



# **PROGRAM REVIEW**

# **HANDBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION

California Northstate University's (CNU's) Academic Program Review process is designed to advance the educational mission of the college or program by assessing and improving student learning outcomes. The emphasis of this data-driven process is forward planning, informed by analysis of recent trends, with the college identifying through the review process the necessary processes for maintaining excellence while correcting deficiencies.

The program review includes a self-study process, followed by an external review component, comprised of two or more distinguished scholars and industry professionals or practitioners in the field who are selected for their expertise. Prior to their visit, the visitors receive copies of the summary of statistical data and the college's internal review report. The External Review team spends one to one-and-a-half days visiting the college and then writes an External Review report that recaps the team's findings.

This handbook is adapted from the WSCUC "Program Review Resource Guide," 2015.

## I. WSCUC REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM REVIEW

CNU's program review process is aligned with the following Criteria for Review (CFRs) from *the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation* (Standards 2 and 4) that address program review and place it within the larger context of the need for CNU's ongoing, comprehensive quality assurance and improvement system:

### CFR 2.7

All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

### CFR 4.1

The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

### CFR 4.3

Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.

### CFR 4.4

The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty and other educators take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and use the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

**CFR 4.6**

The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution's strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.

**A. Definition and Purpose of Program Review**

A program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of programs. The evaluation is conducted through a combination of self-evaluation, followed by peer-evaluation by reviewers external to the program or department and, usually, also external to the organization. It is a comprehensive analysis of program quality, analyzing a wide variety of data about the program. The results of this evaluation process are then used to inform follow-up planning and budgeting processes at various levels in the institution—program, department, college, university—and incorporated into the institution's overall quality assurance system. An institution's program review process typically occurs on a regular cycle of five to eight years, meaning that each program/department is reviewed every five-eight years.

Program review is a required element in the WSCUC accreditation process. WSCUC expects institutions to have processes that assure program currency, quality and effectiveness. When implemented effectively and followed up deliberately, program review is a powerful means of engaging faculty in evaluating and improving programs in the organization. Even though required by WSCUC, the primary utility of program review is internal to an institution. It provides a structure to foster continuous program improvement that is aligned with departmental, college, and institutional goals. Such improvements may include:

- Developing or refining program learning outcomes and identifying appropriate means for assessing their achievement
- Better aligning department, college and institutional goals
- Refining departmental access and other interventions to improve retention/attrition, and graduation rates
- Making curricular and other changes to improve student learning and retention
- Refining, reorganizing or refocusing curricula to reflect changes in the discipline or profession
- Reorganizing or improving student support systems, including advising, library services, and student development initiatives to improve the academic success of students in the program
- Designing needed professional development programs, including programs to help faculty learn how to develop and assess learning outcomes, to improve pedagogy, and to improve curricular cohesion
- Reorganizing or refocusing resources to advance student learning or specific research agendas
- Re-assigning faculty/staff or requesting new lines
- Illuminating potential intra-institutional synergies
- Developing specific action plans for modifications and improvements
- Informing decision making, planning and budgeting, including resource re/allocation
- Linking and, as appropriate, aggregating program review results to the institution's broader quality assurance/improvement efforts

**B. Distinction between Types of Accreditation Review and an Institution's Program Review Process**

Colleges and universities engage in a variety of review processes, including the following:

- WSCUC Regional Accreditation
- Specialized Program Accreditation and State Licensure
- Institutional Program Review

WSCUC's regional accreditation review evaluates whether the institution as a whole meets WSCUC standards. This institution-wide review focuses on the capacity (personnel, curricula, student learning, finances, infrastructure, organizational processes, etc.) and effectiveness of the college or university to meet its particular mission and its documented results in fulfilling its educational goals and outcomes.

WSCUC expects each institution to have its own ongoing system of quality assurance and improvement: program review and assessment of student achievement are key components of this system. The forms of external review described below are part of such a system, not a series of separate, disconnected activities.

