment plays at MCC is to inform departments and programs of those ways service to student learning can be improved upon, particularly in aspects such as curricular design and institutional support. For this reason, emphasis on the assessment process has moved in the past several years from the *mechanics of assessment processes* to the *strategic utilization of assessment results.*
For this reason, MCC’s approach to assessment activities, both current and future, could best be described as being focused on follow-up recommendations and activities that are the product of assessment and evaluation. In other words, the College faculty and administration seek to maintain a process centered on “Closing the Loop” of assessment.

**Institutional Framework for Academic Assessment Activities**

MCC’s academic assessment practices start with those typical overarching, institutional visions that guide all else – the Mission, the Strategic Plan\(^6\), and *Foundations IV*. Other structures, including the Faculty Senate, academic leadership, and the academic departments themselves, provide the institutional context for how assessment projects will be undertaken and how assessment results will be utilized.

**Mission**

As affirmed by Middle States, “assessment is not an event but a process that is an integral part of the life of the institution….”\(^7\) The process of assessment and its results are a critical way to answer the question, “As an institutional community, how well are we collectively doing what we say we are doing?”\(^8\) In other words, how well are we supporting student learning?

The Faculty Senate formed the College Assessment and Program Evaluation Committee (CAPE) for the purposes of reviewing and evaluating MCC’s process of assessing student learning. In updating *Foundations IV*, the CAPE Committee reviewed the Mission of the College and revisited the discussion from *Foundations IV* to determine what, if any, conditions had changed regarding how MCC’s assessment framework supported the mission of the College.

The current mission statement is as follows.

> *Monroe Community College is a dynamic learning community where access, excellence, and leadership are the College’s hallmarks. Our mission is to educate and prepare diverse learners to achieve scholarly, professional, and individual success within a local and global context. The College serves as a catalyst for innovation, economic development, lifelong learning, and civic engagement.*

MCC’s Program Evaluation Guidelines require departments to review, and revise as necessary, their program’s purpose statement and describe its relationship to the College’s mission. MCC’s Mission Statement has changed since the publication of *Foundations I and IV*, which also required departments establish how degree programs supported the College’s Mission. The College’s assessment and evaluation processes should continue to adapt with future changes, both in the College’s Mission Statement and in its Strategic Plan.

\(^6\) References to the Mission and Strategic Plan relate to: *Strategic Plan 2012-2016 Fulfilling the Promise.*

\(^7\) Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2006. *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation*, p. 64.

Strategic Plan

The College’s Strategic Plan frames the institutional backdrop for assessment in much the same way the Mission provides the vision. If assessment and evaluation processes are meant to provide the faculty and staff an opportunity to examine and study how the College is (or is not) serving its students, the Strategic Plan provides the framework for these processes. The current Strategic Plan frames the institutional context of assessment in the following passages:

Direction One: Learning First –

Direction Four: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Accountability –
   Goal 1: Advance institutional effectiveness and organizational efficiency through assessment and evidence-based decisions.

MCC’s Strategic Plan also includes core values and assumptions related to assessment and evaluation. Even as academic assessment and evaluation have developed under Foundations IV, the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan established assessment should support and be a part of virtually all functional aspects of the institution.

Board of Trustees Policies and Faculty Senate By-laws/Resolutions

The Board of Trustees policy manual contained several statements related to faculty responsibilities regarding academic programs and curriculum. Adopted in 1978, this policy manual demonstrated an early commitment to assessment, program evaluation and the usefulness of external review committees.

3.44 Chairpersons of academic departments shall serve as chief representatives of their departments and be responsible for the implementation of the educational programs of the departments for which they serve.

4.10 & 4.13 The faculty shall be composed of the President, College officers, and all other members of the full-time professional staff. The President shall be the chairperson of the faculty. The faculty shall have a responsibility to participate in the development and implementation of the educational programs of the College through consultation and presentation of recommendations through the Faculty Senate.

4.131 Specific Departmental Responsibilities of Faculty Through Departmental Participation, item 7, Evaluation and review of courses, programs, and teaching methods consistent with established practice, and item 16, Work with departmental advisory committees.

Currently, the Board of Trustees Policy Manual is transitioning in both form and content. As revisions are finalized, assessment-related policies will be included in the future version of this document.
The Faculty Senate Bylaws also demonstrate an early commitment to assessment and program evaluation. The “Rationale” statement for these bylaws includes the following:

“The Faculty Senate carries out the academic governance process through judicious and timely deliberations. It also ensures, through the electoral process, a broad participatory role from individual units in the initiation, development, implementation, and evaluation of the educational program at Monroe Community College.

As stated in the purpose statement from their bylaws, “The Faculty Senate is the representative governing body of the Faculty and develops and recommends policies and guidelines in all areas of Faculty responsibility.” The Faculty Senate expresses its leadership role in formulating policy with regard to assessment and program evaluation, as exemplified in the past by the work of ad hoc assessment committees and the CAPE Committee in the major revision of the program evaluation process. The Faculty Senate traditionally has taken the leadership role in formulating policy with regard to assessment, and has provided a variety of forums for the discussion and deliberation over assessment processes. Generally, the work of the Senate on assessment is performed under the jurisdiction of the Curriculum Committee. And, whereas the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee oversees assessment, the implementation of assessment projects resides with department faculty.

The most current expression of the Faculty Senate’s support for assessment activities is the creation of the ongoing College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee in AY 2010-11. Organized under the Curriculum Committee, the CAPE Committee is charged to ensure the guidelines for program evaluation are adhered to, and promote best practices. Members of the CAPE Committee do not have to be senators; they can be drawn from the entire body of teaching and non-teaching faculty. A list of past and present committee members appears in Appendix VIII.

For a more complete list of Faculty Senate actions involving assessment, see Appendix III.

Administrative Leadership

The Provost and Vice President of Academic Services serves as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of the College. The Provost supports an innovative and high quality learning environment that promotes academic excellence and student success, ensuring the quality of the academic curriculum, instruction, and student assessment. The Dean of Curriculum and Program Development reports to the Provost and provides leadership in the areas of curriculum development, program revisions, assessment, and instructional development. The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment is responsible for the improvement and maintenance of the assessment systems, which measure and facilitate excellent academic performance. The Assistant Director reports to the Dean of Curriculum and Program Development, and works closely and collaboratively with faculty and staff to provide training and other resources to facilitate college-wide responsibility for, and contribution to, assessment which promotes institutional effectiveness.
Academic Program and Department Faculty

Although the Faculty Senate’s Curriculum Committee is the body most closely associated with the review and approval of the curriculum, in practice, the program and department faculties “own” academic assessment as an instrumental function at the College. Academic assessment can only be beneficial if the process and its corresponding results can make sense to (and can apply to) a particular course, degree program, or academic department faculty.

In the most recent past, academic departments have been given more freedom and more responsibility to engage in meaningful assessment projects (rather than simply fulfill an assessment mandate). This shift in practice – to encourage further faculty ownership of assessment – has allowed for faculty chairs, in consultation with their colleagues, to have input into the College’s assessment schedule; to allocate resources for assessment among a number of faculty members in a department or discipline; and to engage in assessment projects for longer or shorter time periods than the College’s standard with the approval of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Services.

Institutional Principles Guiding Assessment Activities

In updating Foundations IV, the CAPE Committee considered how the College’s approach to assessment evolved to its current form. The review of Foundations I revealed to the committee’s members that the core guiding principles underpinning assessment have remained constant over time. In recognition of this constancy, the CAPE Committee affirms the following statement of principles included in both Foundations I and IV.

“Monroe Community College’s assessment framework engenders the following principles:

- The ultimate goal of outcomes assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Assessment should be systematic, comprehensive, developmental, and iterative.
- Assessment should lead to improvement and be a catalyst for change.
- The assessment mechanism should lead to customized, multi-dimensional formulas for curriculum development and improvement. The mechanism should encourage creative and unique approaches to assessment in individual departments, academic disciplines and programs.
- Information obtained from assessment should serve as a basis of continuous self-renewal. Assessment should therefore be ongoing rather than episodic.

Projects in the assessment of general education are typically one-year in duration, whereas program evaluation projects have an established three-semester time span, as indicated in the Monroe Community College Program Evaluation Process Guidelines. (See Appendix I)
The primary indication of assessment effectiveness is the skill with which the faculty, students, staff, and administration raise questions about institutional effectiveness, seek answers, and significantly improve the educational process in light of their findings.

Assessment must be tied to a demonstrable relationship between the mission of the College and the goals and objectives of its educational programs.

The assessment process should be embedded in the culture of the institution, and become a way of life for the students, faculty, administration, and staff.

The College community should embrace the assessment process with a spirit of celebration and discovery.”

Current Assessment Practices at MCC

The design of MCC’s approach to academic assessment has evolved over the past decade. The College currently adheres to both the SUNY model of assessment (stated learning outcomes provided by SUNY for General Education courses – Appendix V) and the Middle States model (outcomes determined by department and program faculty). Foundations I outlined a strategy for assessment that was SUNY-centered, so most of the change in the College’s assessment plan have come due to practices that suggested a melding of the SUNY Assessment Initiative into the fulfillment of MSCHE assessment standards.

Specific Assessment Practices at MCC

- Leadership of Academic Assessment Projects by Faculty Members

Our current Faculty Assessment Leadership model appears to be an efficient and productive way to conduct General Education assessment and program evaluation. The model consists of a designated faculty leader who is supported by a faculty committee responsible for implementing assessment and is the “point person” who directs and guides the assessment project, collects information, and reports the findings.

The creation of the Faculty Assessment Leadership model has enhanced faculty communication and increased faculty responsibility for General Education assessment. Based on the high level of cooperation in the assessment process, faculty appear to support and encourage the continuation of the Faculty Assessment Leadership model as it appears to be an efficient and productive way to conduct General Education assessment and program evaluation.

Faculty demonstrate leadership in the assessment process in numerous ways. Many faculty members serve on or chair assessment committees, or lead several key assessment-related initiatives, including:

- Faculty leaders for program evaluation projects;
- Faculty leaders for projects assessing SUNY-GER courses;
c. Several Senate ad hoc assessment committees, including those on program evaluation, the infused competencies, and the rights and responsibilities of faculty and departments in assessment;

d. College-wide Distance Learning Assessment Initiative (DLAI) that provided a current review and assessment of MCC’s approach to distance education;

e. The ongoing initiative for General Education assessment of the infused competencies of values and ethics; diversity and diverse perspectives; information literacy; technological literacy; and critical thinking.

f. The existence of many standing departmental committees on assessment.

- **Assessment of Course Learning Outcomes Using Embedded Tools**

Under *Foundations I*, the faculty tended to utilize assessment methods that leaned toward the development and administration of specially-designed instruments to assess student learning outcomes, particularly for SUNY General Education assessment. These assessment efforts, while designed with great care and effort, tended to be unreliable (students would not perform at their best because these exercises were outside of the graded curriculum). Additionally, because the assessment focused only on the targeted SUNY Student Learning Outcome, it was not uncommon for the assessment results also to be invalid because they failed to relevantly relate to the course being assessed.

