

**Monitoring Report**  
to the  
**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**From**

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice**  
**899 Tenth Avenue**  
**New York, NY 10019**

**Prepared by:**

**Office of Strategic Planning & Assessment**

**November 1, 2006**

**Date of Self-Study Report: February, 2003**  
**Date of Monitoring Report: April, 2005**

## Introduction

In a letter dated June 23, 2005, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acknowledged receipt of the monitoring report submitted by City University of New York, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. In that same letter, the Commission requested that the College submit an additional monitoring report that documents John Jay's progress in the area of developing and implementing comprehensive written assessment plans for student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The original due date for the report was October 1, 2006. However, in order to allow John Jay to complete the most thorough and comprehensive analysis possible, Middle States granted a one-month extension for submission until November 1, 2006.

The Commission's request comes at a critical time in the history of John Jay, a time of great change and growth at the College, involving new leadership, new initiatives, and a renewed commitment to mission and effectiveness. The benefits of these changes are taking root across the institution, and are particularly evident in the significant progress accomplished in the area of outcomes assessment. Building upon the College's commitment to assessment stated in its April, 2005 *Monitoring Report* to Middle States, John Jay has taken great strides toward implementing frameworks of assessment that are "ongoing and recursive process(es) aimed at understanding and improving the College's effectiveness and accomplishments" (p.3). This progress has come as the John Jay community has recognized the value of assessment as a "pathway" through which we can evaluate the quality of "what" and "how well" our students are learning. It has also come through a series of significant institutional accomplishments in the area of outcomes assessment that reflect the commitment of all components of the John Jay community.

The report that follows is a detailed account of these accomplishments, especially those that occurred during the 2005-2006 academic year. As requested by the Middle States Commission, the report begins with a discussion of the history of outcomes assessment at John Jay College, followed by a detailed account of recent initiatives, reports and institutional changes that have advanced outcomes assessment. This account will outline John Jay's progress in two essential areas:

- Evaluation of the "effectiveness" of the institution as it supports the College's primary goal of student learning,
- Evaluation of the content and quality of student learning as it occurs through the College's academic programs and support services.

The concluding section of the report provides a look ahead to the needs and challenges that still face the College in the area of outcomes assessment, and includes an "Outcomes Assessment Action Plan" that identifies significant objectives which, once achieved, will not only further advance the developing culture of assessment at the College, but will also enhance our ability to measure it.

## **Part I – History of Outcomes Assessment at John Jay College**

An accurate description of the history and progress of outcomes assessment at John Jay College must be framed in an analytical context that conveys something broader than simply a series of discrete events. Like other dimensions of the College, outcomes assessment is becoming an element of the overall culture of the institution that reflects its mission and the contributions of all stakeholders. A key element of that culture has been the central focus of John Jay College on the content and quality of student learning, a focus that has guided the development of the College's academic programs and its structures of student support. Implicit throughout this process has been a consistent effort to understand the dynamics of student learning at John Jay, an effort that sparked a variety of initiatives along the way aimed at academic and institutional assessment. Through these early initiatives, the seeds of a "culture of assessment" were being planted at the College, a process that was encouraged strongly by the City University of New York (CUNY) as it moved toward a more focused outcomes assessment effort. The standards for outcomes assessment established by CUNY thus set a benchmark for all colleges within the system and created a compelling and challenging environment for the structuring and measurement of student learning.

Since its inception, the College has been guided by its mission to provide "solid liberal arts education and service in the fields of criminal justice, fire science and related areas of public service" ("John Jay College of Criminal Justice Self-Study Report prepared for the Commission on Higher Education," 2003, p. 10.1). Although the commitment of the John Jay community to fulfill this mission resulted in an international reputation for the College's academic and public service programs, progress in the area of outcomes assessment had been moving at a more modest pace. In fact, in the 1993 self-study prepared for its reaccreditation, the College reported that one of its challenges was the need for additional steps in the development of an institutional commitment to outcomes assessment. In particular, it was noted that while various types of information were being collected, these efforts lacked a cohesive connection to an institutional plan that would allow the College to become a more "sophisticated" user of these data ("Self-Study Report," p. 10.1).