### C. Distinguishing Features of Program Review

The college has adopted these distinguishing features of program review:

- **Evidence-Based Claims and Decision-Making**  
Any conclusions drawn within a self-study report or decisions made as a result of a program review are to be informed by evidence. That is, all claims within a self-study report about a program's strengths, weaknesses, and proposed improvement plans are to be supported by relevant qualitative and/or quantitative evidence (see *Using Evidence in the WSCUC Accreditation Process: A Guide for Institution*, available on the WSCUC website). This contrasts, for instance, with program review self-studies that are largely descriptive and based on advocacy. Hence, the section of this guide describing the components of a self-study report (IIC below) identifies types of evidence useful for answering questions about various aspects of a program's quality or viability.
- **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**  
Evidence-based program review includes the ongoing evaluation of how well a program's student body (in the aggregate) is achieving the stated learning outcomes (or objectives) for that program. While such assessment of student learning outcomes is independent of program review and part of ongoing faculty processes for program improvement, program reviews need to incorporate an analysis of a program's assessment of student learning. This includes: a review of program learning outcomes, evaluation of the methods employed to directly assess achievement of these outcomes, and analysis and reflection on learning results.
- **Integration of Results with Planning, Budgeting, and Institutional Quality Assurance Systems**  
The results of program review are to be used for follow-up planning and budgeting at various decision-making levels within the organization (program, department, college and institution). In addition, program review is to be incorporated into the institution's broader quality assurance/improvement efforts. For example, problems found across several program reviews might be addressed institutionally as well as within individual programs.

## II. CONDUCTING A PROGRAM REVIEW (per the WSCUC "Program Review Resource Guide," 2015)

This section provides an overview of each step of the program review process. It starts with general principles and steps in the governance of a program review process, then addresses key components of a program review in the sequence in which they occur: the self-study inquiry and

report, followed by the external review, then a formal Findings and Recommendations report, and culminating with a Memorandum of Understanding that may involve commitments from senior administrators regarding resources.

### **A. Governance of the Process – Steps and Responsibilities**

The guiding principles governing the process are as follows:

- Academic program review is a faculty-driven process; that is, the program review process is usually codified by Academic Senate policy and implemented by a committee that includes faculty and may involve administration.
- Assessment “by faculty, for use by faculty” is preferable and more effective in improving student learning and other program aspects than is assessment by administration.
- Collaborative involvement of administration in various steps of the program review process (e.g., meeting with the external team of evaluators) helps to secure buy-in for change and improvement, as well as to ensure alignment with institutional goals and resources.
- It occurs on a regularly scheduled timeline, which is determined by the institution.
- It includes a program or departmental self-study process, where departmental faculty and administrators collectively engage in inquiry and analysis.
- The self-study process and report include, as one element in the comprehensive review of the program, an analysis of the ongoing direct assessment of student learning.
- The program review process includes an external review and written report, including recommendations for improvement.
- Agreed-upon recommendations emanating from program review are the result of deliberations between the department, the academic program review committee, and senior administrators (e.g., deans and VP for Academic Affairs) with decision-making power regarding priority setting and resource allocation.
- Program review results are integrated into college and institutional planning and budgeting.

Multiple constituencies within CNU are responsible for carrying out different steps in the program review process. The following steps are broad outlines of the various constituencies’ responsibilities.

Considerable variation in these steps occurs across institutions. Typically, the governance process for program review is organized in the following manner:

- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) maintains a timeline for all academic program reviews and assists departments with the steps involved in the process.
- While faculty oversee and enact the evaluative aspects of program review, the process is implemented in consultation and collaboration with administrative leaders and the VP for IR, Quality & Assessment.
- Special issues for the review are identified by the program in advance and agreed upon, such as alignment with specific school or institutional goals, or special issues relating to a particular program or department.
- Program review committee members are appointed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to represent the program.
- The Institutional Research Analyst and the Assessment Director coordinate a set of program review data that will be analyzed in the self-study (e.g., enrollment and retention data, alumni and student satisfaction survey results, student engagement data, market research, etc.).
- Department faculty conduct a departmental self-study within guidelines provided in the established program review policy. It is important that these guidelines include very specific requirements for program level assessment. Some institutions combine self-studies of both graduate and undergraduate programs while other institutions separate these reviews.
- The self-study identifies program strengths and limitations and suggests solutions to identified problems.

