This installment of the Middle States Newsletter focuses on the activities of Working Group 4, co-chaired by Melissa Manning, Associate Director, Office of Admissions and Tim Pilewski, Registrar, Office of Records and Registration. This Group examined **Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention** and **Standard 9: Student Support Services** to determine if Edinboro University met the key fundamental elements and broader intent of these standards.

As described in the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation* (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2006), **Standard 8, Student Admissions and Retention**, focuses on whether "the institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals (p. x)."

The Working Group reviewed existing data, initiatives, and programs regarding student characteristics and academic success, recruiting considerations, admission procedures as well as practices impacting student retention. As a result of their research, this Working Group reported that limited data exist regarding pertinent questions. However, data that are available indicate that the ESP and CSP programs have little success in promoting student retention and degree completion. Recent initiatives resulting from identified factors associated with poor retention (e.g., Work Study awards to high need students), additional support staff (e.g., Academic Success Coordinators (ASCs)), and summer bridge programs are too new to have meaningful impact data. However, in the case of the ASCs, the limited data available are promising. However, data related to other initiatives (e.g., the First Year Experience Program) indicate that student participation enhances retention.

As a result of the Group’s findings, one recommendation and four suggestions were made with regard to Standard 8.

- All new retention and recruitment initiatives must include a plan for assessment of initiative success.
• Edinboro University should more systematically evaluate success characteristics of the student population to better define the target population for admission consistent with its mission.
• Systematic assessment processes must be established to determine the utility of academic information provided to prospective students, the effectiveness of placement testing, and the accessibility of student learning outcomes data.
• All placement testing procedural information should be centrally located, maintained, and updated on the website by one academic office.
• Edinboro University’s student employment process and probability of securing campus employment should be clearly communicated.

**Standard 9, Student Support Services**, focuses on whether “the institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students (p. x).”

The Working Group’s findings for this Standard showed that, based on various surveys, Edinboro University provides services for students which support their academic success and personal development. Though in some areas data are limited or absent, other areas (e.g., Counseling and Psychological Services) consistently utilize student data to enhance functionality. Additionally, the University’s participation in national surveys such as NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) has recently resulted in data driven decisions. The dissemination of information regarding policies and federal guidelines has resulted in a knowledgeable faculty, staff, and student body. Materials regarding the policies and expectations for securing student information are widely disseminated and accessible.

The findings of this Working Group regarding the Student Support Services Standard, led to one recommendation and one suggestion.

• Institutional assessment of all student support programs should be conducted regularly in a standardized manner and reported to an individual committee or manager.
• A Tutoring Coordinator should be appointed to provide support for academic departments offering tutoring and to provide overall assessment, coordination, and oversight of funding. Options for the addition of supplemental instruction should be considered.

As can be seen from this brief summary regarding Standards 8 and 9, data driven decision-making in the areas impacting student services, admission, and retention practices is narrow in some cases and still developing. However, recent initiatives (e.g., the use of NSSE results) indicate that data are being utilized in operational practices. The University has recognized this limitation and has shown a commitment to reversing this shortcoming.

The next edition of this newsletter will focus on Working Group 5, co-chaired by Susan Curtin and Jerra Jenrette, addressing Educational Offerings, General Education, and Related Educational Activities.