

The Middle States Periodic Review Process

July 2008 – June 2009

A. Background

The Periodic Review Report (PRR) is submitted five years after an institution's self-study and evaluation team visit; Cedar Crest conducted its self-study in 2002-03, had a successful site visit in 2004, and filed a (response) monitoring report in 2006. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education accepted our monitoring report and our accreditation was reaffirmed. At this midpoint of our ten-year accreditation cycle, MSCHE requires us to conduct a self-review and submit a comprehensive report of that process by June 1, 2009.

The PRR is a mandatory phase of the cycle by which Cedar Crest achieves its accreditation and, as such, it must demonstrate that the institution meets all accreditation standards. However, MSCHE also intends the Periodic Review process to aid an institution in the continuous assessment of its mission, goals and objectives. Self-review should be part of ongoing planning and evaluation activities, as these activities are directly related to an institution's viability and quality.

The concurrence of our strategic planning process and our periodic review process presents an unparalleled opportunity for the faculty, administration, trustees and staff to collaborate in reflecting upon our progress, recognizing our current challenges and charting a course for the College's next steps. Careful coordination of these two processes, as well as other governance and planning activities on campus, will not only ensure a successful Periodic Review Report but will also position us for success in the rapidly changing higher education marketplace.

Note: As this is a description of a prescribed review process, much of the information presented below is taken directly from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's Handbook for the Periodic Review Reports; quotations and citations are omitted for clarity.

B. Objectives

The PRR presents information that enables the Commission to assess the current status of the College, particularly with regard to finances and enrollment and to make a judgment about future viability in those areas. It also demonstrates that the College assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement.

MSCHE guidelines state that the PRR is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the impact of significant major developments, changes, or challenges subsequent to the last evaluation
2. To assess the institution's response to recommendations resulting from the previous evaluation
3. To review the institution's enrollment trends, financial status, and enrollment and financial projections
4. To determine the current status of the implementation of plans for the assessment of institutional effectiveness and the assessment of student learning outcomes
5. To assess the extent to which linked institutional planning and budgeting processes are in place

C. Content Requirements

Over the next year, there should be open, extensive and meaningful discussion of topics related to the above objectives. Trustees, administration, faculty and staff should all be involved at some level.

Our PRR will then need to contain the following components:

1. A description of the institution's response to recommendations from the previous team report and institutional self-study

Recommendations resulting from our 2004 site visit were brief and clear:

- a. Our monitoring report of 2006 was to document the further development and implementation of our plans to assess student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. This report was submitted and accepted.
- b. Our PRR due in 2009 must document
 - i. The use of assessment results in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal
 - ii. Evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning.

2. A narrative identifying the institution's major challenges and/or current opportunities over the next five years.

We should present a picture of our greatest accomplishments and then analyze the landscape for significant obstacles and challenges. The Commission gives the following examples of changes that should be noted:

- Mission
- Programs
- Institutional effectiveness (outcomes)
- Student services
- Facilities and other institutional resources
- Administrative organization
- Governing board
- Governance structures
- Personnel and management
- Institutional research and planning
- Policies and procedures
- Admissions
- Enrollment management
- Retention and attrition
- Financial condition

In the time elapsed since our self-study, the College has experienced changes, some significant, in most of these areas. These must be carefully analyzed and documented.

3. Analysis of enrollment and finance projections for the next five years, including assumptions on which those projections are based, and related to enrollment and fiscal trends from the previous five years.

We must include statistics and analysis for the following:

- a. Actual enrollment for the current year and the three previous years
- b. Projected enrollment for the period covered by the institution's financial plan
- c. The institution's financial plan for the current and succeeding years covered by the institution's strategic plan (this may include budgets, pro forma projections, and strategic plans tied to the budget)
- d. Financial audits and IPEDS financial data

Any projections we make, either through text or graphics, must be accompanied by appropriate assumptions and/or other evidence to support the validity of projections.

Enrollment should be broken down by program and level and analyzed in relation to current and future fiscal information. The institution's fiscal analysis should include selected

data such as trends in net income and net assets, and may incorporate financial indicators or ratios.

4. Evidence that outcomes assessment processes (for both institutional effectiveness and student learning) are in place and that the results of such processes are being utilized.

The Commission expects that the institution defines clearly articulated institutional and unit-level goals, implements strategies to achieve those goals, assesses achievement of those goals, and uses the results of those assessments to improve programs and services and to inform planning and resource allocation decisions.

We will need to describe our assessment processes, any changes since the decennial review, and plans for improvement of assessment processes. We will also need to append assessment plans and portions of strategic plans that address institutional effectiveness or student learning.

5. Evidence that linked institutional planning and budgeting processes are in place.

We must provide a narrative describing current institutional planning and budgeting processes, with particular attention to demonstrating how such processes are integrated and linked. Because we do not have a current strategic plan, we will need to provide a detailed account of what the institution is presently doing to carry out linked planning and budgeting processes. We will have completed the first “trimester” of our strategic planning process and should have some valuable evidence of our resolve to dedicate resources to those programs and facilities that we consider important to the future of the College.