- Once the self-study is completed (and approved, if relevant), the visit from two or more external reviewers is organized. The review takes place one or two days. Qualified, objective external reviewers, including those with understanding and experience in addressing student learning outcomes' assessment, will conduct the external review.
- The external reviewers read all relevant documentation, including for example: the self-study report; relevant data from institutional research; survey results of faculty and students in the program; course syllabi; course evaluations; examples of student work, such as senior papers and theses; reports on annual direct and indirect assessment of student learning outcomes; curricular flow charts; faculty CVs; and examples of faculty research.
- External reviewers prepare a written "external review" report (refer to template provided in Appendix B), which may include recommendations not cited in the program faculty's own self-study process. The program review committee examines all reports and writes a final Findings and Recommendations report that is submitted to the department and to senior campus administrators.
- The final product of the program review—a Memorandum of Understanding—places the Findings and Recommendations in the context of resource allocation decisions by mandating the participation of senior campus administrators with authority over campus resources.
- A formal Improvement Plan is required, especially for departments/programs that receive a conditional approval given the results of program evaluation.
- Follow-up action plans are established for tracking progress.

## **B. Components in the Self-Study Report**

The self-study consists of evidence-based inquiry and analyses which are documented in a comprehensive self-study report.

### 1. Introduction/Context

The introduction provides a context for the review. In contrast to the rest of the self-study report, this portion is primarily descriptive and may include:

- The internal context – In what department does it reside? In which school or college? What degrees does it grant? What concentrations are available?
- The external context – How is the program responsive to the needs of the region or area in which it serves?
- It may also include a brief history of the program or a description of changes made in the program since the last review (if relevant).

A key component in providing the context for the review is a description of the program's mission, goals, and outcomes.

- A mission statement is a general explanation of why your program exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the program's essential nature, its values and its work.
- Goals are general statements of what your program wants to achieve.
- Outcomes are the specific results that should be observed if the goals are being met.

### 2. Analysis of Evidence about Program Quality & Viability

The bulk of a self-study report consists of a presentation and analysis of evidence about the quality and viability/sustainability of a program. This major portion of the report addresses the extent to which program goals are being met by using evidence to answer key questions related to those goals.

To facilitate meaningful analysis of the evidence, it is helpful to provide guiding questions to structure the self-study inquiry and report. These questions often produce deep discussions among faculty and are considered the most important aspect of the self-study process. Hence, a set of sample questions is embedded below within each of the core elements typically analyzed in a self-study report.

Program evidence falls into two categories:

- Evidence that addresses questions about program quality
- Evidence that addresses issues of program viability and sustainability

2a. **Evidence of program quality** typically addresses questions about:

- **Student Data** – What is the profile of students in the program and how does the profile relate to or enhance the mission and goals of the program?
  - Data in this category might include students' gender, ethnicity, age, GPA from previous institution, standardized test scores, type of previous institution, and employment status.
  - Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of the program.
- **The Curriculum and Learning Environment** – How current is the program curriculum? Does it offer sufficient breadth and depth of learning for this particular degree? How well does it align with learning outcomes? Are the courses well sequenced and reliably available in sequence? Has the program been reviewed by external stakeholders, such as practitioners in the field, or compared with other similar programs?
  - Evidence in this category might include
    - A curriculum flow chart and description of how the curriculum addresses the learning outcomes of the program (curriculum map)
    - A comparison of the program's curriculum with curricula at selected other institutions and with disciplinary/professional standards
    - Measures of teaching effectiveness (e.g., course evaluations, peer evaluations of teaching, faculty scholarship on issues of teaching and learning, formative discussions of pedagogy among faculty)
    - A description of other learning experiences that are relevant to program goals (e.g., internships, research experiences, study abroad or other international experiences, community-based learning, etc.), as well as how many students participate in those experiences
    - A narrative that describes how the faculty's pedagogy responds to various learning modalities and student learning preferences
- **Student Learning and Success** – Are students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program? Are they achieving those outcomes at the expected level of learning, and how is the expected level determined? Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion? Are they prepared for advanced study or the world of work?
  - Evidence in this category might include:
    - Annual results of direct and indirect assessments of student learning in the program (combination of quantitative and qualitative measures), including the degree to which students achieve the program's desired standards
    - Ongoing efforts by the department to "close the loop" by responding to assessment results
    - Student retention and graduation rate trends (disaggregated by different demographic categories)