To address this challenge, the College looked to its Office of Institutional Research (OIR). In 1990, the OIR was revitalized and refocused to allow for the collection and analysis of outcome-related data on a regular basis. As a first step toward reorganization, the elevation of the significance and scope of the OIR, combined with new leadership, created a process of change designed to replace the ad hoc nature of institutional assessment at the College with a more organized and centrally focused effort. By the time of the College's 1993 Middle States review, the OIR had begun providing college-wide reports on the effectiveness of various academic and curricular initiatives, including studies of the impact of course prerequisites and an assessment of the College's associate degree programs. By 1998, the OIR had become a significant source of information on student programs and institutional effectiveness. Since 2001, the office has produced over 400 reports on virtually every aspect of the structure and functioning of John Jay College (see Appendix A for a complete listing of these reports).

Thus, the significance of this office with regard to continued progress in the area of outcomes assessment must be emphasized.

In the ten years that followed the College's 1993 reaccreditation, John Jay responded to Middle States' challenge by undertaking a variety of college-wide initiatives designed to further the development of a culture of assessment at John Jay, including:

- Extensive self-studies and external reviews of undergraduate and graduate degree programs,
- Initiation of a college-wide focus on writing and critical thinking competencies, with the goal of making such competencies explicit within the context of outcomes assessment, thereby improving student learning and retention,
- The formation of an Outcomes Assessment Working Group in 1997 charged with the creation of guidelines or "best practices" that could be employed by faculty to better prepare students for the CUNY Proficiency Exam,
- The 1997 "Multi-Year Plan," a three year agenda for the achievement and measurement of nine key programmatic and curricular priorities, developed through the collaboration of individuals and entities at all levels of the College,
- The 1998 work by the College Curriculum Committee that established recommended outcomes assessment standards for all course syllabi and exams,
- Recommendations made by the Outcomes Assessment Working Group for the implementation of existing writing assignment criteria by all teaching faculty at the College, which became a permanent part of the faculty handbook in 1999,
- The May 2001 draft report by the John Jay College Office of Planning that summarized the College's efforts in the area of outcomes assessment and established recommendations to advance the College's practice of and commitment to assessment at all institutional levels ("Self-Study Report," 2003, pp. 10.1-10.6).

Although broad in scope, these initiatives had not transformed outcomes assessment at the College into an embedded aspect of institutional life, a fact recognized and acknowledged by John Jay in its 2003 self-study report to Middle States (p. 10.6). The need for such a change was further reinforced in the April 2003 report of the Middle States Evaluation Team. Following their visit to the campus, the team noted that "Outcomes assessment appears to be conducted on an ad hoc basis at the College, although there is serious thought as to how to institutionalize procedures" ("Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students of John Jay College of Criminal Justice," Middle States Evaluation Team, 2003, p. 25). The team recommended three institutional changes designed to improve John Jay's efforts in this area:

- The completion of a comprehensive strategic planning effort that would include the development of an outcomes assessment plan,
- A more effective coordination of CUNY performance indicators with those developed and employed within the College,
- A reorganization of the institutional research functions of the College to more effectively blend strategic planning and outcomes assessment initiatives (pp. 25-26).

With the arrival of Jeremy Travis as President of John Jay College in 2004, these recommendations became guiding principles for the extraordinary changes and growth the College would experience during the next two years. Foremost among these was the adoption of the College's Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP) in March 2005. Developed through a yearlong process of reflection, self-evaluation and decision-making, the CAP represented a college-wide effort involving significant numbers of administrators, faculty, staff and students, and responded to the specific requests issued by Middle States in its 2003 reaccreditation of the College:

- Development and implementation of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan which links planning to decision-making and budgeting processes,
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive facilities master plan,
- Development and implementation of a written plan for assessment including student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness ("John Jay College Comprehensive Action Plan," 2005).

A central piece of the Comprehensive Action Plan was the strategic plan of the College, comprised of nine goals related to three overarching institutional themes:

### **Theme 1: Excellence in Education**

**Goal 1:** Nurture student intellectual development and success,

**Goal 2:** Provide a strong liberal arts education for all undergraduate students,

**Goal 3:** Be the national and international leader in education in criminal justice and related areas of public safety and public service.

### **Theme 2: Preeminence in Research and Service in Criminal Justice and Related Areas**

**Goal 4:** Develop and maintain national and international preeminence in scholarship and policy in criminal justice,

**Goal 5:** Provide appropriate educational, research, and training services in criminal justice and related areas of public safety and public service to

relevant government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and communities in New York City, New York State, the United States, and the international community,

**Goal 6:** Serve the community by providing educational and training and by participating in public service activities and projects.

