An Overview of Program Review

Purpose

The primary purpose of program review is the improvement of programs, as measured by the quality of the faculty, the students, library and other educational resources, the curriculum, available facilities, and the academic reputation of the program among its peers. Institutions of higher education, like individuals, require some regular self-examination to improve, and the systematic review of academic programs is an integral part of this process of improvement.

In addition to the improvement of programs, program review has several associated objectives or goals. For the individual university, program review helps in long-range planning and in setting both institutional and departmental priorities. It gives administrators and academic leaders critical information about the size and stability of a program, its future faculty resources and student market, its equipment and space needs, its strengths and limitations, and its contribution to the mission of the institution. It helps set goals and directions for the future and ensures that overall academic plans and budget decisions are based on real information and agreed-upon priorities.

Program review also provides a mechanism for change. Programs evolve slowly; intellectual differences, bureaucracy, time pressures, vested interests, concern for survival, and simple inertia all make change difficult. By creating a structured, scheduled opportunity for a program to be examined, program review provides a strategy for improvement that is well-reasoned, far-seeing, and as apolitical as possible.

Why Have Program Review?

Faculty are evaluated for salary increases and promotion and tenure; students are evaluated for admissions, performance and degree completion; courses are evaluated as they are added to the curriculum; and facilities and resources are scrutinized annually in the budgeting process.

So why have program review? Program review provides the only comprehensive evaluation of an entire academic program, examining the elements which contribute to its success. Constant scrutiny is unhealthy for any program, but periodic, thorough review will ensure that the program has lived up to its original goals and will identify key areas in which it should be strengthened.

What does a review entail?

The first step in the program review is a program self-study. The self-study is prepared by the faculty of the department and is both descriptive and evaluative; it provides basic information on the nature of the program and gives the faculty's assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. A thorough self-study process takes about a year to complete and involves gathering data and information from many sources. It should be clearly written and candid and should adhere to a standard format. A departmental or program self-study is an opportunity to

scrutinize the program, to publicize accomplishments and to examine flaws, and also perhaps, the only chance for the department or program to explain itself and demonstrate how it is viewed by its peers. The self-study should contain elements such as the following to provide both opinion about and evidence program effectiveness.

Departmental mission and organization: Purpose of the department; contribution to the institution's mission; departmental policies and organization.

Program purpose: intellectual place in the discipline, goals and objectives of the program and related research; national and local need for the program.

Departmental size: faculty, support staff, students, degrees awarded, instructional and general expense budget, portion of the budget used for specific programs, amount of externally-funded research, size of other externally generated funds [gifts, contracts, etc.]

Faculty profile: total number [full/part-time, visiting, tenure/non-tenure track], number of new and retiring full-time faculty during the past five years; average age, gender, ethnicity, percent tenured, percent in different ranks, etc.

Faculty scholarship/creative activity: description of faculty research, scholarship or creative activity, individual productivity, external grants submitted and funded.

Teaching: faculty course-loads, evidence of teaching effectiveness, student feedback

Service: faculty administrative and institutional service [committee work, task forces, etc.], professional and public service activities; departmental service to the university – does the department offer programs for more than their own graduates, do department faculty participate in academic outreach and partnership activities

Student profile: admissions criteria, number of applicants and admitted students, actual enrollments, average age, gender, diversity, part-time/full-time students, time to graduation, scholarships/financial aid

Facilities: space [classroom, research, office], laboratory, and instructional equipment, library, computer resources

Curriculum: degree requirements, program structure, current courses, frequency of offerings, location of offerings, distance delivery, interdisciplinary activities

Student productivity: student publications, exhibitions, professional awards, honors, degree completion rates

Programmatic climate: scholarly community, quality of advising, esprit de corps, critical mass of faculty and students, activities related to promoting diversity among students and faculty, overall quality of experience for faculty and students

Collaboration: interactions with other departments or units that strengthen the program

Profile of graduates: numbers of graduates, job placements, entrance into graduate school

Administrative support: unit [school or college] support both tangible and intangible

Overall assessment of the program: strengths, weaknesses, reputation in the field, goals for improvement

Process
The self-study process usually involves appointment of a committee of faculty to develop the self-study and to secure evidence for the assertions made. Evidence that validates the information and opinions presented in the self-study will be secured from many sources: surveys of current students and graduates, faculty interviews, university data sources, course evaluations, and many more.