- Placement of graduates into graduate schools or post-doctoral experiences
  - Job placements
  - Board pass rates
  - Graduating student satisfaction surveys (and/or alumni satisfaction surveys)
  - Employer critiques of student performance or employer survey satisfaction results
  - Disciplinary ratings of the program
  - Student/Alumni achievements (e.g., community service, research and publications, awards and recognition, professional accomplishments, etc.)
- **Faculty** – What are the qualifications and achievements of the faculty in the program in relation to the program mission and goals? How do faculty members’ background, expertise, research and other professional work contribute to the quality of the program?
  - Evidence in this category might include:
    - Proportion of faculty with terminal degree
    - Institutions from which faculty earned terminal degrees
    - List of faculty specialties within discipline (and how those specialties align with the program curriculum)
    - Teaching quality (e.g., peer evaluations, faculty self-review)
    - Record of scholarship for each faculty member
    - Faculty participation in development opportunities related to teaching, learning and/or assessment
    - External funding awarded to faculty
    - Record of professional practice for each faculty member
    - Service for each faculty member
    - Distribution of faculty across ranks (or years at institution) and workload analyses
    - Diversity of faculty
    - Awards and recognition

[Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of a particular program/department/college.]

2b. **Evidence of program viability and sustainability** typically addresses questions about the level of student demand for the program and the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient in amount to maintain program quality:

- **Demand for the program**
  - What are the trends in numbers of student applications, admits, and enrollments reflected over a 5-8 year period?
  - What is happening within the profession, local community or society generally that identifies an anticipated need for this program in the future (including market research)?
- **Allocation of Resources:**
  - **Faculty** – Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to maintain program quality? Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work?
    - Number of full-time faculty (ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty)
    - Student-faculty ratio
    - Faculty workload
    - Faculty review and evaluation processes
    - Mentoring processes/program
    - Professional development opportunities/resources (including travel and research funds)
    - Sufficient time for course development, research, etc

- **Student support**
  - Academic and career advising programs and resources
  - Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and T.A. training
  - Basic skill remediation
  - Support for connecting general learning requirements to discipline requirements
  - Orientation and transition programs
  - Financial support (scholarships, fellowships, teaching assistantships, etc)
  - Support for engagement in the campus community.
  - Support for non-cognitive variables of success, including emotional, psychological, and physical interventions if necessary
  - Support for research or for engagement in the community beyond campus, such as fieldwork or internships
  
- **Information and technology resources**
  - Library print and electronic holdings in the teaching and research areas of the program
  - Information literacy outcomes for graduates
  - Technology resources available to support the pedagogy and research in the program
  - Technology resources available to support students' needs
  
- **Facilities**
  - Classroom space
  - Instructional laboratories
  - Research laboratories
  - Office space
  - Student study spaces
  - Access to classrooms suited for instructional technology
  - Access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles/universal design
  
- **Staff**
  - Clerical and technical staff FTE supporting program/departmental operations
  
- **Financial resources**
  - Operational budget (revenues and expenditures) and trends over a 3-5 year period

## **Data Sources**

### Student-related Data

- Retention and graduation rates by class
- Board pass rates
- Student learning outcomes by class (PLOs, CoCuLOs, GELOs, if applicable)
- Benchmark exam results (e.g., PCOA, Capstone, Milestone)
- Tutoring results
- Academic alerts
- Progression and Student Academic Progress
- Grade distribution by course
- Indicators of student success

### College-related Data

- Professional development
- Workload analyses
- Faculty-to-student ratios
- Course evaluations
- Faculty evaluations
- Curricular changes
- Practice site evaluations
- Satisfaction surveys (e.g., internal and external faculty, student, alumni, etc.)
- Faculty and staff analysis of the academic program
- Recruiting materials/Marketing plans
- Preceptor evaluations of student and program
- Committee reports
- External review report
- Admissions criteria and analyses
- Enrollment management plan
- Strategic plan outcomes
- Evaluation of mission
- Benchmarking with other colleges

#### Employee and Institutional Data

- Physical resources
- Human resources
- Research and library resources
- Electronic resources
- IT and technology resources
- Research and external funding source

### 3. Summary Reflections

This portion of the self-study report typically interprets the significance of the findings in the above analysis of program evidence. Its purpose is to determine a program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

It is helpful to have questions that guide the interpretation of the findings, such as:

- Are the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources properly aligned with the goals of the program?
- Are department/program goals aligned with the goals of the constituents that the program serves?
- Is the level of program quality aligned with the college/university's acceptable level of program quality? Aligned with the constituents' acceptable level of quality?
- Are program goals being achieved?
- Are student learning outcomes being achieved at the expected level?