Current practice at the College encourages faculty members to choose course-embedded assessment measures to assess the selected MCC CLOs. Not only does this approach address prior problems in addressing reliability, relevancy and validity, it also offers MCC faculty a streamlined approach to assessment that de-emphasizes the mechanical side of the process and encourages faculty to devote more time to the analysis and discussion of the assessment’s results. Additionally, departments are encouraged to undertake follow-up actions.

The two primary types of projects conducted by faculty are Program Evaluation and SUNY General Education Assessment. As one of the steps in a Program Evaluation project, faculty develop a set of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). For SUNY General Education Assessment projects, the stated learning outcomes provided by SUNY are used. Current practice in both Program Evaluation and General Education Assessment includes the mapping of MCC Course-based Learning Outcomes (CLOs) to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) or SUNY General Education Learning Outcomes, respectively. An assessment of the MCC CLO is used to demonstrate achievement of the PLOs or SUNY General Education Learning Outcomes.

- **Focus on Follow-Up**

As did most SUNY schools, MCC operated under the SUNY Assessment Initiative with a set of state expectations that focused the faculty’s attention on the mechanics of assessment. While that practice tended to promote a sound understanding of the data collection side of assessment (such as the design of instruments, an understanding of “validity” and “reliability,” and sample selection), faculty members did not have time to really analyze and discuss how their assessment results were relevant to their work. In other words, assessment in the “early days” was
essentially limited to the systematized collection of data, with relatively little opportunity for follow-up discussion, analysis, or action.

Current expectations at the College follow the MSCHE benchmark that a good assessment program will be a “systematic, sustained, economical, ongoing effort that produces reasonably accurate results.” Assessment as a process is iterative, and so, we can think of this follow-up phase as the part of the process that “closes the loop.” An assessment project does not end with the collection of data or the completion of a report. The process is one of continuous improvement, requiring persistent and attentive follow-up.

The key features of an assessment program focused on follow-up are:

- The results of the assessment project are analyzed and discussed by a program or department faculty;
- The product of this analysis and discussion should be a set of recommendations for the faculty or administrative leaders to act on, based on an evaluation of what activities should be maintained and what others should be improved upon;
- The involved faculty, staff, and administrative leadership should agree upon a plan for that action, including specific targeted actions based on a timeline with appropriately allocated resources.

Clearly not every assessment project will necessarily require significant follow-up actions. For example, the assessment of general education courses tends to focus on sustaining levels of student learning, whereas the evaluation of degree programs requires a broader examination of the student’s educational experience. However, even with these differing expectations, follow-up on assessment is required because the actions taken in between assessment projects are the means by which educational quality is maintained or improved.

- **Support and Involvement of Academic Leadership**

Assessment projects are shared responsibilities, with the primary and motivating action coming from the faculty, and the facilitative and support action coming from staff and administration. Some important ways in which administrative leaders contribute to purposeful assessment projects are as follows:

- The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment is the support person for faculty members and departments undertaking assessment and evaluation projects. The Assistant Director facilitates the process of assessment by assisting the faculty assessment leader(s) of a project, providing resources, training, and consultative advice. The Assistant Director also provides planning assistance, and acts as consultant in the production of any final assessment project reports to help maintain quality and consistency of internal and external documents.

- The department chair and division dean play important leadership roles in helping the faculty engaging in assessment projects understand the direction and context of how project results will be used. Both leaders can be called upon to assist the faculty assessment leader in the completion of the assessment or evaluation project.
The Curriculum Dean provides leadership in the assessment and program evaluation processes in collaboration with the division deans, and takes specific actions to integrate assessment in curriculum design, and the revision process to ensure “closing of the loop” actions are documented in the curriculum database. Further, the Curriculum Office provides resources to support professional development and training for faculty, resource materials, stipends, and awards to promote and support assessment activities.

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) supports program evaluation projects by providing college-wide and program-specific data to program and department faculties to help them evaluate benchmark performance indicators, such as enrollment, retention/attrition, and completion trends.

The Provost/Vice President of Academic Services provides institutional leadership in assessment. The Provost sets the overall tone in the institution of the importance and priority of assessment projects, and in consultation with the deans, may utilize project findings and recommendations for decision-making purposes.

“High Stakes vs. Low Stakes” Projects

Assessment and evaluation projects require the most important resource the College has to offer—the faculty’s time. While Foundations I and IV established the principle and expectation that assessment activities were a part of the job of college educators (just as it is for elementary and secondary school teachers), in practice, assessment projects take a lot of time to complete. And, because assessment project data and other information is often difficult to gather and instruments challenging to design, it can take a faculty member an inordinate amount of time to create, score, analyze, and report student learning data.

How should the faculty determine how much time and effort toward assessment is enough? Linda Suskie, former MSCHE Vice President and assessment expert, has posed the fundamental question: “What are faculty members not doing if they are doing assessment?” Her question, usually offered in workshops in the context of the mechanical steps of assessment, challenges institutions to ask their faculty members to devote less time to ensuring the highest levels of reliability and validity of assessments, and instead focus more on the “back end” stages of assessment: analysis of results, and the formulation of recommendations.

This premise has led to the development at the College of a decision rule applied to all assessment and evaluation projects: “Is the project a high stakes or low stakes assessment?” The designation of a project as one or the other determines the level of intensity of the work and the level of expectations applied to maintaining standards of reliability and validity. Any of the following conditions are examples that can lead to a project being deemed as “high stakes”:

- A program or course is being considered for deactivation;
- A program or course is being considered for a major revision;
- The College is considering a change in the allocation of resources to a particular course or program.

The vast majority of assessment projects at MCC are “low stakes.” Faculty planning and discussion prior to engagement in the assessment project has not indicated either a) any
particular course is failing to meet expectations or b) a program is being considered for major revision or deactivation. In such instances, the project is simply designed to demonstrate students are learning and the program is operating as expected.

All that said, it should be noted “low stakes” projects often yield significant and important results. Our current practice of identifying an overarching project purpose ensures a level of relevance. In some instances, the very follow-up actions suggested from these project results may require that more assessment be done. Therefore, efforts should be undertaken to ensure reasonable standards in validity and reliability are being met.

- **Indirect Measures of Student Success**

The primary means by which student success is measured is the direct assessment of student learning – that is, the degree to which aggregate student learning of specified outcomes meets (or fails to meet) expectations. MCC’s assessment of SUNY-GER courses is entirely devoted to direct assessment measures.

However, program evaluation typically incorporates indirect measures of student success as well. These measures include, but are not limited to:

- Retention, attrition, and persistence measures;
- Graduation, employment and transfer data;
- Measurements of student satisfaction, such as the Student Opinion Surveys (SOS) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results;
- Feedback from program advisory boards;
- Evaluative commentary from external review teams.

**Assessment Projects at MCC: Program Evaluation**

Assessment is often equated and confused with evaluation, but the two concepts are different. Assessment is used to determine what a student knows or can do, while evaluation is used to determine the worth or value of a course or program. Assessment data affects student advancement, placement, and grades, as well as decisions about instructional strategies and curriculum (Herman & Knuth, 1991). Evaluations often utilize assessment data along with other resources to make decisions about revising, adopting, or rejecting a course or program. At MCC, the assessment of student learning is at the core of the many different activities faculty members engage in when completing program evaluation projects.

The Monroe Community College faculty has made significant progress in the execution of program evaluation projects to produce reports documenting a process both complete and thoughtfully carried out, and to generate faculty interest in making fundamental and important changes to program design and course curricula. Program evaluation is guided by a process outlined in *The MCC Program Evaluation Process Guidelines*,\(^\text{10}\) which were written by the

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\(^{10}\) These guidelines replaced another earlier program review process enacted by the Faculty Senate in 2008.
CAPE Committee and approved by the Senate in September 2012, and by the Vice President of Academic Services in November 2013 (see Appendix I). The process of ongoing review and revision of these guidelines is a part of the CAPE Committee’s continuing charge.

Program evaluation at MCC is a process that extends over the course of three academic semesters. Program Evaluation Leaders (PELs)\(^\text{11}\) guide and direct the work of the project, generally with the assistance of a program or department faculty committee (although this is not always the case – departments determine for themselves how best to proceed). Although the following is both a generalization and oversimplification of a very detailed process, one could summarize program evaluation at MCC in the following way:

- **Semester 1**: Project planning; Review of program mission, objectives, outcomes, and design;
- **Semester 2**: Assessment of student learning; Collection of program- and institutional-level data;
- **Semester 3**: Analysis, discussion, and evaluation of results; Completion of project report.

Program evaluation projects are currently scheduled on a six-year cycle (see Appendix IV), after initially having been scheduled on a seven-year rotation.\(^\text{12}\) With each cycle, there is an institutional expectation that the faculty’s success in acting on the recommended actions outlined in the prior evaluation project will be documented and commented upon in the succeeding project report.

- *Exceptions for Accredited Degree Programs*

Consistent with the College’s accepted principles regarding assessment, the CAPE Committee proposed in March 2013 to examine how MCC’s approach to program evaluation might be modified to accommodate degree programs with specialized accreditation. The primary considerations motivating these modifications included:

1. Programs applying for re-accreditation engage in specific, substantial, extensive self-evaluation processes, including the collection, analysis, and reflection upon assessment data;
2. In most instances, a specific accreditation process parallels the MCC process for program evaluation;
3. The CAPE Committee recognized duplicated efforts in accreditation and program evaluation were burdensome and wasteful;
4. The CAPE Committee, referencing commentary from Middle States, acknowledged no accrediting bodies standards completely covered all expectations for a complete program evaluation (as defined by MCC’s program evaluation guidelines);

\(^\text{11}\) Previously known as “Program Assessment Liaisons,” or PALs, the CAPE Committee recommended this name change in Spring 2011.

\(^\text{12}\) This change was adopted by the Faculty Senate in May 2008 in response to a suggestion by the MSCHE visiting team to shorten the interval separating the review and evaluation of degree-granting programs.
5. Program evaluation processes for accredited programs must include an effort to identify gaps between accreditation standards and MCC’s program evaluation guidelines;
6. The specific process for combining accreditation efforts with program evaluation should include consideration of variations in program evaluation and accreditation calendars.

With these considerations in mind, the CAPE Committee was motivated to create an alternative program evaluation process that simultaneously met the needs of the faculty in accredited programs, and likewise fulfilled the College’s broader goals in assessment and evaluation.

Assessment Projects at MCC: SUNY General Education (SUNY-GER) Courses

MCC faculty members conduct projects to assess courses in each of SUNY’s ten knowledge and skills areas, along with the two infused competencies of Information Management and Critical Thinking, on a three-year iterative cycle (see Appendix IV). The College’s approach to the assessment of SUNY-GER courses has not changed significantly since the internal publication of Foundations I largely because the originally devised system has worked so well. What has changed since the release of Foundations I is faculty members now are asked to relate the assessment process and corresponding results more specifically to the courses they are teaching than had previously been the case.

