

Performing Arts Center
May 6, 2014
Meeting of College Council Volume 41 Number 4

There were present:

Prof. Barnhart	VP Gomez	Ms. Palmieri
Dean Basile	Prof. Guigno	Prof. Pierre
Prof. Brancaccio-Taras	Dr. Harewood	VP Pobat
Ms. Blauvelt	Prof. Hume	Prof. Polizzotto
Ms. Bojku	Mr. Klein	Prof. Pollack
Prof. A. Cohen	Prof. Kraljic	Ms. Quinnie
Ms. J. Cohen	Prof. Lax	Ms. Schlesinger
VP P. Cohen	Prof. Martin	Prof. Sokolow
Ms. Daly	Prof. McDevitt	Ms. Sutton-Young
Ms. Driscoll	Prof. McKinney	Prof. Thomas
Prof. Farrell	Prof. Miranda	Mr. Troudt
Prof. Ferretti	Prof. Murphy	Prof. Yarmish
Prof. Furay	Prof. Nanin	
Prof. Garcia-Osuna	Prof. Nicosia	

Interim President Suss called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Interim President Suss began the meeting by introducing Vice President Debra Klinman of the Middle States Commission of Higher Education, a very important guest who has come to KCC to tell us what we have done and need to be doing to compile a successful self-study.

Dr. Klinman then made the following presentation, including a brief question and answer period at the end:

It is a pleasure to be here today as Kingsborough Community College embarks on its self-study. In 2016, your assigned committee will come to the campus to evaluate where the institution is in terms of the fourteen Middle States standards.

I am here to get to know Kingsborough, help you through the process, and answer any questions you may have. Middle States is one of seven regional accreditors for six regions across the United States (California is the only single region which has two assigned accreditors). Some of you are already familiar with disciplinary accreditors which take a comprehensive look at individual programs from top to bottom. The regional accreditors look at the entire institution horizontally, across the disciplines.

Kingsborough will be one of the last institutions to be accredited on the basis of the current 2002 standards, which are being rewritten for 2017. There are fourteen of these standards: the first half are institutional in nature, and the second half examine teaching and student learning.

Of these fourteen standards, two are especially important: Standard 7, which focuses on institutional assessment, and Standard 14, which deals with the remainder of assessment. A

major focus is describing what you do, analyzing it, and providing evidentiary documentation that supports your descriptions. This pressure to perform assessment and provide accountability does not originate with the accreditor, but rather from the federal government, the United States Department of Education. The accreditors, too, are accountable to these federal bodies. Therefore the pressures for accountability will not go away, and they may even be ramped up in the future.

The Middle States Commission accredits institutions of all kinds, including two-year and four-year colleges, tiny art colleges, large comprehensives, culinary institutes, and a broad range of other institutions. The most important way Middle States can assess so many different institutions and types is through the lens of the College's mission. This is provided by each institution itself and then evaluated through the fourteen Middle States standards.

Middle States accredits institutions throughout the Middle Atlantic states as well as Puerto Rico. Membership includes 540 colleges and universities of all shapes and sizes. There are many more institutions of higher education in the area covered by Middle States. Some of them come to request accreditation, but are denied because they do not meet the standards.

This self-study will be about how well Kingsborough serves its students and its communities. The bar is set high; as I mentioned, it is not easy to become accredited.

The core of the process is a mission-centered review, and a peer-to-peer evaluation by a team that understands your college's mission and what it needs to do to fulfill the standards. In Spring 2016 there will be a campus visit by the Middle States team, followed by committee action in June 2016. This is a long process entailing a lot of work, and a lot of people are involved.

For Kingsborough, the purpose of this process is to ensure that students remain eligible for Title IV Student Tuition Aid, faculty for Title III faculty research grants, and other federal dollars only available to accredited institutions. This began in 1965, when federal education aid became a permanent part of the annual federal budget. Subsequently it became necessary for quality assurance to ensure that students attended institutions that would meet their educational goals and enable them to eventually repay their student debt.

Title IV funds for student tuition aid total \$150 billion per year. So the pressure for accountability is real, especially considering the massive number of dollars being allocated for education. Since 70% or so of Kingsborough students need access to federal aid, reaccreditation is necessary for the college's continued existence.

The reaccreditation process is also a way for the college to demonstrate that it is providing students with a high quality education. This is Kingsborough's mark of excellence.

The 2016 Middle States team will come to the campus having read the college's documentation and self-study. All of its members are volunteers who believe in peer-to-peer evaluation. On the Monday and Tuesday of their visit, they will interview all constituencies on campus and then discuss their findings. By that Wednesday they will write them up, and they will then offer an oral exit report of their main findings on each and every standard to determine if the institution has met those standards. They will also provide commendations, recommendations for improvement, and other observations.

These findings will be brought to a committee at Middle States, which will read the findings and the institutional response to the findings. They will then reach a third layer, when they are brought to the entire Commission. If Kingsborough passes all fourteen standards in the eyes of the evaluation team, then the chances of reaccreditation are pretty good.

If all of the standards are not met, then the institution is placed on ‘warning’ status and given the opportunity to fix the problem(s) while remaining accredited. Then another Middle States team will return to review the area(s) where there was a problem. The most frequent standards where noncompliance is found are standards 7 and 14: institutional and student learning outcomes assessment.

Federal regulation sets the timeframe for an institution on warning at two years to fix the problem(s). Kingsborough currently has two years remaining before the Middle States team is scheduled to come to campus, so now is the time to check that outcomes and goals are being assessed, documented, and the results are being used to make changes and improvements.

In five years Kingsborough will submit a Periodic Review Report (PRR) between the ten-year reaccreditation periods. The Middle States team may also ask for additional follow-up reports prior to the PRR; in fact, 67% of all institutions are asked to do so. This allows the institution to focus on particular problems before the PRR is due, and avoid being placed on warning at that time. This is not punitive, but allows the institution to perform strongly on future reaccreditation.

In response to a question on how the team and team chair are chosen, Dr. Klinman responded that the institution is asked to provide a list of similar institutions to serve as peer evaluators. Middle States will select experts on finances, student services, faculty issues, assessment and other areas, totaling 8 or 9 team members.

In response to a comment on best practices, Dr. Klinman stated that every academic and nonacademic administrative unit should have clearly articulated goals. In the case of student learning outcomes, they should be mapped to particular courses and connected to specific assessment measuring tools. Data should be collected every semester, and analyzed by stakeholders who ‘close the loop’ and show that they use the data to make changes based on their analysis of the results. It is crucial to demonstrate how you use the data to make changes and try to improve, then track those changes. Assessment is being performed to make improvements. The college has two years to put this in place, document it, and make improvements based on those findings.

Middle States describes this as ‘continuous improvement’ that is organized, systematic, and sustained. It is crucial that this be documented throughout.

Dr. Klinman concluded by stating that Kingsborough Community College is a fine institution that provides an excellent education and is active in terms of its students and its community. It is up to the College to be the best Kingsborough it can be, and what the college learns at the end of this process is all meant to benefit our students.

Interim President Suss thanked Dr. Klinman for her time and effort, and for her invaluable comments.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Sokolow

Michael Sokolow, secretary