The goal for PLO achievement for all programs is that students demonstrate achievement of each PLO at the Developed level.

### 4. Future Goals and Planning for Improvement

Self-study reports conclude with a section devoted to future planning and improvement.

- What are the program's goals for the next few years?

- In order to achieve these goals:
  - How will the program specifically address any weaknesses identified in the self-study?
  - How will the program build on existing strengths?
  - What internal improvements are possible with existing resources (through reallocation)?
  - What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?
  - Where can the formation of collaborations improve program quality?

## **C. The External Review**

Prior to the scheduled department visit, the information from the program self-study and any additional materials are sent to each member of the external review team. The external review typically occurs a month or two after a program or department submits its self-study report.

### 1. Choosing Reviewers

External reviewers should be distinguished scholars/teachers/practitioners in the field and chosen from campuses that are similar to the campus of the program undergoing review. It is also helpful for external reviewers to have had experience with program administration. Since student learning results are part of the review criteria, it will be important for at least one of the reviewers to understand and be experienced with student learning outcomes assessment and have the ability to review and analyze the program's assessment processes and results; one way to include such expertise is to have a campus expert/coordinator on outcomes-assessment join the other external reviewers as part of the external review team.

When feasible and desirable, programs include local campus faculty on a review team (from departments external to the program under review). Campus faculty serving as reviewers should have familiarity with the program undergoing review. The department undergoing review is asked to assure the program review committee that the list of proposed reviewers is capable of carrying out a neutral review.

The program review committee (or administration) decides on the final list of possible reviewers, contacts proposed reviewers for their availability, and typically designates one reviewer to serve as Chair of the review team.

### 2. Instructions and Materials for the External Review Team

About thirty days prior to the scheduled department visit, the information from the program self-study and materials are sent to the external review team, along with a charge by the campus program review committee. An identical information package is provided to the members of the campus review committee and other designated administrators.

### 3. External Review Team Visit and Report

The review team visit typically lasts for one or two days, during which time the review committee members meet with department faculty, academic advisors, students, the campus program review committee, and select administrators. The review team typically takes part in an exit interview just prior to concluding its departmental visit and is expected to submit its written evaluation to the campus program review committee within several weeks of the visit. Upon submission of the report, off-campus reviewers generally receive a stipend and travel expense reimbursement.

## **D. Post External Review Process**

The program is typically asked to review the External Review Report (within a brief time period) for factual inaccuracies and misperceptions. The summary of factual corrections and misperceptions becomes part of the package of documents subsequently reviewed by the campus review committee.

### 1. Findings and Recommendations Report

The campus program review committee reviews all relevant documentation (self-study report, external review report, departmental response, if relevant) and, based on the evidence reviewed, writes a report detailing the major findings and recommendations resulting from the evaluation process. The findings and recommendations report presents a cohesive plan of action for program improvement based on the program review documents.

The chair of the department undergoing review distributes the findings and recommendations report to the program faculty, staff and, in some cases, students. The department/program collects input from all constituents and prepares a detailed response, either outlining plans for implementing the recommendations or detailing reasons for not doing so.

This response is submitted to the campus program review committee within a reasonable time frame for consideration in drawing up the final Findings and Recommendations. The campus review committee distributes its approved final report to the department/program for action and to designated administrators.

### 2. Responding to Findings and Recommendations Report

The campus review committee and designated administrators (e.g., Dean and VP for Academic Affairs) meet with department/program representatives to discuss the action steps to be taken as a result of the review. A timeline is set and resources needed to accomplish the plan's goals are identified. At this stage, it is imperative that senior campus administrators with authority over resource allocation decisions be involved in the process. Program review guidelines call for a written response to the Findings and Recommendations Report from the Dean. This requirement focuses the Dean's attention on the review and increases the potential for change. Unless program review has the involvement and attention of Deans and the VP for Academic Affairs and is in accordance with their priorities, findings from the reviews are not likely to be included in budget decisions.

An MOU (memorandum of understanding) is written and signed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dean, and VP for Academic Affairs. The MOU may contain recommendations that the department is expected to fulfill by the next review, including a timeline with progress milestones. The MOU may also contain recommendations for resource allocation.