With the SUNY Assessment Initiative came not only a mandate to undertake academic assessment of SUNY-GER courses, but also a requirement specifically prescribing that SUNY Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) should be assessed (see Appendix V). The faculty members at MCC teaching SUNY-GER courses found themselves having to assess outcomes that were not specifically part of their courses (but which were generally supported by the course’s content and design). This meant assessment of SUNY SLOs was largely a “busy-work” exercise for the faculty having no meaning to them except to fulfill the state mandate.

Starting in AY 2010-11, the Discipline Assessment Leaders (DALs) of SUNY-GER projects have been asked to work with participating faculty members to map the SUNY-GER Student Learning Outcomes to the individual Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) of those courses qualifying for SUNY-GER credit. Once this mapping is completed, faculty members are free to assess their own course CLOs, thereby fulfilling the state mandate to demonstrate a course’s support for the SUNY-GER SLOs.

This process adds more work to the assessment project initially, but once it is completed, it need not be repeated unless course content changes over time (which it should, but not drastically). In addition, the mapping process gives the faculty a greater understanding of how their particular courses relate specifically to the SUNY-GER SLOs, and thereby, providing them with the opportunity to reflect on whether or not a course listed as qualifying for SUNY-GER credit should remain so listed.

Assessment Projects at MCC: Local General Education (MCC-GER) Courses

In the 2005-06 MSCHE Self Study, MCC presented its assessment process for general education at the College as being driven by fulfilling the SUNY Assessment Initiative. Since MCC’s broad
general education design was similar to that of SUNY, the assessment of SUNY-GER courses was determined to be appropriately representative of MCC-GER courses. This process was deemed acceptable by the MSCHE Review Team at that time as fulfilling MSCHE standards (for a chart indicating the mapped competencies of SUNY-GER, MCC-GER, and MSCHE guidelines, see Appendix VI).

However, over the past five years, MSCHE has expressed increasingly higher expectations for the assessment of general education programs. In recognition of that development, and of MCC’s own changing focus and priorities regarding assessment of general education, the CAPE Committee began developing in Spring 2015 a new set of general education assessment guidelines. The guiding principles behind these new guidelines were as follows:

- The CAPE Committee had authorized in 2011-12 a three-year trial transition period whereupon general education assessment would shift from a SUNY-focus to an MCC/MSCHE-focus. General education assessment projects were led by academic departments, rather than cross-disciplinary committees, and were designed to reflect purposeful, inquiry-based assessment of student learning and curriculum. This successful experience formed the basis of the new general education assessment guidelines.
- General education assessments of the infused competencies would be guided by the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate until an alternative oversight group is formed or charged by the Faculty Senate and Provost.
- Any plan for the assessment of general education would need to be adjusted to accommodate possible changes in the structure of MCC’s current general education model, which had been recently reviewed by the faculty.

**Impact of the “Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, Re-Engineer General Education Committee”**

In 2014-15, the findings and recommendations of the Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, Re-Engineer General Education Committee were reviewed by the College community. Although the final report of that committee included a number of recommendations, the primary change advocated was to transition MCC’s local general education program from a distributive model (15 credits from five disciplines, along with 2 credits from Health and physical education, compatible with SUNY general education) to an outcomes-based model (12 General Education Learning Outcomes statements, mapped to SUNY general education).

In May 2015, the Faculty Senate approved this recommendation, which has since been forwarded to a newly-formed “Institutional Learning Outcomes Committee,” jointly formed by the Faculty Senate President and the Interim Provost/Vice President of Academic Services. In Fall 2015, the Faculty Senate and newly-appointed Provost/Vice President of Academic Services will determine next steps for MCC’s local general education model. It has been specifically planned that any changes expected in MCC’s local general education model will necessitate corresponding changes in the institution’s approach to the assessment of general education.
Assessment Projects at MCC: Special Initiatives

As assessment and evaluation has become more a part of the College’s culture, opportunities to utilize the benefits of assessment and evaluation have led to special initiatives outside of the regular ongoing projects the College’s faculty undertakes. Generally, these projects follow modified assessment procedures the faculty adapts from the College’s currently established General Education assessment and program evaluation processes.

Examples of special initiatives include:

- The assessment of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program in AY 2007-08 (and ongoing);
- The completion of the Distance Learning Assessment Initiative (DLAI), a three-semester project that ended in February 2011;
- The departmental self-evaluation, conducted by the Transitional Studies faculty in AY 2010-11;
- The assessment and evaluation of the College’s services for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in AY 2013-14;
- The assessment of three Liberal Arts Degrees (LA04, LS01 and LH01) in AY 2013-14;
- The assessment of the Distance Learning Assessment Initiative (DLAI 2) (in progress);
- The assessment of Experiential Learning in AY 2012-13;
- The assessment of Infused Competencies in AY 2014-15;
- Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, and Re-Engineer General Education Committee (in progress).

Moving Forward: Closing the Loop in Assessment at MCC

As Monroe Community College enters its second decade of systematized, institution-wide assessment, it is clear the faculty believes significant progress has been made in developing an approach that satisfactorily fulfills any objective standard for sound assessment practices. The new challenge is to continue making progress in promoting assessment practices as being practically useful – both in providing the faculty with feedback as to what students are learning, and in offering the institution’s leaders with important information that will further allow them to make data-based decisions.

The College’s “next steps in assessment” should include those aspects outlined in Foundations I and IV that have clearly worked. Likewise, the faculty’s experiences with assessment provide the opportunity to change those things that need changing, and augment the current plan with new institutional innovations in assessment.

Building on Past Successes

With both the 2009-10 Faculty Senate ad hoc Foundations Subcommittee and the 2014-2015 CAPE Committee each having the chance to fully review MCC’s assessment policies and
practices, the following represents a list of those key areas in the institution’s approach to assessment and evaluation the College should continue:

- Faculty leadership in assessment projects;
- Faculty release time for assessment projects;
- Departmental ownership of assessment processes and results;
- The position of a designated assessment professional, currently the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment;
- The allocation of resources for professional development in assessment (training events; workshops; conferences);
- Acknowledgement of faculty efforts and success in assessment projects;
- Cooperation and project support from Institutional Research Office.

New Directions for Assessment and Evaluation at MCC

The point has been made several times earlier in this document that Monroe Community College has been moving away from the SUNY-based assessment model under which the plan in Foundations I was constructed. Instead, the College has been adopting policies and practices that bring MCC more closely in line with the expectations of MSCHE. The release of Foundations IV to the college community brought a formalization of that shift in approach to assessment, and codified some of the more important changes in the institution’s new strategy for approaching assessment projects.

Additional Principles Guiding Assessment at MCC

The MSCHE handbook, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, offers member institutions some important guidelines for evolving assessment programs. As these guidelines have become more well-known, colleges and universities have revised their respective strategies for assessment in response. Although MCC’s program for assessment and evaluation has been compatible with the MSCHE’s guidelines, it makes sense to be explicit about how the College’s approach to assessment is consistent with that advocated by the MSCHE.

The following short list includes those principles from Characteristics of Excellence that should be added to the College’s own list (referenced earlier in the document):

- **Assessment results should be useful to, and used by, the College’s faculty and administrative leaders.** This guiding MSCHE principle is implied by MCC’s own list of guiding principles, but is not explicitly stated, and it deserves to be. Experience with the SUNY Assessment Initiative has shown that the faculty may be willing to engage in assessment because they are asked (or even required) to do so, but the result of this work may not be utilized for constructive purposes. MCC’s faculty and leaders should continue the current practice of focusing the work of assessment on those particular areas of concern, or on those questions that need answering.
• **Assessment processes should be economical.** Within the larger MSCHE framework, “economical” refers not to the financial resources a college devotes to assessment particularly, but rather to the time and energy faculty members put into the work of assessment. The MSCHE principle is that the amount of time the faculty puts into assessment should be proportionate to the utility of assessment results. When engaging in assessment and evaluation projects, the faculty should not be asked to put a lot of time into those aspects of assessment that yield relatively little benefit (see the discussion concerning “high stakes vs. low stakes assessment” for more details).

• **The results of assessment and evaluation projects should be “reasonably accurate.”** In the early days of the SUNY Assessment Initiative, MCC’s faculty received significant amounts of training to learn the mechanics of assessment. MSCHE’s principle is not to undo the integrity of good assessment practices; attention still must be given to aspects of validity and reliability. The real business of assessment is not the mechanics of data collection, but rather the utilization of that information for other purposes.

In addition to these principles MSCHE brings to the forefront, MCC’s own experience with assessment under *Foundations I and IV* yielded some new ideals. These principles include:

• Shared community responsibility to support assessment
• Consideration of the Faculty Senate statement on Rights and Responsibilities of Departments and Faculty in Assessment\(^\text{13}\)
• Broader engagement of the faculty in effectively utilizing the assessment process
• Broader engagement of Administration in implementing assessment recommendations
• Recognition of faculty accomplishments related to assessment and program evaluation

The CAPE Committee expects to undertake consideration of these principles so as to clarify how they will influence the formulation of future policies regarding assessment and evaluation.

**MCC’s Ongoing Commitment to “Full-Circle Assessment”**

In the past several years, all organizations involved in promoting excellence in assessment have promoted the final stage of assessment, so-called “closing the loop,” as the most important and least practiced among institutions of higher education. In 2006, SUNY began requiring colleges and universities to submit reports documenting how results of assessment were being utilized. Recently, MSCHE has been advocating in all of its assessment workshops and conferences that colleges undertake stronger efforts in “closing the loop” activities. Clearly, how well institutions follow up on recommendations and proposed action plans is the new standard for what it means to engage in “good” assessment.

\(^{13}\) In 2008-09, the Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on Assessment developed a full set of rights and responsibilities of departments and faculty members engaging in assessment projects. As of the writing of this document, the Faculty Senate has not yet had the opportunity to consider the committee’s recommendation.
While MCC’s assessment and evaluation projects have included measures the institution takes annually to ensure follow-up is undertaken, the College is positioned to pursue a strategy that considers assessment as part of a larger plan for continuous improvement in the curriculum: “full-circle assessment.”

The four phases of the assessment/evaluation cycle can be summarized using four corresponding verbs:

\[
\text{REVIEW} \Rightarrow \text{ASSESS} \Rightarrow \text{EVALUATE} \Rightarrow \text{ACT}
\]

Typically, this four-phase process is demonstrated visually in a circle, each verb occupying a different quadrant of that circle, but with the process clearly indicated as iterative and never-ending. The term “close the loop” refers to the final “ACT” phase, and has received attention because that step is so often overlooked, thus leaving the circle incomplete.

What makes MCC’s approach of “full-circle assessment” distinctive is that it proposes the College integrate assessment principles proactively into the curriculum. The process of assessment should be considered not as a step taken to judge the effectiveness of a program only after it has been formulated and has run for several years; rather, assessment principles should be applied at the time a new degree program or course is proposed. If new academic initiatives included all aspects of the assessment process at the time the initiative is designed, then more careful processes will be put in place earlier that will assist faculty and decision-makers later on.

Full-circle assessment, then, is the College’s acknowledgement that the best way to ensure assessment remains an ongoing, continuous process is to embed that expectation into the curriculum-building process itself. If faculty members understand up front the expectations of the College’s assessment and evaluation processes, then at the time they propose new courses or programs, they will account for those processes in the design of those courses and programs.