### **Theme 3: Institutional Effectiveness**

**Goal 7:** Improve the environment, management, and operational effectiveness of the College,

**Goal 8:** Develop an enrollment management plan consistent with the mission, aspirations, values, fiscal abilities, and vision of the College,

**Goal 9:** Increase funding from CUNY and external sources (“John Jay College Comprehensive Action Plan,” 2005, pp. iii-v).

As the College set about pursuing these strategic goals, it was guided by an equally important part of the CAP – the Outcomes Assessment Plan (OAP). Developed through the same rigorous processes as the Strategic Plan, the OAP was designed as a response to the requests of both the Middle States Commission (in its reaccreditation of John Jay) and CUNY (which requires annual performance reports from all its colleges). The plan provided an overarching framework and direction for outcomes assessment at the College, thus addressing the issue of how to progress beyond an ad hoc approach to assessment. With guidance from materials developed by the American Association of Higher Education, the plan was developed to include six governing principles for assessment that reflected the culture and the mission of the College:

- Assessment is a goal-oriented process that will work best when our programs have clearly stated goals and objectives and where the process is linked to strategic planning,
- The assessment process must be ongoing and embedded into the institution’s culture – not as an add-on, not top-down, not done episodically in response to external requests,
- Outcomes assessment works best when faculty, students, administrators, staff and, where appropriate, community members (such as employers and alumni) are involved in the process,
- The plan for outcomes assessment must be realistic given time and resource constraints; it should not make busy work for people, but rather should be an integral part of our primary functions at the College,
- Useful and meaningful data should be collected so that members of the community find the results credible and applicable to decisions that need to be made. The point of this assessment process is not to gather data and show

“results,” but rather to use the data to identify where changes and improvements are needed and to drive these changes,

- Student learning is multidimensional and complex, and it is revealed in performance over time. As such, a diverse array of methods must be used to measure learning. Both direct (i.e., measures of actual learning, skill or knowledge) and indirect (i.e., measures of results) imply that learning has occurred. For example, students’ perceptions of learning should be used as one important source of information. All units of the College should be encouraged to generate multiple options for measuring outcomes (“John Jay College Outcomes Assessment Plan,” 2005, p. 4).

Proceeding from these principles, the OAP provided an outline of the steps involved in outcomes assessment, including measurement of the dynamics of student learning, assessment of the various elements of institutional effectiveness, and integration of OA into the planning and budgeting processes of the College. The outline also established a clear link between what it terms “Illustrative Indicators” and “Strategies” presented in the strategic plan, thus framing the College’s OA initiative as part of a dynamic process of institutional reflection, analysis and growth (OAP, p. 10). The outline concludes with a commitment to the development of the support and participation needed to make comprehensive outcomes assessment at John Jay a reality.

In April 2005, President Travis submitted the Comprehensive Action Plan to the Middle States Commission as part of a monitoring report of the College’s progress in strategic and assessment related initiatives. In June 2005, the Commission responded by requesting an additional report documenting further progress in the development and implementation of comprehensive written assessment plans for student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. As the following academic year progressed, John Jay would respond to this request with an unprecedented program of self-reflection, reorganization and change that would advance the College’s commitment to an understanding of student learning and institutional effectiveness.

## **Part II – 2005-2006: A Year of Progress in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness**

The strategic planning initiative leading to the submission of the College’s CAP to Middle States in 2005 provided an opportunity for all sectors of the College community to come together and reflect on the mission and future direction of John Jay. The commitment of those involved did not end with the issuance of the CAP. Rather, it continued and served as the motivating force behind the institutional effectiveness assessment efforts undertaken in 2005-2006. Driven by the directives of the Comprehensive Action Plan, administrators, faculty, staff and students examined fundamental issues related to the structure and function of the College. The results of their efforts provided meaningful answers to important questions about the effectiveness of curricula, services and support structures at John Jay, and paved the way for institutional changes and improvements.

- **Strategic Action Templates**

To facilitate an assessment of the progress represented during this time of institutional change, a broad analytical framework was developed that would enable administrators, faculty and staff to chart the institutional effectiveness of the College within the context of multiple layers of strategic expectations and outcomes. In the case of John Jay, as the College implements its Comprehensive Action Plan, it must do so within the context of the goals and objectives outlined by CUNY for all College's in the University's system. In particular, the CUNY Performance Management Process (PMP), adopted in 2000, serves as an overarching strategic plan for all CUNY institutions designed to promote uniformity in the assessment of college success and accountability within the system. Thus, an approach was needed that would contextualize John Jay's strategic accomplishments in relation to relevant standards of the PMP.