### 3. Sharing Results and Tracking Improvement Plan

To maximize the effectiveness of program review, it is important to share the findings and resulting decisions with stakeholder groups. Such sharing of findings generates buy-in to the program's and/or institution's goals and creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to review the program review results. To facilitate and track the implementation of improvement plans, each year the Dean's Executive Council reviews the progress of the program review action plans from each previous year and provides updates. If the program was not successful in implementing all aspects of the plan, the council may recommend follow-up actions to the program and appropriate campus administrators.

### 4. Distribution and Archiving of Program Review Documents

Copies of the program review documents (self-study report, external review report, responses, findings and recommendations report, improvement plan, MOU) are sent to relevant parties, such as the VP for Academic Affairs; Dean; VP for IR, Quality & Assessment; and IR Analyst. File copies are archived in an appropriate location for future reference. Deans and other administrators need to retain copies of program reviews and the decisions that resulted from them (including MOUs) and refer to them in their planning and budgeting.

### **III. USING PROGRAM REVIEW RESULTS IN PLANNING & BUDGETING (per the WSCUC “Program Review Resource Guide,” 2015)**

Program review provides one way for institutions to link evidence of academic quality and student learning with planning and budgeting. That is, the findings in the self-study, recommendations in the external review, Findings and Recommendations Report, and MOU can be used as evidence to inform decision-making processes at various levels in the institution (i.e., from the program-level through the university-level, depending on the nature of the recommendations). The mechanism for facilitating such integration will vary greatly from one organization to the next, but there are some processes and guiding questions that facilitate the use of the results from program review flow in planning and budgeting processes at each decision-making level.

Many recommendations involving program improvement can be met with very little resource reallocation (e.g., re-sequencing of courses, refinements in the criteria for student evaluation, re-organization of instructional or workshop material). However, other recommendations can point to a larger reallocation of resources ranging from faculty development for assessment to hiring more staff or faculty members to fill current unmet needs.

What follows are examples of the types of decisions that might be made based on the results of program review at three levels of an organization—the department/program level, the college level, and the institution level—and questions that might guide decision making.

#### **A. Program Level**

At the program level, results from program review can be used to inform curriculum planning, such as the following:

- Changing the sequence of courses in the major curriculum
- Adding or deleting courses
- Refinement or articulation of pre-requisite or disciplinary requirements
- Re-design of the content or pedagogy of specific courses

The primary questions driving such changes include the following:

- Are our students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program?
- If not, what elements of the curriculum could be changed to improve learning?

Inform changes in how resources are used within the department/program, such as the following:

- Assignment of faculty to teach specific courses or sections
- Changing the scheduling of certain courses or the frequency with which they are offered.
- Changing the number of students required in course sections so that student learning and effectiveness of teaching are maximized
- Implementing improved advising and support services to increase learning, retention, and/or graduation rates

- Adjusting the allocation of faculty resources across General Education, the major, and the graduate program
- Providing additional professional development or research resources for faculty
- Adjusting faculty teaching loads and assigned/release time

Some guiding questions here are the following:

- How can resources within the department be allocated in such a way as to better achieve the mission and goals of the department?
- At what point in the prioritization of departmental goals do these recommendations fall?
- What are the costs of each recommendation (both the direct monetary cost and the opportunity cost in the form of lost resources for other initiatives)? What is the extent of departmental funds available and where might the department turn for external funding?

Make recommendations for how resources outside the department/program should be used. For example, the department may suggest that:

- Library collections be enhanced
  - Additional tutors be added to the learning resource center
  - Instructional technology support be improved
  - The university explore writing/speaking across the curriculum initiatives
  - Career placement services be improved
- Make a case to the Dean for specific additional resources. For example, the department may ask for:
- An additional faculty line or support staff
  - Additional funds to support faculty professional travel or research
  - Release time for curriculum development or research-related activities
  - A reduction or increase in program enrollment

## **B. College Level**

At the college level, program reviews can be used to decide how to allocate resources across departments. For example, the Dean may decide to do the following:

- Enhance support to programs with the potential to grow or to establish research distinction in the field
- Combine or phase out certain programs
- Re-tool and reassign faculty or academic support staff

In making such decisions, a Dean may consider:

- How do these recommendations fit into the overall department mission and goals?
- How do these recommendations fit into the College mission and goals?
- At what point in the prioritization of both sets of goals do these recommendations fall?
- What are the costs of each recommendation (both the direct monetary cost and the opportunity cost in the form of lost resources for other programs)?
- What is the extent of resources available and where might the dean turn to for external funding?

