BACKGROUND

Established in 1969 and opened in 1971, Ramapo College has been designated New Jersey’s “public liberal arts college.” Located on 300 acres in the scenic foothills of the Ramapo Mountains in Mahwah, the primarily residential campus is just twenty five miles from New York City. The mainly undergraduate student body of about 5700 comes largely from New Jersey, but includes students from 17 other states and 52 countries. The institutional mission is driven by learning that reflects the four pillars of interdisciplinary, international, intercultural, and experiential education. The interdisciplinary mission is embodied in the structure of five academic schools: American and International Studies, the Anisfield School of Business, the School of Contemporary Arts, the School of Social Science and Human Services, and Theoretical and Applied Sciences.

The college has seen a dramatic turnover in administration over the past ten years, but this has stabilized in recent years, with a strong president in office over the past three years, and a strong provost in office over the past two years. Additionally, there has been dramatic turnover in the faculty, with currently 50% of the faculty being employed for under five years.

In the Fall 2006 semester, the college successfully implemented the Curriculum Enhancement Plan, a reform that established a four-credit course system, requiring students to take fewer courses for graduation, and providing longer class meeting time. In order to facilitate this transition, Ramapo sent a team to the 2005 Greater Expectations Institute to develop a plan to assist faculty in redesigning individual courses, as well as major and free-standing minor programs and the general education program. The team recommended that the mission pillars be integrated more fully into courses to take advantage of longer meeting times. The team produced a series of activities that centered on course design including interactive and intentional learning, student engagement, and learning centered education in the year leading up to the implementation of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan.

In 2006, a second team came to the Institute with the objective of evaluating the integration of general education and higher-level academic programs and creating models of assessment to improve teaching and learning. The first step in this process was accomplished over the following year, when team members worked with convening groups to produce mission statements and learning outcomes for all majors and free-standing minors at the college. Additionally, institutional learning goals and outcomes were identified by a specially constituted task force and were applied in identifying learning outcomes for our general education program.
Currently, the team hopes to facilitate the process of planning assessment strategies for general education, the majors and free-standing minors. Our goal is to have assessment data gathered and a plan for analyzing this data by the end of the 08-09 academic year.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION & GOALS

To enhance student learning though an explicit curriculum that can be improved through assessment, reflection and revision.

Content Recommendations:

Consolidation of Activities and Effort of Committees
The Provost will convene the various groups currently focused on assessment to coordinate and consolidate their efforts in order to avoid duplication of activities. These groups include, but are not limited to, General Education Assessment Committee, Unit Assessment committees, the office of Institutional Research, and the larger Greater Expectations team. The consolidation of activities and efforts will guide the execution of the recommendations below.

Clarify Purpose of Ongoing Assessment
The Greater Expectations Team, in collaboration with the above-named committees, will develop a clear statement of the purpose of ongoing assessment, separate and apart from Middle States accreditation. The stated purpose shall reflect the value of assessment as serving to enhance student learning through the development, assessment, and ongoing revision of appropriate student learning outcomes.

Active Inclusion of Student Affairs
We recognize a significant portion of learning occurs outside the classroom. The Greater Expectations Team, in collaboration with Student Affairs, will clarify an on-going assessment plan that includes these contributions as related to student learning outcomes.

Process Recommendations:

We recognize that student learning outcomes and assessment plans currently exist throughout the College. In order to effectively plan for future assessment strategies, we need to determine current resources that exist. These resources include existing student learning outcomes at all levels of the curriculum, as well as existing assessment plans.

Convening Groups

Under the guidance of the Vice Provost for Curriculum and Assessment, conduct an audit of the existing student learning outcomes for each major and free-standing minor.
As part of this review, the student learning outcomes will be evaluated in terms of specificity and wording. A rubric will be selected or created to guide this audit.
Audit of capstone courses
A survey will be conducted of capstone courses as to the definition of what constitutes “capstone” courses for each major, for example, cumulative as to major skills, inclusive of General Education learning outcomes, or inclusive of other disciplines; or, if there is not a capstone course where assessment of the major’s learning outcomes can take place, identification of other upper level courses where this assessment can take place.

Status report of the currently existing convening group assessment plans
As part of this review, the assessment plans will be examined as to effectiveness of methods such as e-portfolios, essays, gates, etc. An inclusive rubric will be selected or created to guide this audit.

Curriculum Map
Each convening group will provide a curriculum map which illustrates whether, and if so how, individual courses meet the various learning outcomes for the major or the minor, as appropriate, as well as the learning outcomes related to General Education skills and to the pillars. Ideally, for each learning outcome met in a given course, the curriculum map would indicate the level of student proficiency expected (e.g., introductory level, developing level, or mastery level).