Through the work of a group of Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee members, several strategic action templates were developed that linked the nine goals of the Comprehensive Action Plan with corresponding elements of the PMP. These templates (attached as Appendix B) create useful frameworks for the assessment of institutional initiatives in relation to both college and university benchmarks and have established a more direct method by which the achievement of CAP goals and objectives can be assessed.

The usefulness of these templates stems from the extent to which they facilitate a recursive process of institutional assessment, analysis and renewal. Management of such a process requires an institutional body with the authority to oversee the effective implementation and measurement of strategic initiatives. At John Jay, the Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) serves that function. In a December 2005 resolution to incorporate the CPC as a committee of the College Council, the charge of the CPC was defined as follows

The Comprehensive Planning Committee, in conjunction with the relevant College constituencies, shall periodically develop and revise Comprehensive Action Plans, including a Strategic Plan for the College and make recommendations to the College Council. This Committee will identify future directions for the campus, incorporate resource allocation in its planning, and seek to ensure that the College's mission remains relevant to the needs of the students and of society at large.

This charge clearly identifies the CPC as the appropriate decision-making body within the College to provide ongoing review and evaluation of the implementation of the College's strategic priorities. Also, the committee serves as an effective instrument through which assessment results and recommendations can be integrated regularly into ongoing planning efforts. As the College's strategic "feedback loop," the CPC can employ the action templates as guideposts for the assessment of institutional progress in achieving CAP and PMP goals and objectives. It can also provide a dynamic forum through which what we learn from assessment can be used to structure ongoing processes

of institutional renewal. A taskforce has begun the work of making the CPC a chartered committee of the College, a change that will institutionalize its role in the outcomes assessment process.

- **Assessing Institutional Effectiveness**

In addition to action on implementing and evaluating the CAP, several institutional changes were made at the College during the 2004-2005 academic year that reflect its commitment to outcomes assessment. The most fundamental change came with the elevation of the College's Office of Academic Planning and Assessment to the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment, with its Dean reporting directly to the President and included as a member of the President's Executive Council. This change communicated the importance of the strategic planning function as an enterprise that cuts across all levels of the institution. In addition, in 2005, its Dean was promoted to the position of "Assistant Vice President," further strengthening the Office's administrative connections with other sectors of the College (e.g., academic affairs, finance and administration, institutional advancement, etc.). An additional structural change came when the Office of Institutional Research was brought under the administrative authority of the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment. Recommended by the 2003 Middle States Evaluation Team, this change provided an improved structure and direction to the flow of institutional information through the College, and created a much-needed link between strategic priorities, outcomes assessment and the collection of institutional data.

With these administrative changes in place, the College embarked on a program of comprehensive self-study designed to assess various aspects of institutional effectiveness at John Jay and, where necessary, to propose meaningful solutions to the challenges facing the College. Fulfilling a commitment stated in the Comprehensive Action Plan, this program of self-study began with the creation of a Strategic Enrollment Management Committee, a representative group of administrators, faculty and staff who were charged with the responsibility of developing a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan for the College. Guided by the nationally recognized consulting firm of Michael G. Dolence Associates and assisted by the Office of Institutional Research, the Committee used a "learner centered lens" to conduct an extensive evaluation of curriculum design, program delivery methods, and academic enrollment processes. In its March 2006 draft report, the Committee drew the following conclusions regarding the impact of enrollment management policies and procedures on student learning at John Jay:

- Strategic enrollment management and academic and curricular management processes are inexorably linked,
- Fragmentation of policies, processes, and procedures inhibits our learners' ability to complete academic programs,
- Lack of comprehensive and integrated SEM and Curriculum management approaches causes fragmentation,

- Relentless assessment and analysis coupled with continuous improvement are required to achieve our goals of overall excellence and academic preeminence in criminal justice related areas,
- Success requires that resources, including time, talented personnel and funds, are allocated in alignment with defined critical needs (“Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, 2006-2007,” March 2006, p. 4).

The results of the SEM Plan were used by a second group of administrators and faculty (the Academic Affairs Working Group) to conduct an extensive review of John Jay curricula and to develop structures for the ongoing monitoring of academic programs and practices at all levels of the College. The SEM Plan created a framework that outlined action plans and assessment criteria for the improvement of an extensive array of enrollment management functions and issues, including learner success, enrollment capacity and composition, academic advising, career-curriculum alignment, graduate program enrollments and strategies, course scheduling, and EM policies, processes and procedures. The SEM Plan also led to the establishment of the “Division of Enrollment Management” at John Jay, a comprehensive reorganization designed to place emphasis on the enrollment areas of the College, and to improve the functioning and assessment of these areas within the broader context of academic affairs (“SEM Plan,” pp. 17-56).