Once the self-study is complete, units that have accrediting bodies will have a site visit from a team of external reviewers. Those units that do not have accrediting bodies will also have a review team visit [this team will be made up of external reviewers]. The review committee typically reads the self-study report, interviews faculty and students, tours the facilities, meets with the department chair, and interviews the relevant dean. The review committee then prepares a succinct report on its findings, including recommendations for changes or enhancements. The department/program prepares its response to the review. The department/program then present the self-study report, the review committee findings, and the departmental response to the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction [UCUI] who add further recommendations and review the process used to insure that the department and program reviews have been conducted according to standard policy and practice. UCUI sends the self-study report, review committee's findings, departmental response and UCUI's final recommendations to relevant dean and provost/designee. A copy of UCUI's recommendations is also sent to the department/program. Based on this information the department chair in consultation with the dean and the faculty will create an enhancement plan.

SELF-STUDY CONTENT GUIDELINES
Each unit undergoing a review is to produce a narrative self-study report and a set of supporting documentation for the report. The contents of the narrative document and backup evidence files are outlined below. Although accurate descriptions and documentation of information is requested, the unit should use the self-study to evaluate its programs and write its report from an evaluative perspective.

I.SELF-STUDY REPORT

1.1 Identification of Academic Units and Programs
Identify the program(s) being reviewed and the academic unit in which they reside.
1.2 Academic Unit Profile
 Provide discussion of the following:
 Goal and Mission: of the unit; its contribution to the institution's mission

 Purpose: of the unit; its place in the discipline; national and local needs of the unit's programs

 History: of the unit. Briefly describe the inception and evolution of the unit.

 Unique Characteristics: of the unit; comparison of the unit's programs with similar programs at other institutions; description of significant cooperative relationships the unit has within the university

 Size: of the unit; number of the faculty, support staff, number of students currently enrolled, enrollment trends, number of degrees awarded; amount of externally funded research and externally generated funds

 Outreach: of the unit; description of significant cooperative relationships the unit has outside the university [partnerships] and the type and amount of non-credit programming that the unit provides

1.3 Curriculum
For EACH program [major, minor, concentration] that the unit offers provide the following information.

 Title of the program

 Requirements: summary of admission requirements and graduation requirements

 Offerings: Describe the list of courses required by each program, the frequency with which they are offered, the sites at which they are offered, and typical enrollments at those sites. Discuss any programs which are partially provided at off-campus sites and those that are credit incentive degree programs.

 Accreditation Status: Indicate programs that are externally accredited and describe all efforts at getting the program accredited by appropriate bodies or enhancing the program's recognition.

 Student recruitment and retention: Describe efforts made to attract students; for example, list scholarships. Internships and cooperative opportunities available. Describe

any efforts to accommodate specific student needs such as evening offerings, off-site offerings, and distance learning

Relationship to other programs: Describe majors, minors and concentrations associated with the program. Describe the contribution of the program to cross disciplinary programs and requirements such as general education, ethnic diversity, women studies, and honors college. Describe any other unique service that the program provides to the university, the public, or the profession.

Other: Describe any other significant features of the program.

1.4 Unit Faculty

Provide discussion of the following information.

General Profile: total number [full/part-time, visiting, tenure/non-tenure track], number of new and retiring full-time faculty during the past 10 years; average age; gender and ethnic distribution; percent tenured; percent in different ranks; faculty turnover, number of faculty approaching retirement

Workload: Describe the expected workload, and the average workload for faculty in your program. In particular, specify the teaching load, the average faculty to student ratio, the level of research activities, student supervision, committee participation, student advising load, and so forth.

Scholarly Activities: Describe the scholarly productivity of the unit's faculty [number of publications, presentations, performances, etc.] and the trends in scholarly productivity over the past 10 years.

Teaching: Describe unit efforts at supporting and evaluating teaching effectiveness and trends in teaching effectiveness levels over the past 10 years.

Service: Describe the level of service activity of the unit over the past 10 years.

Adequacy: Describe the adequacy of the size and make-up of the faculty to meet our unit's goals.

Individual profiles: For each faculty member who has taught courses during the past three years in your programs provide a one-page vita including the following information:

1.Name, rank, years at current position and rank
2.Areas of research interests and teaching interests
3.List of program courses taught in the past 3 years
4.List unit and university committee duties in the past 3 years
5.List any special administrative duties of the past 3 years

6. List of publications for past 3 years
7. List of professional conferences attended in past 3 years
8. List of grants obtained in past 3 years

1.5 Students

For EACH program the unit offers provide the following.