In addition, Deans may use resource allocation decisions to ensure that departments include outcomes-based assessment and evidence-based decision making in the program review process to ensure that the process is a meaningful tool for quality enhancement. This can be encouraged by withholding resources if these two elements are absent from the self-study or granting additional resources for those programs engaged in meaningful assessment of student learning and which demonstrate evidence-based decision

making within program review. Program review will be viewed as more meaningful and departments will take the process more seriously if there are a) consequences for departments not meeting new program review and assessment standards and b) strategic funding by Deans and VP for Academic Affairs of evidence-based proposals for improving student learning and other dimensions of program quality.

### **C. Institutional Level**

At the institution level, program reviews can be used in a variety of ways in planning and budgeting, among them:

- By Deans bringing forward requests during the budgeting process that are informed by the results of program reviews

In this case, many of the guiding questions listed under the dean/college level may also be questions that are discussed at this level, depending on institutional culture and the institution's business model.

- By aggregating program review results across departments and Colleges, the institution can get a sense of whether university goals (or strategic planning goals) are being met or being modified. If the overall pattern of results suggests that there is an area for improvement then university leadership may decide to allocate additional resources, typically to Colleges, to address that area.
- By institutional leadership articulating its primary strategic initiatives and allocating funds or resources to Colleges or programs in order to strengthen efforts in those areas.

If this approach is adapted, many of the guiding questions listed under the dean/college level may also be questions that are discussed at this level, depending on institutional culture and the institution's business model. The idea is that the institution controls all allocation of resources and can influence directly the decisions to improve specific aspects of desired strategic initiatives.



## **Appendix A: Supplemental Materials**

### **College Logo**

#### **EXTERNAL REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

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**FOR**

**Fall 2011**

## **Appendix B: External Review Report Template**

**Team members:**

**Date(s) and Location of Review:**

**Summary of Review (including documents and evidence reviewed, constituencies with whom team met, and other relevant information)**

**Areas of Strength and Commendations**

**Areas for Improvement and Recommendations**

### Program Review Rubric

Indicators	Initial	Developing	Developed	Proficient
<b>Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)</b>	Program has developed objectives but no outcomes' statements.	Program has developed outcomes' statements but has not developed assessment tools.	Program has developed outcomes' statements and evaluation rubrics. Program employs these assessments to measure students' PLO achievement.	Program has developed outcomes' statements and evaluation rubrics; assessments are imbedded in curriculum. Rubrics are used to measure and document students' achievement of PLOs.
<b>Assessment Plan</b>	A cyclical assessment plan exists that details specific programmatic and institutional assessments.	A cyclical assessment plan that details specific programmatic and institutional assessments exists. Assessment plan is reviewed and revisited. Portions of the plan are followed, and assessment results are compiled.	A cyclical assessment plan that details specific programmatic and institutional assessments exists. Assessment plan is reviewed and revisited. Most parts of the plan are followed, and the plan is regularly revisited and updated. Assessment results are compiled and analyzed.	A cyclical assessment plan that details specific programmatic and institutional assessments exists. Assessment plan is regularly followed, reviewed, and updated. Assessment results are compiled, analyzed, and communicated to constituencies. Assessment results are used to create action plans, which are used for institutional and programmatic improvements and are reassessed as part of the cycle of improvement.
<b>Evidence</b>	Evidence of improvements in program is lacking. Few, if any, changes in curriculum, pedagogy, or assessments are reported.	Evidence of improvements in program is minimal. Changes in curriculum, pedagogy, or assessments are reported, but there is not sufficient evidence of reassessment or of programmatic improvement.	Some changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessments based on assessment results are reported and documented.	Evidence of improvements in program is abundant and documented. Changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessments are reported and reassessed. Assessments demonstrate a cycle of improvement.
<b>Results and Impact</b>	Assessment results are compiled but not analyzed, communicated, and/or used for planning purposes. Assessments rarely lead to programmatic and institutional improvement.	Assessment results are compiled and often analyzed but are not always communicated or used for planning purposes. Assessments sometimes lead to programmatic and institutional improvement.	Assessment results are compiled, analyzed, and communicated to constituencies. Assessment cycle often lead to programmatic and institutional improvement.	Assessment results are compiled, analyzed, communicated, and used to plan improvements. Assessment cycle regularly lead to programmatic and institutional improvement.