**Continuing Faculty Senate Involvement**

With the impaneling of the CAPE Committee has come the opportunity for the Faculty Senate to engage in ongoing oversight of the College’s assessment and evaluation activities. As pressures grow from external stakeholders for assessment, the presence of a permanent committee consistently engaged in the discussion of assessment processes provides the College an increased ability to respond with accountability.

Given this opportunity to refine the role of the faculty in overseeing assessment, the many issues the CAPE Committee may choose to discuss, as directed by the Faculty Senate and the academic leadership, include:

- The location and proper storage of student learning assessment data and instruments
- The publication of, and public access to, student learning assessment results
- The development of more formal assessment training workshops/seminars
- An institutional statement covering the proper use of assessment information
- Monitoring program/departmental progress between assessment projects
• Peer review of assessment reports

Accomplishments in Assessment Over the Past 5 Years

Several specific activities have been implemented and/or completed by the College in the years since the publication of *Foundations IV*. A partial list follows.

• Development of an Assessment Database, compatible with the Curriculum Database, to facilitate the documentation of assessment and evaluation processes, and enable improved follow-up on recommended actions resulting from completed projects.
• Recognition of faculty accomplishments related to program evaluation and assessment at the annual Assessment Awards ceremony

Moving Forward: Next Steps in Assessment and Evaluation at MCC

The CAPE Committee, as a permanent subcommittee of the Faculty Senate, has an ongoing interest in the development of forward-thinking approaches to assessment and evaluation at the College. While assessment activities have evolved and grown, and the processes of assessment and evaluation have become more fully integrated into the academic life of the College, there is still room for further growth and improvement.

The following areas represent the issues the CAPE Committee members believe deserve consideration for action in the immediate and intermediate future. Although these areas do not represent immediate recommendations for change, they do summarize the most currently recognizable opportunities for improvement in the College’s approach to assessment:

• Collaboration with Student Services division on assessment-oriented issues;
• Development of college-wide workshops on assessment, led by local faculty and staff, utilizing the Teaching and Learning Center as appropriate;
• Improved involvement of adjuncts as more a part of the assessment process;
• Communication of assessment results to a broader audience than currently practiced;
• Interim consultation by the CAPE Committee with departments regarding implementation of assessment findings.

Concluding Remarks

This document represents a summary of where MCC has been, where it is, and where it is going with regard to its activities in academic assessment and evaluation. The process involved in the review and updating of the College’s assessment program has revealed many opportunities for faculty and administrative leaders to capitalize on the progress already made. MCC is institutionally well-positioned to continue its movement away from performing assessment for accountability and focusing on assessment for improvement.

The challenge moving forward, however, lies not with the dichotomy of how assessment results will be used (accountability versus improvement), rather, the greater opportunity exists in the
recognition that the College is on the brink of developing a true *culture of assessment*. If the College’s efforts in the next several years focus on doing “Assessment for Us,” where faculty and administrative leaders embrace a system that promotes effective and responsive curricular improvements with responsible internal accountability standards, then the College will not have to be concerned about doing “Assessment for Them,” where assessment is simply a mechanical process done to satisfy external stakeholders.
APPENDICES
Introduction

Program evaluation does not take place in a vacuum. While faculty members engage in conducting their own respective program evaluation projects, teaching and learning continues, departmental committees continue to meet, and curriculum planning marches forward. It is therefore important that for each evaluation project a program faculty engages in, the experience be one that also advances in some way the other work being undertaken. Program evaluation projects are not a means and an end unto themselves, but rather an extension of the business that department and program faculty are already engaged in.

Process in Context

As outlined in *Foundations of Student Success IV: Closing the Loop*, Monroe Community College’s faculty is moving toward a model of “full-circle assessment:”

> “The four phases of the assessment/evaluation cycle can be summarized using four corresponding verbs:

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REVIEW  =>  ASSESS  =>  EVALUATE  =>  ACT
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Typically, this four-phase process is demonstrated visually in a circle, each verb occupying a different quadrant of that circle, but with the process clearly indicated as iterative and never-ending. The term “close the loop” refers to the final “ACT” phase, and has received attention because that step is so often overlooked, thus leaving the circle incomplete (*Foundations IV, pg. 25*).
This process, when applied to a program evaluation project, results in a set of findings and recommendations which require follow-up action beyond that point when the project is completed and the report is filed.

PREPARATORY STEPS TO A PROGRAM EVALUATION PROJECT

Monroe Community College operates on a 6-year cycle, with all degree and certificate programs scheduled for a complete evaluation once within that time frame. In fall 2011, the Faculty Senate adopted a three-semester project schedule that established a fall-spring-fall three-semester process. The preparatory steps for program evaluation projects listed and described in this section are, therefore, understood to take place in the spring semester prior to the scheduled start of the project.

A. Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment meets with division dean then the department chair to identify a “Program Evaluation Leader (PEL),” generally a full-time faculty member of the program under evaluation, to lead the project.
B. PEL meets Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment to discuss general processes of leading an evaluation project and receives resources necessary to prepare for the project.
C. PEL receives and reviews the program evaluation report filed in the previous cycle.
D. PEL works with department chair to establish appropriate allocation of teaching load and other service so as to plan for the successful completion of the project.
E. PEL consults with department chair to develop a general plan that addresses how the department will enable and support the completion of the project.

PHASE ONE: REVIEW (Semester I of III, generally fall)

During the review phase of the project, the PEL, along with his/her program colleagues, dean, and department chair, engage in a thorough discussion of past and current practices within the program. The time spent on review should be devoted to the development of a complete understanding of how, and if, the program meets the purpose and goals of the faculty given its current design and daily execution. In the context of preparing for the new program evaluation project, the PEL and working team should review any prior evaluative reports related to the program. This phase is one of discussion and discovery, and should serve as a benefit to build purpose and unity within the program.

A. Establish a working team. Even in programs with many full-time faculty members, the PEL cannot reasonably complete a full program evaluation alone. Support from the department chair and colleagues is necessary. Since the daily work of the program is the product of shared contributions, so too should the work of the program evaluation project be shared.
   a. Team may be a committee comprised of full-time and/or adjunct faculty members
   b. Team may be the full program faculty
B. **Designate a purpose for the project.** Program evaluation should not be about the mechanical collection of information. For the project to be useful, it should be framed in advance of the start of the project by a purpose. Generally speaking, projects should be conducted so as to answer a set of questions (or a major question), address a set of issues (or a major issue), or solve a set of problems (or a major problem) associated with the success of the program.

   a. **PEL should meet with the division dean and department chair to discuss and establish project purpose; the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment and/or the curriculum dean may also attend such a meeting;**

   b. **When reasonable and necessary, faculty teaching in the program should also be consulted on the development of a project purpose.**

C. **Review Program Design.** The PEL is responsible for directing a program-level review of the design of the degree. As part of this process, the PEL should lead the following actions:

   a. **Collect, review, and revise as necessary (for accuracy and consistency), information about the program’s design** from publications and web resources, including:

      i. all references to the program in the College catalog (including the program description, summary of program entrance requirements, etc.)

      ii. the program’s specific course requirements, including recommendations for course enrollments in electives and in general education classes

      iii. any specific requirements that make admission to the program conditional, such as pre-requisite or co-requisite courses, or the achievement of specific scores on placement tests

      iv. the four-semester model of course enrollment that demonstrates how a student might achieve completion of the degree within two years of full-time study

      v. the program or department website (if applicable)

      vi. promotional materials;

   b. **Review, and revise as necessary, the program's purpose statement and describe its relationship to the College’s mission;** if the program has no formal or published purpose statement, one should be written, with linkages shown to support the College’s mission;

   c. **Review, and revise as necessary, established program-level goals/objectives.** If the program has no formal or published goals/objectives, then they should be written. Do these stated goals/objectives accurately reflect the program faculty’s priorities for what the program should offer its students (examples could include completion of the degree, acquiring a specific skills set, transfer, and/or employment)? Is the list of goals/objectives complete and up-to-date?

   d. **Describe how the program’s goals/objectives support the program purpose statement.**

   e. **Review, and revise as necessary, existing program-level outcomes.** If the program has no formal or published outcomes, then they should be written. Outcomes should take two forms:

      i. **Program Learning Outcomes.** These are concisely-worded, measureable statements of the broad, cumulative learning that graduates of
the program should have acquired as a result of successfully passing the program’s designed set of courses. Measurement of these outcomes is usually associated with the structured learning that goes on in the classroom (known as direct measures of program success).

ii. **Program Operational Outcomes.** These concisely-worded statements include all other aspects of the successful operation of a high-quality program outside of the classroom, such as ongoing faculty professional development; conditions of the learning environment; success in student recruitment, enrollment, retention, and completion; and/or applications of technology. The measurement and reporting of these outcomes is not associated with the structured learning in the classroom, but these measures do help provide a broader understanding of the success of a program (known as indirect measures of program success).

f. *Describe/discuss how all program outcomes support the program’s goals/objectives.* If helpful, construct a map or grid that shows how each of the stated goals/objectives relates specifically to the outcomes of the program.

g. *Review existing course learning outcomes (CLOs) for all core required courses in the program, and for all electives supporting the program.*

   i. Ensure that the design of each CLO meets current College standards

   ii. Verify that the set of CLOs for each course accurately portrays the “minimum common core content” that students should expect to learn by taking the course

h. **Review the whole of the program curriculum.** Map program core and elective courses to program-level outcomes. Analyze and assess as part of this process how current courses do and do not satisfy program-level outcomes as a whole. What program-level learning outcomes are not adequately supported by courses (gaps)? Which program learning outcomes are covered in too many classes (redundancies)? Which courses seem to deliver little value in supporting program learning outcomes, and which ones seem to be overly-packed with content?

i. *Identify and describe any distinctive, unique elements of the program as it currently exists.* What about the current program makes it different from similar programs at other two- and four-year institutions? What would or should draw students to MCC for this program? If, for any reason, the program’s design is not unique, what other aspects of faculty efforts, facilities and equipment, or student success make the program something that the faculty are proud of?

j. **Review and evaluate for clarity the relationship between degree requirements and general education courses.** If particular courses are required, do these courses seem to be serving their intended purpose? If general education electives are recommended, what purpose do they serve the degree? Are there particular skills, knowledge, or competencies missing in the degree that general education courses could provide?

D. **Plan for course-based assessment.** Based on the work included in the curriculum map, identify strategic opportunities for assessing individual course learning outcomes that can be shown to directly support program-level outcomes. These courses will be the “target courses” for assessment of the program’s learning outcomes. Course-based assessment needs a lot of planning for it to be done well, and faculty should work collaboratively to ensure program and course outcomes are assessed properly. The PEL should consult
with the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment for training, and where appropriate, should invite the Assistant Director to meet with program and/or department faculty for advice and training in assessment processes.

PHASE TWO: ASSESS (Semester II of III, generally spring)

During the assess phase of the project, the PEL works in collaboration with his/her program faculty, along with colleagues from support offices around the College, to collect information and data that documents the operations of the program within the institutional context. It is understood that the process of program assessment includes the analysis of collected information from a variety of sources. This phase of the project is the most time- and labor-consuming of the three semesters.

