

## **Middle States Self-Study and Site Visit**

**Sunday, March 21 – Wednesday, March 24, 2021**

### ***What to Expect and How to Prepare***

Updated: March 15, 2021

Over the last two years, Loyola engaged in an in-depth self-study of how it demonstrates adherence to the seven accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Several community members representing the institution (faculty, staff, administrators, students) participated in the self-study as part of the steering committee, work groups, or internal reviewers and contributors to the final report. The report captures a snapshot of the University during this period, since 2016 and up to fall 2020, and it reflects how dedicated our colleagues are to meeting Loyola's mission. The accreditation process culminates in a site visit by peers from other institutions, and it provides an opportunity for us to answer their questions, primarily, but also to be together in celebration of our work and our students.

During the visit, the team assesses the institution in the context of the self-study report. Team members meet with faculty, students, staff, administrators, trustees, and other members of the campus community to confirm and clarify the information provided in the report and to gather additional perspectives. In some cases, they gather additional information that was not available to them prior to the visit. The team examines the documentation, reflects on what was learned in interviews, and spends the latter part of the visit assembling its findings into a Team Report.

#### **The Schedule:**

- March 21: The schedule will begin Sunday afternoon with a welcome from Fr. Linnane and the President's Cabinet.
- March 22-23: Team interviews of several campus groups and individuals will take place all day Monday and Tuesday. Please see the schedule included as an attachment in Provost Thomas' March 15<sup>th</sup> email.
- March 24: On Wednesday at 11:00 a.m., a final oral Exit Report will be delivered by the Evaluation Team Chair. This will be open to the entire Loyola community. No questions will be permitted. The report will not be recorded. The team leaves promptly after the report.

#### **Expectations of the Loyola Community:**

- We encourage you to check the [Self-Study website](#) each day to see if there have been any updates to the [Middle States Evaluation Visit Schedule](#). For your convenience, you can also access the [Middle States Visit – Loyola Participants List](#) there.
- Expect you might be asked to meet as a group or an individual with one or more Evaluation Team members on Monday or Tuesday, and please attend the Exit Report if you are able.
- Welcome the team to campus as colleagues.

- Read the relevant parts of the [Final Self-Study](#) (executive summary and the chapter related to your meeting's topic/standard OR read the handy Quick Reference guide).
- Expect this to be a collegial interview, focused on Loyola's academic mission through the lens of the Middle States standards.
  - Evaluation Team members lead the interviews.
  - You do not need to over-prepare because we cannot anticipate the questions the evaluation team might have.
  - You will not be making a presentation—no need to prepare slides.
  - When you are asked a question, try to be focused and concise, and answer the question directly and honestly.
  - A visiting team member could ask about a particularly narrow data point or topic—and that is perfectly fine.
  - We may wish to talk about a few things important to us. If that fits in well, fine; if not, please do not shoehorn it into the conversation.
  - Avoid over-sharing on topics—respond only to what you are being asked. The team members' time with us is limited, and they have a long list of topics to cover while they complete their report on Loyola.
  - If you are in multiple meetings and hear a consistent theme or discuss a topic in one meeting that had more context in another, please help the evaluators make that connection. They will be physically separated for this visit since it is entirely virtual, and they might miss opportunities afforded by a traditional in-person visit to be as social with one another. This means some of the connections made during team debriefing and report-writing sessions could be hampered by the virtual nature of this visit. Let's help them make those connections, if we can.
  - Don't forget that this is a chance to celebrate the work you and your colleagues do and the students we serve. (And it is a chance for us to be together in cross-campus gatherings that have been rare over the last year.)
- Remain flexible, responsive, and organized throughout the process.
  - Team members might cut a meeting short if they have gathered the answers they need,
  - OR team members might ask for additional time with an individual or group by extending the meeting or finding another time Monday or Tuesday to continue the conversation.
  - Team members might request more information, documents, or data.
    - ❖ It is reasonable to respond that you do not know the answer to a question. If that is the case, let them know that you will work to find out the answer and get back to them.

- ❖ Likewise, it is reasonable to respond that you will need to obtain the requested document/data after the meeting. (If possible, give an estimate of time—can you get it to them within the day?)

**Expectations of Loyola Timekeepers:**

- In the schedule, included as an attachment in Provost Thomas' and Elizabeth Dahl's March 15th email, please note the column labeled, "Time Keeper."
- This person is responsible:
  - To ensure that a meeting starts and ends as promptly as possible.
  - To assist in directing inquiries to the appropriate colleague:
    - ❖ Scott McCabe ([smccabe@loyola.edu](mailto:smccabe@loyola.edu)) for all Zoom-related requests
    - ❖ OTS Help Desk (410-617-5555) for all other technology requests
    - ❖ Tracey Frey ([tdfrey@loyola.edu](mailto:tdfrey@loyola.edu)) for document requests
    - ❖ Tracey Frey ([tdfrey@loyola.edu](mailto:tdfrey@loyola.edu); cc: April Roberts [aroberts@loyola.edu](mailto:aroberts@loyola.edu)) for *NEW* meeting requests from the Middle States evaluation team
    - ❖ Tracey or Fr. Duffy with feedback if you sense there is a significant issue or concern

**Expectations of the Evaluation Team:**

- Respect for time and effort put into a self-study;
- Respect for the institution's expertise about itself;
- Collegiality with appropriate professional distance;
- Fairness and integrity;
- Expertise in applying standards and interpreting institutional conditions;
- Thorough preparation and earnest interest in the story of the institution;
- Consistency with role expectations and conduct of the visit; and
- No conflict of interest.
- The team will be accompanied by a participant from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), who is given access to all materials and who participates strictly as an observer. This is standard practice in Maryland. The participant is bound by the Middle States Commission's requirement of confidentiality, like the rest of the team members.