Profile: admissions criteria, number of applicants and admitted, actual enrollments, enrollment trends; average age, gender, and ethnic distribution; time to graduation; scholarships, financial aid, cooperative opportunities and number of internships completed

Student Support: Describe the advising processes [professional and faculty advising] used. Describe all professional student chapters and active groups. Describe the level of contact that students have with the faculty, lab assistants, adviser, etc. Describe the academic support available to students such as tutoring and supplemental instruction.

Productivity: student publications, exhibitions, professional awards, honors, degree completion rates

Graduates: number of graduates, job placement results, admission to graduate schools

Adequacy: Discuss the adequacy of student preparation at admission. Discuss the adequacy of the preparation provided by your program in meeting the students' needs upon graduation.

1.6 Infrastructure

Provide a discussion of the following.

Organizational Structure: describe the unit's administrative structure (number of unit heads during past 10 years, etc.), unit committee, planning processes, etc. Describe the unit's operating budget for both on- and off-campus programs and its adequacy for meeting unit goals. Discuss faculty development activities and processes for mentoring new faculty, unit processes for promotion and tenure reviews.

Staff: List the staff positions and duties for staff exclusively dedicated to the unit. Describe any shared staff positions.

Facilities: Describe the available facilities as they relate to the program(s). Facilities include space (classrooms, research and teaching labs, offices), equipment, library, maintenance, supplies and services, etc.

Collaboration: Describe interactions with other departments or units that strengthen the unit's programs.

Adequacy: Discuss the adequacy of the current infrastructure in supporting the goals and mission of your programs.

1.7 Atmosphere
Provide a discussion of the following:

Programmatic Climate: Describe the overall programmatic climate within your unit. This may include the relationship of the unit with the scholarly community, the quality of advising, critical mass of faculty to students, activities related to promoting diversity among students and faculty, overall experience, for faculty and students.

Communications: Describe all formal or informal mechanisms of communication within the unit. How are issues involving faculty, students, staff, and administration handled? Provide examples of issues raised through these mechanisms and relate the actions taken and the outcome.

1.8 Assessment
Provide a discussion of the following.

Previous Reviews: Describe the outcome of previous unit and program reviews and subsequent actions taken. In particular, include any findings from reviews of the unit's progress toward fulfilling its assessment plan in the university-wide assessment process.

Self-Assessment: Discuss the extent to which each program currently meets the stated goals and mission of your unit and the goals and mission of the university.

Student Assessment: Describe how student outcomes are assessed.

Plans and Projections: Describe specific actions, curricular changes, new programs that are planned for the next 5 years. Discuss all resources that will be needed to implement these plans. Discuss the expected results from these plans.

II. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Examples of materials that might be included in the set of documents supporting the narrative report are given below. Note that this is only a sample not an exhaustive list of evidence and data that might be presented.

2.1 Unit/Program Identification
unit and program descriptions from Undergraduate Catalog, unit brochures, overviews, outlines, promotional materials

2.2 Academic Unit Profile

a unit mission statement, market analyses for programs, alumni surveys, historical documentation about the unit, national data and information on like programs, employee information, student enrollment data and trends, research productivity data, outreach/partnership documentation, continuing education and non-credit documentation

2.3 Curriculum

Course Offerings: a list of courses offered for each program with enrollments in each course for the last five years, recruitment and retention data

Accreditation Status: current accreditation documentation for each program that is accredited by an outside agency

Course Details: For all courses included in each program, provide the most recent syllabus, a full set of class handouts for one section, a sample of student assignments, a sample of the student tests and course evaluations used.

Recruitment/Retention: course enrollments for past five years, student retention to graduation in each program, recruiting brochures, recruiting plans, etc., attempts to recruit minority students

Relationship to Other Programs: number of service courses offered and enrollments, number of faculty teaching in Honors College, number of interdisciplinary courses/programs

2.4 Faculty

In addition to the one page vita included in the self-study narrative provide detailed up to date vitae for all current full- and part-time faculty. Provide information on gender, race, ethnicity of faculty and time in rank to promotion. Provide data to support teaching workload section. Provide data to support teaching workload section. Provide tables of productivity in areas of scholarship, teaching and service.

2.5 Students

Provide supporting data on enrollments, graduation rates, ability to secure positions after graduation, honors, age, gender, ethnicity; professional advising overview, faculty advising participation data; data from student tutoring; student publications, presentations, surveys of student perceptions, etc.

2.6 Infrastructure

backup information on unit committees, facilities, off-campus programs, budgets, etc.

2.7 Atmosphere

information on cross-unit projects, research, planning, unit retreats, unit newsletters, etc.

2.8 Assessment

previous program/accreditation outcome documentation; copy of unit assessment plan and reviews by Assessment Committee; plans for new programs and future growth, examples of student success measures