As a complement to this initiative, the Academic Affairs Working Group began an unprecedented self-study of the architecture of its undergraduate curriculum. This initiative was guided by the belief that, as a tool for more effective academic planning and assessment, the architecture would provide a variety of institutional benefits, including

an understanding of the enrollment patterns in degree programs and concentrations, a synthesis of curriculum specifications that guide program design and include clear and concise definitions of all official components of the curriculum, the development of a general education plan, a scheduled model of study and an assessment and accreditation scope of the curriculum that is offered (“Curriculum Architecture Self-Study,” 2006, p. 3).

Assisted, once again, by Michael G. Dolence Associates, the group collected extensive data on all degree, certificate and academic minor programs at the College. This information was then used to construct “educational plans” for each major (with each plan detailing specific information on required credits for general education, required credits for the major, and necessary electives), with all plans compiled into a “master chart” that included identification of relevant assessments used to evaluate student ability and mastery. From this broad template, a thirteen-semester view of each major was developed, providing longitudinal guides for curriculum design and review, course availability, and delivery. The comprehensive nature and uniqueness of this effort make this framework an essential assessment resource for the College, one that facilitates processes of ongoing evaluation of the impact of curriculum design on patterns of

enrollment. The curriculum architecture is being updated and monitored by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

The significance of these two enrollment management initiatives with regard to improved assessment of institutional effectiveness cannot be overstated. The clarity and structure they provide have paved the way for productive and planned curricular change. Moreover, the embedded assessment frameworks in each facilitate the collection of rich evaluation data that provide regular and meaningful insights into program effectiveness. An added benefit is the fact that these initiatives were led by members of the John Jay community, thus giving administrators, faculty and staff a sense of “ownership” of the process and its product, a key element in the advancement of a culture of assessment.

These accomplishments were not the only assessment related achievements at John Jay during the academic year. Under the leadership of President Travis, the college community completed a series of initiatives designed to evaluate, focus and strengthen keys areas of programming and service at the College. They included:

- **“Reforming the Academic Enterprise at John Jay College of Criminal Justice:”**
  - Compiled by the Academic Affairs Working Group as a companion to the Curriculum Architecture, this report analyzed academic and organizational structures and service delivery methods in order to clarify institutional structures and lines of accountability in the academic affairs units of the College. (“Reforming the Academic Enterprise at John Jay College of Criminal Justice,” 2006).
- **“Critical Choices”**
  - Chaired by Dr. John M. Jeffries, an independent consultant and former Dean of The New School, the College undertook a comprehensive initiative designed to study the status and potential future of associate degree programs at John Jay. The final report of this study recommended a plan whereby admission of students into associate degree programs would be reduced beginning in 2007, and would be complemented by the establishment of educational partnerships with community colleges within the CUNY system, thus resulting in a more focused undergraduate curriculum and the potential to redirect much needed institutional resources. The plan was reviewed and evaluated by members of the John Jay community through a series of campus wide meetings, and was approved unanimously by the College Council during the Spring 2006 semester (“Report on Associate Degree Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice” [Prepared by the President’s Advisory Committee on Critical Choices], December 2005).

- **“Promoting Student Success in the Forensic Science Major”**
  - In response to a CUNY retention initiative, the college conducted an extensive review of its Forensic Science bachelor degree program to determine why, despite strong interest and rapidly growing enrollments, few students are graduating with degrees in the field. An analysis of overall student GPA’s and grades in key Forensic Science courses showed a clear disjuncture to exist between students who have a desire to study Forensic Science and their ability to do well in the major. To address this problem, a “four-pronged approach” was developed to put the following institutional safeguards in place:
    - A placement protocol that will screen incoming freshmen who have selected Forensic science as a major according to criteria established to indicate success in key Chemistry and Biology courses,
    - A change in the Forensic Science curriculum that will bolster the success of less prepared students through a paced alternative for beginning Chemistry and Biology courses,
    - Implementation of a minimum 2.0 GPA requirement for students completing their freshmen and sophomore years in the program, to protect them from investing time and finances in a program of study they will not be able to complete,
    - Enhancement of existing and development of new interventions designed to promote student success in the program (“Promoting Student Success in the Forensic Science Major,” 2006, pp. 6-7)
  
- **John Jay College’s “Campaign for Success”**
  - As part of a university-wide initiative, the College engaged in a self-study of existing and needed resources as it developed a plan for the overall improvement of student success at John Jay. The resulting ten-part strategy blends various student service offices and functions into a comprehensive framework of support designed to improve John Jay’s undergraduate retention and graduation rates. Through informational support from the Office of Institutional Research, as well as requested resources from CUNY, the Campaign is expected to play a significant role in the identification, tracking and correction of institutional impediments to academic success (“Campaign for Success”[Report Prepared by the Office of the Provost, John Jay College of Criminal Justice], February, 2006).

