



The State University of New York

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## Memorandum to Presidents

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**Date:** July 15, 2010 Vol. 10, No. 2

**From:** Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

**Subject:** *Policy and Guidance: Assessment*

**To:** Presidents, State-Operated Campuses  
Presidents, Community Colleges  
Statutory College Contacts

This memorandum provides guidance on implementing the State University's Board of Trustees Resolution 2010-039, *Streamlining the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Assessment*, of March 23, 2010. It supersedes and replaces previous policy and guidance on assessment.

The memorandum was developed in consultation with Presidents, Chief Academic Officers and Campus Assessment Contacts in all sectors of the University as well as faculty governance leaders, the Undergraduate Committee of the University Faculty Senate and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges.

Questions regarding this memorandum may be sent to [Assessment@suny.edu](mailto:Assessment@suny.edu).

Attachment

Copy: Chief Academic Officers, All Campuses  
Campus Assessment Contacts, All Campuses  
Campus Institutional Research Officers, All Campuses  
President, University Faculty Senate  
President, Faculty Council of Community Colleges

## State University of New York

### *Policy and Guidance: State University Assessment Policy*

#### **I. Relevant Board Policies**

Relevant Board policies are contained in Trustees Resolution 2010-039, *Streamlining the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Assessment*.

- A. Trustees Resolution 2010-039, adopted on March 23, 2010, replaces all previous Board policies on assessment, and takes effect in fall 2010.
  - i. This resolution 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 rescinds the previous assessment approach and now 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.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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.
  - iv. 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.
  - v. 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.
  - vi. 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.

#### **II. Implementation Policies and Procedures**

- 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<sup>1</sup> (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.

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<sup>1</sup> Low enrollment programs should not be excluded entirely from campus assessment plans.

- 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.
  - External review shall conclude with the external reviewers submitting a report, based on a campus visit, to the Chief Academic Officer.
- D. 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*.  
< <http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/GenEdGuideApp.cfm> >
- E. 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
  - to submit to the Provost of the State University of New York, at [Assessment@suny.edu](mailto: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.

### III. Resources for Campuses

Trustees Resolution 2010-039, Streamlining the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Assessment, March 23, 2010

<[http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic\\_affairs/Resolution2010\\_039.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/Resolution2010_039.cfm)>

State University of New York Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses

<<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/GenEdGuideApp.cfm>>

State University of New York Assessment Policies and Procedures

<<http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/>> (Search for “Assessment.” Pages to be updated by fall 2010.)

Assessment Resources for Campuses

<[http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic\\_affairs/assessment.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/assessment.cfm)>

Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s *Characteristics of Excellence*

<[http://www.msche.org/publications\\_view.asp?idPublicationType=1&txtPublicationType=Standards+for+Accreditation+and+Requirements+of+Affiliation](http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=1&txtPublicationType=Standards+for+Accreditation+and+Requirements+of+Affiliation)>

List of Accrediting Bodies Recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the U.S. Secretary of Education, or both

<[http://www.chea.org/pdf/CHEA\\_USDE\\_AllAccred.pdf](http://www.chea.org/pdf/CHEA_USDE_AllAccred.pdf)>