A. Plan and administer course-based assessment of student learning in selected courses.

The information collected from course-based assessment is particularly important, because it is generally the only source of direct measurement of student learning available to program faculty. Conducting course-level assessment is difficult to manage and coordinate, and the timing opportunities for collecting this information are often short and very specific. Referring to the identified target list for course-based assessment, the PEL should work with the teaching faculty members to assist them in the planning and administration of the assessment.

B. Collect supporting program-level data from various resources. Aside from student learning achievement, a program best demonstrates its quality and success in meeting goals and outcomes through the collection of information outside of the classroom.

   a. From and about the faculty --

      i. Faculty credentials. Construct a chart that includes each full-time faculty member from the department where the program is housed, his/her achieved degrees/certificates/licensures, academic rank, and years of service at MCC. Verify and report that the adjunct faculty members teaching in the program retain the appropriate credentials to teach in the program.

      ii. Program faculty workload. Construct a chart that includes full-time and adjunct faculty teaching workloads, defined in terms of on-load, over-load, and release-time faculty contact hours. Assess specifically for proportion of courses taught by full-time faculty members versus adjuncts, and trends in workload distribution over the past three full academic years.

      iii. Course coverage. Create a chart that includes required core program courses, the number of sections offered, the number taught, and the status and number of the instructor(s) teaching the courses (full-time tenured; full-time untenured; adjunct).

      iv. Professional development of faculty. Document professional development activities of program faculty members since the last program evaluation (or, in the case of a new program, since its inception) that relate to the efforts of the faculty to increase effectiveness in teaching, student learning, and/or student advising. Discuss how these activities further the purpose, goals, and/or outcomes of the program.
v. **Faculty satisfaction.** Describe the method by which the program measures the satisfaction of its full-time and adjunct faculty with the program’s design, delivery, and support received from the College. Information may be collected from an internally designed faculty survey, department meeting discussions, or other means that permit and promote constructive dialog and candor about program strengths and weaknesses.

b. *From and about the students ---*
   
i. **Program enrollment.** Include breakdowns according to full-time/part-time status and demographics, for last five years (period since last project).
   
ii. **Course enrollment.** Include course enrollments for last three years, by semester, for required core program courses, along with grade distributions.
   
iii. **Student/Faculty ratio.** Report figures for program where possible; for department otherwise.
   
iv. **Persistence, retention, transfer and completion.** Report and assess student success in attaining the certificate or degree, or in transferring, using standard procedures for these three categories as developed by the Institutional Research Office. Benchmark program performance against the College as a whole. Include results from employment surveys as appropriate.
   
v. **Transition of underprepared students into program.** Assess and evaluate, with data as available, the program’s success in addressing the needs of students who are underprepared for the demands of college-level study.
   
vi. **Time to graduate.** Assess the time that is necessary for successful students to complete the program, on average.
   
vii. **Student recruitment, orientation, advisement, and registration.** Describe program faculty efforts in each of these areas. Include quantifiable data where possible regarding the number of students affected and/or hours devoted to such efforts by faculty members.
   
viii. **Faculty efforts in student retention and program completion.** Describe program faculty efforts in each of these areas.
   
ix. **Student satisfaction with the program.** Describe program faculty initiatives to measure student satisfaction with aspects of the program, which could include: teaching, learning, advisement, facilities, scheduling, and other elements of the program. Report as appropriate student feedback measured by such initiatives, both from current students as well as graduates of the program.

c. *About the institutional educational environment ---*
   
i. **Academic learning environments.** Describe and assess any specific physical facilities and equipment that the program requires (and uses) to deliver the educational purpose of the degree. Assess to what extent the facilities and equipment in their current state meet the needs of students
and the teaching faculty, and how identified improvements might promote student success in program achievement and completion?

ii. **Student support from other college offices.** Identify those other services upon which the program relies that are delivered by other college offices. Collaborate with staff providing those services to describe and assess the contributions made to the program. Examples of such support may include (but not be limited to): the library; Admissions; Counseling and Advising; Career and Transfer Center; Student Support Services; tutoring and learning centers; online learning services; and Educational Technology Services.

iii. **Co-curricular activities and service learning.** Identify other learning activities students engage in that fall outside of the typical course design, or even outside of the program, but which support learning opportunities. Collaborate with activity advisors to describe and assess the value of these activities to the program.

d. **From the external environment**

i. **Input from standing advisory committees.** Agendas and minutes from meetings documenting input and suggestions made by committee members should be included and commented upon, as appropriate. The role of the advisory committee, how often it meets, and a list of advisory committee members with their respective institutional/professional roles should be included in the report.

ii. **Analysis of an environmental scan.** The PEL should consult with the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment to obtain an area employment analysis using the College’s economic modeling software. This analysis should be included in the program evaluation report as an appendix and discussed as part of a department or program faculty meeting.

iii. **Plan for external review team (ERT) visit.** The PEL should lead the program faculty in a discussion identifying prospective participants in an on-campus visit from peers and professionals from other colleges and/or prospective employers. The Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment should be consulted regarding the process of identifying and building an effective external review team. Members of the ERT should not be directly affiliated with MCC, nor should they be currently serving members of any campus advisory committee. For additional guidance on external review teams, consult Exhibit A: Guidelines for External Review Teams.

**PHASE THREE: EVALUATE (Semester III of III, generally fall)**

In this, the final phase of the project itself, the PEL should focus the program faculty’s attention on understanding how the earlier processes of “review” and “assess” now lead them to consider specific changes to the program. In the “evaluate” phase, the PEL should revisit the initial “defining purpose” of the project, to ensure that questions are answered, concerns have been addressed, and issues have been properly researched. In evaluating the program, the PEL should lead the program faculty in a discussion of findings, recommendations, and new directions. As
the project draws to a close, the program faculty should gain a sense of renewed purpose in serving their students.

A. *Host the external review team visit to campus.* The contribution of the external review team to the program evaluation project is to provide the program faculty with a perspective outside of the institution but grounded in the discipline. Members of this team will have an interest in promoting student success, but should not have a specific or vested interest in the success of MCC’s program. A review of the program by an objective panel of qualified participants provides the program faculty with its best opportunity to hear new ideas, receive sincere and constructive advice and criticism, and discuss new trends and ideas in the discipline or profession. Maintaining this objectivity brings integrity to the written comments and recommendations that the ERT will provide to the program faculty. For additional guidance on external review teams, consult Exhibit A: Guidelines for External Review Teams.

B. *Discuss and analyze data and information.* Although some course-based assessment data will not yet be completed (for fall-only courses), the PEL should have a complete set of information and data from the “review” and “assess” phases of the project to be able to assemble the information together and begin to compile the project report. The discussion of the results of this research and inquiry should include colleagues, and may include adjuncts and staff. Collaboration outside of the program, and even outside of the department, is encouraged. From these discussions, and from the input from the external review team visit, the PEL should be able to identify a set of findings, and begin developing a set of recommended actions based on those findings.

In identifying and discussing the project’s findings, the following questions should be considered (though not necessarily answered directly):

a. Given the purpose(s) of the project, what are the major findings that the faculty should address next?

b. What did the project validate about our program?

c. If program-level outcomes are not being met, what can and should the faculty do to improve student success in meeting these outcomes?

d. What innovations might the program faculty bring to the program in the next five years, and what value and purpose would those innovations serve?

Additionally, the PEL should devote specific attention in the final report addressing the following:

a. Given the results of the assessment of student learning outcomes, what specific changes do program faculty members propose to make to their teaching for the improvement of student learning?

b. Given the results of the evaluation of the program, what specific changes does the program faculty propose to make in the design or delivery of the program?

c. What actions and resources are necessary to allow for the recommendations in “a” and “b” above to be realized?
C. Compile, complete, and submit project report summarizing information, data, findings and recommendations for action. In the final stages of the project, the PEL should collaborate with his/her program colleagues, the department chair, and the division dean to ensure that a completed assessment and analysis of program strengths and weaknesses has been conducted, and that the purpose(s) of conducting the program evaluation project has/have been addressed.

a. Prior to the finalization of the project, PEL should consult with program faculty and department chair with a completed draft of the report, to allow for final feedback and collaboration.

b. Also prior to the finalization of the project, the division dean and the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment should receive completed drafts to allow for input and feedback.

c. Final project report should be submitted by February 1st through the Compliance Assist database which will be reviewed by the department chair, the program coordinator, the division dean, the curriculum dean, the Faculty Senate CAPE Committee chair, and the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment.

D. Presentation of Project Findings. At the conclusion of the project, the PEL and program faculty will have the opportunity to present the findings of the program evaluation to the academic leadership of the College.

PHASE FOUR: ACT (generally spring following project completion)
The period following the completion of a program evaluation project (until the next cycle of evaluation) is known as the “action phase.” Often identified in educational literature as the “closing-the-loop” step of assessment and evaluation, this phase of program evaluation should focus the attention of department and program faculty members on “findings and fixes.”

Monroe Community College’s “full-circle assessment model” ensures program evaluation projects establish opportunities for programs and departments to organize their work with students in a strategic manner.

A. Moving Forward Forum. Within the same spring semester in which a program evaluation project report has been submitted, the Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment convenes a meeting that initiates the action phase, the “closing of the loop.” Those attending this meeting should include:

a. Program Evaluation Leader
b. Department Chair and/or Program Coordinator
c. Division dean
d. Dean of Curriculum
e. Assistant Director of Curriculum and Assessment
f. Faculty Senate CAPE Committee Chair
g. Other program/department faculty members (optional)
B. Closing the Loop. Following the completion of the moving forward forum, the PEL’s official service ends, and the department chair and/or program coordinator become the effective leaders to ensure that follow-up steps are taken to ensure that the project’s findings and recommendations are acted upon.

Departments completing program evaluation projects should develop a timeline with corresponding strategy to ensure continuity in follow-up on project findings. The following serves as a model for such a strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term actions to be taken (within 2 years)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual(s) responsible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeline to implement</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Middle-term actions to be taken (within 4 years)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
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<td>Individual(s) responsible</td>
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<td>Timeline to implement</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term actions to be taken (within 6 years)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual(s) responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline to implement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Interim Consultation. At the midpoint in the evaluation cycle, between the completion of the program evaluation project, and the commencement of the next, the Faculty Senate CAPE Committee shall initiate contact with programs to engage in follow-up discussions and assist them as requested on strategies to continue forward progress on follow-up actions.
Exhibit A: Guidelines for External Review Teams

External review teams should consist of three or more individuals. The make-up of these teams should be determined by the Program Evaluation Leader in consultation with his or her program faculty, with input from the department chair and division dean.

General guidelines for External Review Team membership is as follows:

For A.S. degree-granting programs:

1) At least one member of the team should be from a competitor or peer institution, and familiar with the academic specialty of the MCC program being evaluated;
2) At least one member of the team should be from a four-year institution that receives substantial numbers of MCC’s program graduates, and familiar with the academic specialty of the MCC program being evaluated;
3) The third member of the team may be from a second four-year institution that receives MCC graduates, or alternatively, an individual representing a significant employer that hires graduates from four-year institutions with the B.A. or B.S. degree in the area of academic specialty of the MCC program being evaluated.
4) Additional members of the External Review Team may be added at the discretion of the participating program faculty (and should be considered if more than one degree is being evaluated).