- **Enhancement of John Jay’s Office of Academic Support Services**
  - During the 2005-2006 academic year, the College’s Office of Academic Support Services (OAS) enhanced its structure and procedures to provide a more comprehensive and effective framework of academic services. Facilitated by its strong partnership with the Office of Institutional Research, the OAS adopted new strategies and procedures that improved its ability to identify and respond to students experiencing academic difficulties, and provided a better structure for the office to administer and monitor the CUNY Proficiency Exam to all John Jay students.
  
- **Assessment of the Division of Student Development and Enrollment Management**
  - In order to assess its effectiveness, the Division of Student Development and Enrollment Management attended a workshop given by Dr. John Schuh, co-author of the book *Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners*, which stands as the pre-eminent work in the field. Following this training, the management and directors of the division decided upon an assessment plan using instruments developed by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and endorsed by Dr. Schuh. Specified training on the use of the latest version of the CAS will take place in November 2006, with the assessment of the services to begin after that date.

Although not exhaustive, the preceding discussion describes an impressive array of achievements in the area of improved assessment of institutional effectiveness. In responding to the recommendations of the Middle States Commission, the College continued along a path of profound change in terms of its overall commitment to outcomes assessment. While the various initiatives, reports, and institutional changes were accomplished by the hard work of all involved, what is most compelling about these achievements is that they proceeded from a growing and unprecedented commitment to the meaningful assessment of college effectiveness. Beneficial for the College, this commitment also signals a significant change in the mindset of its community, a change that represents progress toward the goals of institutionalized evaluation and the establishment of a data based decision-making culture.

### **Part III – 2005-2006: A Year of Progress in the Assessment of Student Learning**

The 2005-2006 achievements in the area of the assessment of institutional effectiveness were complemented by similar progress in the College’s efforts to develop ways of measuring student learning. The reasons for this progress and the work it produced are best categorized under three headings: Administrative Changes, Faculty

Development Efforts, and Written Assessment Plans. What follows is a summary of the advances and activities associated with each.

- **Administrative Changes**

Although the benefits of elevating John Jay's Dean of Strategic Planning and Assessment to the level of Assistant Vice-President have been discussed above, it is important to note that this change was also a catalyst for meaningful progress in the creation of a college-wide effort to assess student learning. During the 2005-2006 academic year, the AVP for Strategic Planning and Assessment charged the Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee (OAS) of the Comprehensive Planning Committee to develop and implement faculty-centered efforts designed to produce written assessment reports for each of the College's majors and programs. Comprised of faculty and administrators with assessment experience, the OAS was assisted in its efforts by a Fellow of the American Council on Education (ACE) with a background in evaluation and assessment research.

An additional significant change came in the selection of Outcomes Assessment Planners, faculty from each major and program in the college with interest and/or experience in academic assessment. These planners were designated to be the principal liaisons between the OAS and the faculty and were given the task of leading the development of written assessment reports for their respective departments or programs. The planners' contributions to the college's efforts to assess student learning were invaluable and are best described through a discussion of the faculty development efforts in which they were involved.

- **Faculty Development Efforts**

In an effort to mine the significant potential of faculty involvement, the OAS drew upon the extensive body of research in the area of planning and assessment as it crafted a series of faculty development events and exercises to be held throughout the 2005-2006 academic year. The purpose of these initiatives was two-fold. First, they were intended to engage the planners in a dialogue that would link general principles of academic assessment to the specifics of John Jay curricula and programs. Also, these development efforts were intended to encourage a sense of ownership of the assessment process among the faculty, thus giving them a vested interest in its quality and outcome. This latter objective was seen as essential to the success of the college's efforts to evaluate student learning, given the strong sense of pride with which John Jay faculty view and administer their academic programs.