Five-year Assessment Plan
Each convening group will establish or design a basic on-going assessment plan indicating which learning goals will be assessed in each of the 5 years. The recommendation is that 2 learning outcomes will be assessed each year on a rotating basis. The timing of this assessment may be coordinated with existing 5-year program or accreditation reviews.

General Education Assessment
The Greater Expectations Team recommends that assessment of General Education curriculum in respect to all-college learning goals and outcomes be coordinated as follows:
• Each year, all students in First Year Seminar and all students in the defining capstone course for each major, or appropriate upper level courses as determined by convening groups, will be assessed for all-college learning goals and outcomes using an agreed upon instrument.
• In collaboration with the General Education Assessment Committee, a method to similarly assess transfer students will be agreed upon.

Five-Hour Course Enrichment Activity (formerly, Experiential Component)
A rubric will be created or selected to gather information about the student learning outcomes resulting in these activities for all courses.
Student Affairs

Student Affairs Assessment
A significant portion of learning occurs outside the classroom. In collaboration with Student Affairs, a rubric will be selected or created to guide an audit of the learning which takes place as a result of events, programs, and activities that happen outside the classroom.

Generally

In order to accomplish these goals, we recommend:

• Personnel review standards should be revised to give credit for assessment-related activities and included in teaching self-evaluations.
• Faculty development resources will be adequately allocated: training in assessment – on campus and/or off campus institutes, to increase effectiveness of all-college collaboration.
• Adjuncts will be included in training related to understanding of SLOs and assessment methods.

BARRIERS TO ACCOMPLISHMENT

• current vacancy and search in progress for vice provost for curriculum and assessment
• lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various committees charged with planning and implementation of assessment and corresponding administrative offices – Provost, Deans, Convening Groups
• insufficient training of all levels of personnel charged with planning and implementation of assessment
• faculty resistance to engaging in assessment, largely due to lack of understanding and training
• competing service activities that require a high level of participation (e.g., various task forces, Strategic Enrollment Management team, personnel committees, American Democracy Project, Academic Review Committee, etc.)
• no known allocation of resources dedicated to assessment training
• assessment work is not valued, (e.g., carries little weight in faculty reappointment, tenure and promotion), and is not valued by convening groups, (e.g., can illustrate a need for additional faculty to address student learning outcomes).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT

• Faculty Resource Center
• enthusiastic junior faculty, 50% employed for under 5 years
• Faculty Assembly leadership
• higher administration, such as Provost
• General Education Assessment Committee
- Individuals on campus with expertise based on past accreditation (e.g., faculty in Business, Nursing, Teacher Education, & Social Work)
- Relationship of majors and the College with employers about assessment criteria
- Existing course evaluation process that may provide quantitative data regarding General Education skills or SLOs

ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- presentations at Faculty Assembly and other scheduled meetings
- interfacing with Middle States accreditation committee and General Assessment team
- development and launching of Ramapo College Greater Expectation web page – including resources of developed tools; links to General Education Assessment Committee & Middle States webpages

TEAM ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Greater Expectations Team Actions & Timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Purpose/Details</th>
<th>When</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with whole GEI team</td>
<td>To achieve consensus on recommendation</td>
<td>As soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Recommendations to Provost</td>
<td>For feedback and endorsement</td>
<td>As soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Provost, convene a meeting with General Education Committee, Middle States, Student Affairs and other committees charged with assessment</td>
<td>For consolidation of activities and clarification of roles</td>
<td>As soon as possible, but no later than September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue with key faculty and staff</td>
<td>To assess reception by faculty and staff &amp; gather support</td>
<td>Prior to presentation at Faculty Assembly</td>
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Recommended Timeline for Campus Work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation at Faculty Assembly – of consolidated recommendations</td>
<td>Various committees and officials charged with assessment</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Training – by outside expert – for committees, officials, Deans, general faculty</td>
<td>Outside expert</td>
<td>Early Fall 2008</td>
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Audits Commence | All-College | Fall Term 2008
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Commence on-going SLO assessment by Majors and Student Affairs | All-College | Commenced Fall 2008 term, completed by end of Spring 2009 term to be presented early Fall 2009
Present Audit Results and Curriculum Maps at Faculty Assembly: Poster Session | Consolidated Committee, Faculty, Student Affairs | Early Spring 2009
General Education Assessment – decision on comprehensive assessment methods. Incorporating any pilot assessments. | General Education Committee | Commencing immediately. On-going
Evaluate effectiveness of SLO assessment by majors and Student Affairs | Consolidated Committee, Faculty, Student Affairs | Fall 2009

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

Over five year period:

- Initial Results of Audits, Curriculum Maps & Assessment
- Demonstrated Application of Findings regarding SLOs and Assessment