For A.A.S. degree-granting programs:

1) At least one member of the team should be from a competitor or peer institution, and familiar with the academic specialty of the MCC program being evaluated;
2) At least one member of the team should be from an area employer that is known to hire substantial numbers of graduates, and familiar with the academic specialty of the MCC program being evaluated;
3) The third member of the team may be from a second employer that hires MCC graduates, or alternatively, an individual considered to be a substantive area expert in the field of the MCC program being evaluated, such as a faculty member from a four-year institution, or a local business leader.
4) Additional members of the External Review Team may be added at the discretion of the participating program faculty (and should be considered if more than one degree is being evaluated).
APPENDIX II

SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution 2010-39
SUNY Assessment Procedure

Summary
This procedure covers the University's assessment policy, which requires campus-based assessment of institutional effectiveness, academic programs and general education in ways that maintain academic rigor and meet or exceed rigorous, external assessment standards.

Process
- Trustees Resolution 2010-039 updates the University's policy on assessment by acknowledging and affirming the University's strong, longstanding commitment to assessment for enhancing academic and other excellence. Recognizing the gains made and the evolving external standards in the area of assessment, this resolution permits each campus to develop assessment plans that are consistent with its mission and goals within the context of the State University's mission and goals, while maintaining academic rigor and meeting or exceeding external standards for assessment required by federal and state law.
- A campus shall enhance quality by developing and implementing plans for the regular assessment of institutional effectiveness, academic programs and general education, such that the campus meets or exceeds the assessment standards set by the New York State Department of Education, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and, as appropriate, programmatic accreditation bodies.
- A campus's regular assessment of its registered academic programs shall include, at minimum, the assessment of student learning and external review, to the extent necessary and appropriate.
- A campus's regular assessment of its general education curriculum (or curricula) shall include the assessment of student learning in terms of the student learning outcomes associated with the SUNY General Education Requirement.
- The Provost of the State University of New York shall review the findings of regional and programmatic accreditation bodies related to assessment on State University of New York campuses, and shall assist campuses when needed.
- The Provost of the State University of New York shall work with leadership, faculty and others on campuses to implement this policy, shall provide the resources necessary to ensure regular consultation and assistance, including the formation of an assessment advisory group in consultation with faculty governance, and shall report periodically to the Board of Trustees of any additional steps that may need to be taken to insure the smooth implementation of this policy.

Implementation

A. Campus Assessment Plans. A campus shall develop and implement one or more assessment plans that reflect its mission and goals, its curriculum and governance procedures, the State University of New York's policies, and the standards of both institutional and programmatic accreditation bodies. Such plans shall provide, at minimum, for the regular assessment of institutional and program effectiveness and student learning.

B. The Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness. A campus shall develop and implement a plan for regularly assessing its institutional effectiveness – defined as achievement of its mission and goals within the context of the State University of New York's mission and goals – to gauge its own progress in academic and other areas, and to meet or exceed the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

C. The Evaluation of Academic Programs. A campus shall develop and implement a plan for the periodic evaluation of each of its registered academic programs, and may group programs for this purpose, as appropriate for the campus. The plan shall meet campus assessment and planning needs, and be designed to meet or exceed the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and, as applicable, programmatic accrediting bodies.
   i. Purpose. Academic program evaluation shall be designed to enable programs to stay current, assemble and analyze evidence to inform improvement, and provide the best possible education to students within the context of campus mission and goals and the State University of New York's mission and goals.
   ii. Components. Each credit-bearing academic program shall be included in an evaluation plan. The evaluation itself shall reflect the program's mission and goals and, at minimum, include a self-study that refers to assessment of student learning, and external review or programmatic accreditation.
iii. **Cycles.** Academic program evaluations shall generally occur on a five-to-seven year cycle, or a cycle of programmatic accreditation of ten years or less. Each cycle shall include all programs, except that a Chief Academic Officer may waive full evaluations for:
- a program with no or low enrollment[1] (e.g., fewer than 10 students);
- a new program that recently had external review during program development, or whose evaluation will be included in the next cycle; and
- a program whose evaluation is scheduled for the next cycle due to programmatic accreditation or other scheduling reasons.

In addition, a Chief Academic Officer may combine program evaluations for programs that involve some or all of the same faculty members or have substantive curriculum elements in common.

iv. **Programmatic Accreditation.** Programmatic accreditation by an accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U.S. Secretary of Education that includes the assessment of student learning satisfies the State University of New York's expectation for academic program evaluation.

v. **External Review.** Continuing the State University of New York’s longstanding practice, the evaluation of academic programs that do not have programmatic accreditation shall include external review, to the extent necessary and appropriate.
- Generally, potential external reviewers should be discussed by the program/department being evaluated, the Dean (where applicable) and the campus Chief Academic Officer or designee, but the Chief Academic Officer should make the final selection.
- In general, at least two external reviewers should be selected who have no significant academic, professional or other relationship to full-time faculty in the program/department, who have no previous significant or formal affiliation with the institution, and who come from academic or professional institutions belonging to a peer or aspirational peer group (i.e., in the same Carnegie class and having a similar program size, scope and statistical, or perceived, reputational ranking).
- Two-year programs may invite a local Advisory Board member to be one of the two external reviewers.
- The Chief Academic Officer may use professional judgment to determine whether one external reviewer would be sufficient to achieve the goals of an external review.

1151 - Assessment, Procedure

- External review shall conclude with the external reviewers submitting a report, based on a campus visit, to the Chief Academic Officer.

vi. **The Assessment of General Education.** Each campus with one or more general education curricula shall develop and implement a plan for the periodic evaluation of these curricula that meets or exceeds the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. At minimum, the plan shall indicate how the campus will assess student achievement of the student learning outcomes associated with the SUNY General Education Requirement and use the results to inform planning for improvement. The student learning outcomes are in Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses.

vii. **Accountability and Improvement.** A campus shall maintain records of its assessment plans, findings, and resulting actions and their impact, and share them, as appropriate, with campus constituencies, regional and programmatic accrediting bodies, the Provost of the State University of New York, and external auditors. The exchange of information about assessment and its impact on advancing practice and improving programs is highly encouraged.

i. **Recordkeeping for Institutional Accreditation.** To meet the assessment standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, campuses are encouraged to maintain records for multiple levels – such as the institution as a whole, its major units and its academic and other programs – that provide evidence of their alignment, and, for each level, evidence of:
- statements of mission, goals and expected outcomes, including student learning outcomes;
- the assessment of mission, goals and outcomes; and
- the analysis and use of assessment results to inform planning and, as appropriate, resource allocation.

ii. **Reporting on Accreditation.** Board policy requires the University Provost to "review the findings of regional and programmatic accreditation bodies related to assessment" and "assist campuses when needed." As a result, each campus is asked to:
- report to the Provost of the State University of New York, upon request, its schedule for program evaluation and accreditation; and
- submit to the Provost of the State University of New York, at Assessment@suny.edu, an electronic copy of the all official determinations from all accrediting bodies, within 30 days of receipt. This includes determinations from site visits, follow up visits, and periodic review reports, or their equivalents.

[1] Low enrollment programs should not be excluded entirely from campus assessment plans.
APPENDIX III

Faculty Senate Actions in Assessment

Assessment continues to evolve due in large part to the Faculty Senate leadership role. The Senate’s involvement is critical to promoting shared faculty governance in the assessment process. A series of Senate ad hoc committees have been responsible for developing key assessment initiatives, including revision of the process for program review and evaluation.

Recent Faculty Senate initiatives relevant to assessment evolved through the work of a series of successive Faculty Senate ad hoc committees which had been given charges from the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee. These initiatives include:

2006-2007

The Faculty Senate accepted three changes and updates made by SUNY’s General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group to Strengthened Campus-Based Assessment (SCBA) for Basic Communication, Mathematics, and Critical Thinking. These changes were based on the SUNY recommendation to use externally-referenced measures to assess these three Knowledge and Skills areas.

2007-2008

Based on the Middle States Evaluation Team’s suggestion that “MCC should develop an accountability system to make sure that information literacy; critical analysis and reasoning; and the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives are incorporated into each student’s general education program,” the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee charged an ad hoc committee with developing such an accountability system. The Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment and Program Review presented recommendations to the Senate for updating both program review guidelines and the assessment cycle timeline and received final Senate approval in October 2008.

Additionally, in a letter dated October 28, 2007, Academic Vice President Janet Glocker made the following charge to the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee:

- Review MCC’s definition for each of the General Education subject areas for validity and clarity.
- Review the curricular processes used to maintain the general education lists to:
  1. Ensure content review of each proposal is measured against consistent, valid and Senate-endorsed criteria.
  2. Ensure that the program of general education meets internal and external regulatory requirements.
- Make any appropriate recommendations for improvement, taking into careful consideration the impact of these recommendations on students and programs. That is to say, prior to advancing a recommendation for a new definition, the committee should examine how many and which courses would be excluded from the list under the new definition and identify how the removal of those courses would affect the curricula of which the target courses are now part.
2008-2009

- The Curriculum Committee sent a request to department chairs for input regarding their department’s understanding of the definitions of MCC’s General Education Knowledge and Skills areas, as well as the criteria for course inclusion in each area. The Curriculum Committee also researched General Education definitions from sponsoring and accrediting organizations, cohort colleges and transfer institutions. Input from department chairs was used to inform the committee of the extent of agreement among departments regarding the definitions of MCC’s General Education areas, while also involving departments in building a common understanding of General Education. The committee’s task was to build faculty consensus, and establish valid definitions and criteria for inclusion of courses in the General Education Knowledge and Skills areas that reflected the perspective of MCC faculty. This work is in progress.

- The Curriculum Committee began overseeing an Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Review of Course Learning Outcomes. In 2008-09, course learning outcomes for all 200-level courses were developed by department faculty and submitted to the ad hoc committee for review and approval. Subsequently, course learning outcomes for 100-level courses were developed by department faculty and presented to, reviewed and approved by the ad hoc committee.

- The Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment and Program Review presented recommendations to the Senate Executive Committee in June 2009 on the “Rights and Responsibilities of Individual Faculty and Departments in regards to Assessment and Program Review.” The committee also recommended the Faculty Senate form a long-standing Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment and Program Review, with potential to become a permanent standing committee. This recommendation was amended by the Curriculum Committee and presented to the Executive Committee which established college-wide assessment committee as a pilot project for one year.

2009-2010

- An ad hoc Committee on Assessment, reporting to the Curriculum Committee, completed its task to provide recommendations for updating the College’s Foundations for Student Success: Learning and Assessment document and to provide recommendations regarding the assessment of the infused competencies.

- Faculty Senate established a standing College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee for overseeing the full process of academic assessment at MCC; improving its continuity, organization and structure; and promoting shared faculty governance in assessment policies and procedures.