The first of these faculty development efforts was a series of workshops for OA planners designed to introduce the faculty to the concept of academic assessment and provide an historical context for the college's commitment to program evaluation. These workshops were also intended to encourage participants to begin the process of working with their respective faculty groups to develop and write individual assessment plans. Held in late fall and early spring, workshop activities included presentations to the group

on current knowledge regarding assessment, quantitative and qualitative strategies for assessment, and discussions of case studies from various academic institutions. Central to each workshop, however, was the participation of each planner in various assessment exercises using their own curricula. This was facilitated by the use of a worksheet designed for the event (see Appendix C) on which planners determined central learning objectives for their discipline or major and linked those objectives to specific aspects of their curricula at John Jay. Next, planners were asked to identify existing elements of performance evaluation (other than course grades) and to explore how those types of evaluation could be used to indicate attainment of the relevant learning objectives. Follow-up discussions revealed significant engagement of the participants in the exercises and the sessions were reviewed very positively by those who attended.

As the actual work of report writing proceeded, a second set of workshops was planned to address questions and concerns that were emerging from the process. Unlike the more generalized focus of the first sessions, these later workshops (held in late spring) were designed as one-on-one sessions where members of the OAS worked individually with OA planners to answer specific questions and provide constructive feedback on the assessment plans as they evolved. From these sessions, a second worksheet was developed (see Appendix C) to allow faculty responsible for individual, yet required courses (e.g., Physical Education) to provide analyses similar to those being developed by majors and programs. Here, again, the sessions were well attended and were seen to provide useful information and feedback that aided the assessment process.

Throughout this process, a consistent source of support for faculty and planners was a link placed on the college's *Blackboard* site that provided access to a host of resources related to planning and assessment. The site included articles and resource manuals from planning and evaluations journals, as well as publications from national and professional associations (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association of American Colleges and Universities, etc.) that provided sample assessment frameworks and rubrics that could be used as exemplars. Additionally, the site included links to materials from the various workshops (worksheets, power-point presentations, etc.) that could be accessed for contextual reference. Seen as an assessment "tool-kit," the site proved to be a considerable asset for OA planners as they prepared their respective reports.

- **Written Assessment Reports**

Having spent the 2005-2006 academic year developing their skills in the area of assessing student learning, OA planners were given a deadline of mid-June 2006 to submit their respective reports to the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment. This date was selected to give members of the OAS ample time to review the submissions and provide feedback and suggestions for revision, if warranted. The result was the submission of twelve comprehensive reports from the following majors, programs and departments across the college:

- Anthropology: Analysis of program and select courses (ANT 101, 110)
- Corrections: Analysis of major
- Counseling: Analysis of program
- English: Analysis of program
- History: Analysis of program and select courses (HIS 231, 232)
- Justice Studies: Analysis of major
- Library: Analysis of academic function within the college
- Physical Education and Athletics: Analysis of main course (PED 103)
- Psychology: Analysis of major
- Sciences: Analysis of program
- Sociology: Analysis of program
- Speech, Theatre and Media Studies: Analysis of select courses (DRA 110, SPE 113)

Copies of these reports are attached to this document (See Appendix D).

While more work on the challenge of assessing student learning lies ahead, we have succeeded this past year in moving the level of the discussion of assessment from the general to the specific. Our academic programs and departments are now talking specifically about learning objectives linked to curriculum, which will allow us in the year ahead to move forward in efforts to measure those objectives. For example, the Psychology Department, with its learning objectives in place, is now reviewing national assessment measures for introductory psychology and is also debating the appropriate measurement vehicle for its senior seminars. Such progress was simply not possible before an overall framework for assessment was established. In short, last year's efforts, like those related to institutional effectiveness, created an unprecedented sense of momentum and an understanding of the value of assessing student learning beyond that of simply satisfying an external mandate.

#### **Part IV - Conclusion: A Look Back and a Look Ahead – Accomplishments and Challenges in Outcomes Assessment**

Documenting what we have accomplished in the area of assessing institutional effectiveness and student learning is not just an exercise in recognizing what we have achieved; it is also an opportunity to “set the bar” for what still needs to be accomplished. A look back over the past academic year shows significant institutional activity that resulted in unprecedented accomplishments. The extensive Strategic Enrollment Management reviews, the Critical Choices and Forensic Science initiatives, and the reorganization of the offices of Strategic Planning and Assessment, Institutional Research and Enrollment Management have all provided comprehensive and much needed restructuring of processes and functions in key areas of the College. The embedded assessment frameworks in each have provided the institution with the ability to collect and interpret meaningful information on the impact and effectiveness of the institution on the student experience. Of equal value is the work of the faculty in developing written assessment plans for various academic programs and majors, which represents a

significant step forward in our understanding of the connections between the content of curricula and students' ways of knowing.

