

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

As the accrediting body for degree-granting institutions of higher education throughout Pennsylvania, Middle States heavily influences the goals, performance, and resources of its members.

Within **Standard 11, Educational Offerings**, institutions are expected to demonstrate rigorous academic content that supports the development of students' knowledge and skills. To accomplish this, institutions develop institutional-level learning outcomes for students and corresponding program and course-level outcomes and strategies to realize these outcomes. The framework for Twenty-First-Century Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (Table 2, Praxis Brief) provides a ready-to-use summary of skills, knowledge, values, and experiences that can bolster an institution's learning outcome statements. Reciprocally, an institution's Middle States Self-Study can identify the already existing institutional learning outcomes that support civic learning and democratic engagement.

Also within **Standard 11, Educational Offerings**, there is an expectation that a diverse set of experiences and strategies are utilized that complement the core learning outcomes for students. These include civic involvement and the integration of community-based learning experiences with the curriculum so that institution fulfills its educational mission and social responsibility commitment. As A Crucible Moment asserts, the simple integration of community service with educational curricula is not synonymous with civic learning. However, engaged pedagogies such as service-learning, collaborative civic problem solving, and deliberative dialogues, are recommended as part of a larger institutional strategy to instill civic learning. These strategies can strengthen an institution's alignment with Middle States Standard 11. Additionally, an institution's Middle States Self-Study may highlight those programs that effectively implement engaged pedagogies such as those described. These can be used as exemplar programs to spur the development of similar experiences that support the institution's cohesive civic learning strategy.

Within **Standard 9, Student Support Services**, student services are cited as strengthening learning outcomes and leveraging students as partners in the educational process. Student services support the institution's mission, the students' strengths and needs, and support student learning expectations. Integration of civic learning and democratic engagement within the co-curricular experience is encouraged within A Crucible Moment, and may provide an avenue to demonstrate the ways in which some student services are aligned with an institution's civic mission, student learning expectations, and student leadership development. Use of the Middle States Self-Study may locate the ways in which student affairs initiatives and programs support civic learning and democratic engagement, thus bringing Student Affairs into partnership with other institutional divisions as an institutional strategy is created.