- Two Separate Committees were formed: One to revise the Foundations document and one to make recommendations regarding the infused competencies.
2010 - 2011

- New three semester cycle (fall-spring-fall) was incorporated into the Program Evaluation process by the recommendation of the CAPE Committee
- *Foundations for Student Success IV: Closing the Assessment Loop* was proposed by the CAPE Committee and approved by the Faculty Senate
- Chair of the CAPE Committee presented to the Faculty Senate on history of assessment at MCC, current assessment practices and closing the loop activities. This presentation was to promote a better assessment culture at MCC and to put the assessment activities at the level of higher importance.

2011 – 2012

- Curriculum Special Projects Committee finalized the Infused Competencies and Values/Ethics and Diverse Perspectives form, along with the questions from the Global Education Committee, to be used in the curriculum database to collect current Infused Competencies inventory.
- The Provost challenged the Faculty Senate to look at General Education and the Liberal Arts General Studies (LA04) degree critically and examine if MCC provides students with the appropriate foundation for transfer. He asked the Faculty Senate to analyze what we can do to keep the intellectual rigor yet re-engineer the first two years of a four year experience for students and use this as an opportunity to re-invent this degree option.

2012 - 2013

- The Faculty Senate formed the “Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, and Re-Engineer General Education Committee with the following charge: “Over the next two years, you and your fellow committee members will forge a new future for Monroe Community College as you consider the most fundamental aspects of the content and delivery of general education. We challenge you and your colleagues to engage in a process of inquiry that will genuinely re-imagine, re-invent, and re-engineer our general education program at the College."

- In November 2012, the Faculty Senate approved the following resolution, devised by the CAPE Committee:
  Resolution 2.8 Academic Assessment of Student Learning and Program Evaluation Faculty/Department Rights and Responsibilities

- In January 2013 the Faculty Senate approved the following resolution, devised by the CAPE Committee: Resolution 2.6 Program Evaluation Process Guidelines

- Faculty Senate has charged the Infused Competencies Project with completing the infused competencies inventory. The results of this inventory were going to be used by the ACE internationalization Task Force, the LA04 program review committee, and the Re-imagine MCC’s General Education Committee.
The Faculty Senate Infused Competencies Project charged a sub-committee with creating a proposal for the assessment of Infused Competencies (Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Technological Literacy, Values & Ethics, Diversity and Diverse Perspectives). The plan, proposed by the sub-committee, was a two-year project which was to start in Fall 2013.

2013 – 2014

The chair of the General Education Steering Committee, which was charged by the Provost to re-invent, re-imagine and re-engineer General Education at MCC, presented the committee’s plan to go from a distribution-based model to an outcomes based one to meet the following five (5) Principles of General Education requirements:

1. General Education should promote an integrated educational experience for students through exposure to a varied curriculum cultivating personal and professional development.
2. General Education should teach necessary skills and competencies including, but not limited to: critical and analytical thinking, reasoning and problem solving, written and oral communication, informational literacy, and technological competency.
3. General Education should accommodate students’ diverse academic and professional goals, including the completion of a MCC degree.
4. General Education should have courses with applicable value to specific programs.
5. General Education should instill the values of ethics, democracy, diversity, globalization, and civic engagement.

The Re-Imagine General Education committee decided to pursue the following goals of the General Education

- Provide students with a collaborative learning environment
- Encourage students to become active participants in a diverse society
- Guide students in developing a sense of personal responsibility in their education success
- Provide an opportunity for context-based learning
- Offer experiences that show the interdependence of academic disciplines
- Promote the development of effective communications skills
- Provide students with experiences to think critically and draw conclusions
- Promote dialog among students in politically, economically, and culturally sensitive issues
- Provide students with a world-view perspective
- Provide students rigorous training in quantitative, informational, and technological literacy
- Challenge students to develop a personal ethical code
- Encourage participation in the interpretation of human culture
- Provide students with a foundation for personal fitness and wellness

The committee proposed the following Learning Outcomes for General Education

1) Write effectively in a discipline-specific context.
2) Engage in effective oral communication in a discipline-specific context.
3) Apply discipline-specific scientific reasoning to argument or analysis.
4) Engage in discipline-based inquiry or problem solving.
5) Analyze domestic political, economic, or social issues from various points of view.
6) Examine global issues from various perspectives.
7) Apply research techniques to locate and utilize valid sources of information.
8) Apply quantitative analysis to solve discipline-specific problems, analyze patterns and trends, or evaluate data.
9) Use technology in discipline-specific ways to further educational or occupational goals.
10) Express the application of personal, educational, or professional values to ethics-based decision making.
11) Discuss various aspects of cultural expression.
12) Apply specific health or fitness principles to a personal wellness plan.

The committee believed that the advantages of the proposed model would include the following:

- Allows programs to shape general education around their degree requirements
- Allows students to understand how general education relates to their educational and career goals
- Promotes an integrated curriculum
- Clearly communicates the value of general education to all stakeholders
- Cleanly overlays the SUNY General Education model

The Committee also included additional requirements for High Impact Practices: Require 3 writing intensive courses AND - 2 from the following list: Service Learning; Learning Communities; Internships and Other Field Experiences; Undergraduate Research, Scholarly Inquiry, and Creative Activity.

The committee anticipated potential concerns from the faculty and tried to address them.

- In April 24, 2014, Infused Competency Project formed committees for the assessment of the Infused Competencies:
  - Values & Ethics Committee
  - Diversity & Diverse Perspectives Committee
  - Distance Education Committee
  - Information Literacy Committee
  - Critical Thinking Committee
  - Technological Literacy Committee

2014-15

- In October 2014, the following resolutions were proposed by the CAPE Committee and approved by the Faculty Senate
  - Faculty Senate Resolution 2.6.7: Program Evaluation Process Guidelines for Accredited Programs.
  - Faculty Senate Resolution 2.9: Assessment of Online Courses
• The Faculty Senate adopted the Infused Competencies Assessment Committee report from Values & Ethics and Diversity & Diverse Perspectives.

• In April 2015, the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) Committee was formed by the Senate at the request of the Provost.

• In May 2015, the Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, and Re-Engineer General Education Committee recommended Learning Outcomes for General Education were approved by the Faculty Senate.
## APPENDIX IV

### ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT & PROGRAM EVALUATION PROJECT SCHEDULE (Updated 27 June 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>General Ed. Assessments Department – Discipline</th>
<th>Program Evaluations Department -- Program</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>AHPS—Anthropology</td>
<td>Bus. Adm. – Accounting A.A.S.</td>
<td>Liberal Arts – LA04</td>
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<td>Chem/Geo – Geosciences</td>
<td>VaPA – Fine Arts A.S.</td>
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<td>Eng/Phys – Physics</td>
<td>English/Phil – English for Hum.</td>
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<td>English/Phil – English for Hum.</td>
<td>VaPA – Art &amp; Music</td>
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<td>Program Evaluations</td>
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<td>PSTF – Fire Prevention A.A.S.</td>
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APPENDIX V

Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses

For each State University General Education Requirement (SUNY-GER) category, the Task Force-defined learning outcomes are set out in plain text. Following each set of learning outcomes, guidelines for review and approval follow in italics. The guidelines take into account the intentions of Board Resolution 98-241, and the Provost’s Advisory Committee on General Education’s (PACGE’s) recommendations regarding the interpretation of the Task Force learning outcomes. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide transparency as to the expectations of the kinds of courses that may be approved in each of the SUNY-GER categories. They are not intended to constitute a logically exhaustive description of possible ways in which the learning outcomes can be met or evaluated. But it will generally be true that the further a given course is from obviously meeting the articulated guidelines, the less likely it may be approved for the category in question. It is anticipated that these guidelines will be subject to review, refinement and correction on an ongoing basis to account for shifts in disciplinary boundaries and feedback from campuses on a range of relevant issues.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL AREAS

1. MATHEMATICS

Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics;
- represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally;
- employ quantitative methods such as, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, or statistics to solve problems;
- estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness; and
- recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.

If a student has passed either the Regents Math B exam or the Regents Algebra 2 and Trigonometry exam with a score of 85 or above, the campus may judge the student to have satisfied all the learning outcomes for this category.

2. NATURAL SCIENCES

Students will demonstrate:
- understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; and
- application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural (or physical) sciences.

For courses in the traditional natural science disciplines (e.g., chemistry, biology, physics, etc.) the inclusion of a laboratory component, though highly desirable, is not necessary for approval.

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14 Revision made 4/13/05, reflecting the content of student learning outcomes approved by State and National mathematical organizations. Revision made 7/9/10 to reflect new Regents exams.
For inter- or multi-disciplinary courses (e.g., environmental science, or the science portions of integrated curricula), or courses that fall outside the envelope of traditional natural science disciplines (e.g., psychology), submitted course information should demonstrate clearly:

- how they use all the methods listed in the first student learning outcome for the natural sciences;
- a rationale for which discipline(s) in the natural sciences they draw on for concepts and models;
- that the majority of the texts used fall clearly within the natural sciences.

3. SOCIAL SCIENCES

Students will demonstrate:

- understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; and
- knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

More than some other broadly defined discipline areas, the boundaries of the social sciences may vary significantly from campus to campus. In order to be approved for the social science category, submitted information should demonstrate clearly that the course provides a substantial introduction to an acknowledged social science discipline.

For inter- or multi-disciplinary courses (e.g., women’s studies, or the social science portions of integrated curricula), or courses that otherwise fall outside the envelope of traditional social science disciplines, submitted course information should demonstrate clearly:

- how they teach understanding of social science methodologies;
- a rationale for which discipline(s) in the social sciences they draw on for concepts and models;
- that the majority of the texts used fall clearly within the social sciences.

4. AMERICAN HISTORY

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society;
- knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups; and
- understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

To satisfy this SUNY-GER category, students must take either:

(i) a basic introduction to American History; or
(ii) a more specialized course in American History (only if they scored 85 or above on the NYS American History and Government Regents Exam).

A. Kinds of courses that are approvable for category (i):

1. One half of the typical year-long survey of U.S. history.
2. Introductions to American Government that document significant attention to historical context.
3. American History courses with a somewhat narrower chronological focus that nevertheless provide enough historical context to cover a narrative equivalent to one semester of the U.S.
History survey. Courses in 20th century U.S. history, e.g., have been approved when it has been documented that there is significant coverage of the 19th century context.

4. Special theme courses that have as an explicit component the coverage of the basic narrative equivalent to one semester of the U.S. History survey. Examples of such courses are UGC 211 American Pluralism (Buffalo), and GEA 2000 American History, Society, and the Arts Purchase. Both of these examples document the breadth of coverage of U.S. history by the use of a U.S. history textbook among the readings for the course.

B. Kinds of courses that are approvable for category (ii):
   1. Virtually any American History course.
   2. Courses on American society and culture that adopt an ostensibly historical perspective and address in a significant way the 2nd and 3rd Task Force learning outcomes. These include, e.g., courses on the sociology of American institutions and/or minority groups. Courses that focus narrowly on literature, philosophy, the arts, vel sim., would not normally be deemed to provide the breadth of coverage of U.S. history intended by the Board Resolution.

5. WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Students will:
   • demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization; and
   • relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

In addition to generic, eponymously titled, courses on the history of western civilization, courses that are more specialized—in either chronology or theme—may be approvable. Information submitted for such specialized courses would have to demonstrate
   (i) a focus on an aspect of western civilization that is reasonably construed as foundationally important; and
   (ii) relate that focus to the overall development of western civilization.

Thus, courses on specialized topics or periods—examples include: classical mythology, the Renaissance, the Bible, French civilization, the history of theater—are approvable so long as the materials submitted demonstrate that the primary focus of the course is related to larger cultural developments of western civilization. Courses that focus narrowly on particular authors or figures are generally not approvable, even if the authors in question should be very important ones. The operative idea is that the core of the course must be central to western civilization and that the treatment of that core must be placed in a broader cultural perspective, so that it could reasonably be said that students will gain an acquaintance with western civilization and not just a specialized knowledge of one narrowly defined topic.

6. OTHER WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

Students will demonstrate:
   • knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or
   • the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

The intention of this category is to provide a counterpoint to the European focus of the Western Civilization requirement. Thus, approvable courses in this category must be either entirely or preponderantly non-European and non-US in focus. In addition to courses on the civilizations of Asia
or Africa, this would, for example, allow courses on the histories of Latin America, the Caribbean, and/or indigenous peoples of the Americas.

7. HUMANITIES

Students will demonstrate:
- knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.

This category does not specify a particular humanities discipline or approach. In order to preserve the Task Force intention in splitting the original Humanities/Arts category in two, “performance” courses will generally not be approvable unless supported by documentation that they include a preponderance of scholarly humanistic study. Standard scholarly histories of the arts are approvable in both the Humanities and Arts categories.

For inter- or multi-disciplinary courses whose scope does not obviously fall within the envelope of traditional humanistic disciplines (e.g., some communications offerings), submitted course information should demonstrate clearly:
- a rationale for which humanities discipline(s) they draw on for conventions and methods;
- that the majority of the texts are within humanities disciplines.

8. THE ARTS

Students will demonstrate:
- understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

In order to be approved for the Arts category, offerings should engage the creative process directly as well as foster understanding of a principal form of artistic expression. Both performance-oriented and scholarly/historical offerings in the expressive arts are approvable for this category. Literary offerings are also approvable depending on campus-based criteria for distinguishing the Humanities and Arts categories. Courses imparting purely technical skills with no demonstration of aesthetic content are not approvable.

For inter- or multi-disciplinary courses whose scope does not obviously fall within the envelope of traditional principal forms of artistic expression (e.g., courses on technical or practical aspects of design or electronic media) submitted course information should demonstrate clearly:
- which principal form(s) of artistic expression students will encounter;
- the amount of time spent on each form;
- how students will show understanding of the creative process(es) inherent in the form(s).

9. FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Students will demonstrate:
- basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; and
- knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

The first college semester, or above, of a foreign language constitutes an approvable course in this category.
It is acknowledged that campuses have widely differing practices and available resources for the assessment of foreign language preparation. Previously acquired language competence may be determined by a standard measure selected or developed by the relevant faculty and should demonstrate the student’s readiness to enter the second college semester of foreign language study. In the case of the Regents Exam, this would mean passing Checkpoint B with a score of 85 or above. Use of the Regents Exam for this purpose is at the discretion of the campus. Many campuses have, and are encouraged to have, language requirements that go beyond the minimum established by the Board resolution.

American Sign Language may be used to satisfy this category only by students in the following programs:
- programs leading to certification in elementary and secondary education;
- programs leading to careers where there is likely to be significant contact with the hearing-impaired.

10. BASIC COMMUNICATION

Students will:
- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

Approvable courses for this category include
- writing-intensive courses that also include significant attention to speaking skills;
- speaking-intensive courses that also include significant attention to writing skills.

Campuses proposing to cover the Basic Communication outcomes by diffusion (e.g., Writing Across the Curriculum programs) must demonstrate that they are taught and practiced in all the courses involved. This demonstration may be facilitated by describing the mechanisms of course or program organization for achieving the learning outcomes.

Remedial or ESL courses are not acceptable within this category. Nor should students place out of the Basic Communication requirement by high verbal SAT scores, on the grounds that all students need an awareness of and continual practice in all the specifically college-level knowledge and skills.

II. COMPETENCIES

The following two competencies should be infused throughout the General Education program:

1. CRITICAL THINKING (REASONING)

Students will:
- identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and
- develop well-reasoned arguments.
2. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Students will:
- perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- understand and use basic research techniques; and
- locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

*The Critical Thinking and Information Management competencies are not necessarily associated with any one course, though either or both of them could be imparted in specific “Critical Thinking” or “Information Management” courses. In either case, campus submissions must demonstrate that the learning outcomes are accomplished in the overall undergraduate curriculum.*
**APPENDIX VI**

**Degree Requirements: Liberal Arts Content & General Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degrees: AA, AS, AAS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Degrees: AA, AS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Degrees: AA, AS, AAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit Hours: 17 credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>Credit Hours: 30 credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>Credit Hours: 15 credits</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCC (7 out of 10, include Basic Communication and Mathematics, if transferring to a SUNY college or university; 5 out of 10 for Engineering Science)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 Knowledge &amp; Skills Areas:</th>
<th>10 Knowledge &amp; Skills Areas:</th>
<th>Knowledge &amp; Skills Areas:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As listed in current MCC catalog, “Courses Fulfilling Degree Requirements”</td>
<td>As listed in current MCC catalog, “SUNY General Education Requirements”</td>
<td>As listed under Standard 12, Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, pg. 48.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Basic Communication (ENG 101/200)</td>
<td>3 Basic Communication (Requirement)</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Any MCC Humanities</td>
<td>3 Humanities</td>
<td>Speech Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Any MCC Social Science</td>
<td>3 Social Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Any MCC Natural Science</td>
<td>3 Natural Sciences</td>
<td>Scientific Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mathematics, MTH 104 or higher</td>
<td>3 Mathematics (Requirement)</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Foreign Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 American History</td>
<td>3 American History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Western Civilization</td>
<td>3 Other World Civilization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Any MCC PE/HED</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Infused Competencies:
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Information Management**
- **Study of Values, Ethics & Diverse Perspectives**

**Note:** Table current as of September 2015.
APPENDIX VII

Academic Assessment of Student Learning and Program Evaluation

Faculty/Department

Rights and Responsibilities

Monroe Community College recognizes and upholds the 1940 AAUP statement on Academic Freedom and subsequent interpretive comments. This is recognized in the collective bargaining agreement with the Faculty Association. The following list of rights and responsibilities is in no way an attempt to claim rights not given via Academic Freedom, nor is it an attempt to limit the rights allowed under the provisions of Academic Freedom as defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), or supersede policies already established.

From the beginning, MCC has held that assessment is faculty-driven and faculty-owned with support from the administration. Additionally the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning and curriculum design, not to assess or evaluate faculty performance. Assessment is a significant component of the Middle States Commission of Higher Education accreditation process. To account for student learning outcomes and the attendant issues raised by (institutional and program accreditation), the faculty and administration will continue to (work collaboratively).

In regards to Assessment and Program Evaluation:

Each individual Faculty member has the right:

1. To accept or decline a leadership role in assessment
2. To select/create/refine the assessment tool in accordance with departmental policies
3. To determine for themselves an appropriate response to their assessment findings.
4. For findings not to be used to evaluate the quality of instruction or to compare instructors
5. For findings not to be used for promotion/retention decisions against their choice
6. For anonymity to be preserved where possible

Each Faculty member has the responsibility, consistent with departmental policy/practice:

1. To participate in Assessment/Program Evaluation, which may include, but is not limited to:
   a. Becoming knowledgeable about specific departmental assessment practices
   b. Engaging in department assessment practices at the request of the Program Evaluation Leader or Discipline Assessment Leader (PEL or DAL)
   c. Administering the assessment tool
   d. Collecting data and reporting the findings
   e. Analyzing the findings and taking actions in response to the findings as requested
2. To share the assessment tool with appropriate PEL or DAL
3. To provide the Coordinator of Academic Assessment and Program Review with access to the assessment tool

Each Department has the right:

1. To request who leads departmental assessment
2. To administrative support for assessment/program evaluation, such as:
   a. Institutional Research Support
   b. Release time for the support of assessment projects as determined by the Provost, as appropriate.
   c. Assistance of the Coordinator of Academic Assessment and Program Review
3. To determine for itself the pace and substance of its response to assessment findings
4. For findings not to be used to compare departments
5. To choose how and with whom to share its assessment tools
6. To manage its General Education course list which includes proposing the addition or removal of courses
7. To choose the location for storage of the assessment tools and samples of scored student work**
8. To select/refine/create assessment tools consistent with best practices and departmental policy and practice

Each Department* has the responsibility:

1. To ensure assessment of student learning (in discipline-specific General Education courses) and evaluation of program is conducted in consultation with the Coordinator of Academic Assessment and Program Review
2. To support training in assessment and program evaluation
3. To analyze assessment findings and oversee implementation of the action plan which may include:
   a. Researching pedagogical and curriculum theory and practices
   b. Creating and implementing new curriculum
   c. Ensuring the continuation of current successful practices
4. To respond to assessment findings in a timely manner. To oversee production of required reports by PEL/DAL
5. To submit reports to the Coordinator of Academic Assessment and Program Review to be archived in a secure central area
6. To maintain documentation of the location of assessment tools, and samples of scored student work**
   a. Scored student work** will be stored for at least one full cycle of program evaluation
7. To ensure all General Education courses running are assessed per cycle
8. To acknowledge and support the program evaluation efforts by faculty

*"Department” does not necessarily connote the department chair specifically. A department may choose to charge a subgroup of faculty members to take responsibility for assessment activities.

** Scored student work will consist of, at minimum, two samples of each level of achievement.
## CAPE Committee Membership Archive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Committee Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1: 2010-2011</td>
<td>Elizabeth Laidlaw</td>
<td>Susan Carlson, Elena Dilai, Charlotte Downing, Paul Emerick, Diane Fitton, Michael Heel, Ryan Jackson, Renee Rigoni</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 2: 2011-2012</td>
<td>Elizabeth Laidlaw</td>
<td>Susan Carlson, Elena Dilai, Charlotte Downing, Paul Emerick, Michael Heel, Anne Hughes, Renee Rigoni</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 3: 2012-2013</td>
<td>Paul Emerick</td>
<td>Susan Carlson, Elena Dilai, Charlotte Downing, Michael Heel, Anne Hughes, Elizabeth Laidlaw, Renee Rigoni</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4: 2013-2014</td>
<td>Elena Dilai</td>
<td>Tracey Britton, Susan Carlson, Marcia Fugate, Michael Heel, Anne Hughes, Elizabeth Laidlaw, Renee Rigoni, Jason Szymanski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5: 2014-2015</td>
<td>Jason Szymanski</td>
<td>Tracey Britton, Susan Carlson, Elena Dilai, Marcia Fugate, Michael Heel, Renee Rigoni, Catharine Ganze Smith</td>
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