A look ahead highlights the tasks and challenges yet to be addressed, recognition of which keeps us faithful to the strategic goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Action Plan. By sustaining our commitment to increased understanding of student learning and institutional effectiveness, we also reinforce the value of the College's strategic plan as a living document, a framework of institutional action that is both dynamic and vital to the continued growth of John Jay. To ensure continued progress in this direction, this report concludes with an "Outcomes Assessment Action Plan," a written outline of strategic objectives to be achieved during the 2006-2007 academic year that will advance the College's growth in the area of outcomes assessment.

It is important to close this report with a brief discussion of what is perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the last year. Past evaluations of the College have noted that, although John Jay produces a multitude of assessment data, it lacks an overall institutional structure for its interpretation and use. The experiences of the last year have changed that reality, and can best be summarized by borrowing a phrase from common parlance: "We get it." Under the leadership of President Travis, the College culture has evolved to embrace assessment as a necessary and useful element of the academic enterprise. Whereas evaluation strategies of the past were most often viewed as ancillary activities to the "real" work of the college, the initiatives of the last year have advanced the John Jay community to a place of significant enthusiasm and support for outcomes assessment. This change creates a fertile environment for the ongoing integration of academic and institutional evaluation and is clearly reflective of a developing "culture of assessment" at the College. This momentum can and will be sustained to build on the significant work already done and take John Jay to the next level in its commitment to providing a dynamic environment of student learning.

### **Outcomes Assessment Action Plan: Strategic Objectives for 2006-2007**

- Sustain an institutional commitment to the realization of the goals and objectives of the strategic, outcomes assessment, and facilities plans of the college, nurturing the on-going development and use of meaningful assessment data;
- Employ the Strategic Action Templates as comprehensive tools to guide the Comprehensive Planning Committee in its work of monitoring the ongoing integration of CAP and PMP goals and objectives;
- The Assistant Vice-President for Strategic Planning and Assessment will continue to lead the effort to incorporate the Comprehensive Planning Committee into the College Council. As a chartered committee of the College, the CPC will have enhanced potential to function as a forum for institutional assessment, evaluation and renewal;

- Continue the work of the recently established College Finance Committee to integrate outcomes assessment initiatives into the budgeting process, thereby establishing a more coordinated procedure for resource allocation and support;
- Continue the work of the recently established College Technology Advisory Committee to ensure that all segments of the College community are appropriately engaged in the formulation of technology plans and policies;
- Continue to promote philanthropic efforts to secure outside resources dedicated to strategic initiatives and the ongoing improvement of institutional effectiveness;
- Apply the structural and assessment frameworks developed through the College's strategic enrollment initiatives, ensuring that outcomes information is evaluated and integrated into practice through cycles of continuous process improvement;
- Begin the self-study of the Division of Enrollment Management, using assessment instruments developed by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS);
- Continue the processes of revision and institutional reorganization outlined in the "Critical Choices" and Forensic Science initiatives;
- Continue the commitment to the professional development of OA planners by providing a series of retreats and workshops on the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies for assessing the attainment of learning objectives, focusing on the establishment of regularized procedures for collecting, analyzing and disseminating assessment data for all programs;
- Encourage all departments and majors to complete their work on written outcomes assessment plans, integrating these plans into department and program decision-making processes regarding majors, curricula and individual courses, thus creating the "feedback loop" through which the results of regular self-studies can be integrated for the continuous improvement of the academic enterprise;
- Work with departments to formalize the role and work of OA planners, developing strategies to provide support, compensation and institutional credit for administrators and faculty who commit to leading this important work;
- Establish a formalized college initiative that provides on-going support for professional development in the area of outcomes assessment, and evaluates the impact of these efforts on the quality of student learning and institutional effectiveness.

**John Jay College Report References (listed chronologically):**

John Jay College of Criminal Justice Self-Study Report prepared for the Commission on Higher Education, 2003

John Jay College Comprehensive Action Plan, 2005

John Jay College Outcomes Assessment Plan, 2005

Report on Associate Degree Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice [Prepared by the President's Advisory Committee on Critical Choices], December 2005

Campaign for Success [Report Prepared by the Office of the Provost, John Jay College of Criminal Justice], February, 2006

Curriculum Architecture Self-Study, 2006

Promoting Student Success in the Forensic Science Major, 2006

Reforming the Academic Enterprise at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2006

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, 2006-2007, March 2006