

## **Lehman College Launches Self-Study Process**

By Don Sutherland

On Wednesday, Lehman College's steering committee for the Self-Study process was charged by the Provost and held its first meeting to organize the process under which the College will develop its Self-Study Report. This broadly-inclusive committee made tangible progress in laying a foundation for moving ahead.

As Lehman College and numerous other institutions in its accreditation cohort begin similar processes, understanding the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE) overall expectations is crucial. Increasingly, the accreditor is looking for the Self-Study process to move beyond demonstrating compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation and the accreditation standards. Compliance remains necessary. However, the Commission expects the Self-Study process to promote institutional improvement. If it is done well, the Self-Study process can promote just such an outcome.

Back in 2005, an article published in *Harvard Business Review* revealed that approximately 37% of a company's performance is "lost" due to a variety of factors. Inadequate/unavailable resources, poorly communicated strategy, lack of clearly-defined actions for execution, unclear accountability, organizational silos, and inadequate monitoring accounted for just over three-fourths of this performance loss. Since then, there has been no empirical literature to suggest that a large improvement has taken place.

Although the article concerned companies, all organizations face similar kinds of challenges. Those organizations include colleges and universities.

In fact, if one takes a closer look at the new Middle States accreditation standards, one finds elements in numerous standards that address the kind of findings that were published in *Harvard Business Review*.

Framed differently, each factor that contributes to a strategy-to-performance gap offers a rich opportunity for beneficial institutional self-inquiry during the Self-Study process. For example, let's take poorly communicated strategy, which contributed 14% to the gap according to the article. Some relevant questions might include:

- How widely known was the strategy among the College's stakeholders? (MSCHE Standard I that requires, in part, that an institution's mission and goals "are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders")
- When and how the effectiveness of the communication was evaluated? (MSCHE's Standards I-VII concerning "periodic assessment")
- What should the College do differently (a Self-Study recommendation)