

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

San Juan College: Designing and Piloting a Program/Discipline Review Process at SJC

Project Details	
Title	Designing and Piloting a Program/Discipline Review Process at SJC
Category	1-Helping Students Learn
Timeline	
Planned Project Kickoff	08-19-2008
Target Completion	06-30-2010
Status	REVIEWED
Updated	09-29-2011
Reviewed	10-25-2011
Created	11-24-2009
Last Modified	10-25-2011

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Desk Audits

By the fall of 2010, fifteen academic programs and disciplines had completed the Desk Audit phase of the College's program review model. Based upon the results of a spring 2011 analysis of the Desk Audit phase of the College's program review model, as well as the feedback provided on the 2010 Update for this Action Project that questioned the validity of the point system associated with the Desk Audit, it was determined that the Desk Audit component would be integrated into a more comprehensive process (previously envisioned as a separate phase to be completed only for programs that scored beneath a pre-determined threshold). The Desk Audit would be renamed the Annual Academic Program/Discipline Trend Report, and this data would be one input into the comprehensive program review model. Throughout the spring semester, Learning administrators met individually with each of the participating Program Directors and their Deans to review the data generated by the Desk Audit and to discuss the usability of the data to inform improvement efforts. These discussions led to the expansion of the data elements that are included in the Annual Trend Report. As the new title implies, the trend report will be provided to Program Directors on an annual basis, in conjunction with their annual assessment activities, and can be used to track improvement efforts initiated following a comprehensive program review and to identify emerging issues that may lead to additional improvement initiatives.

Program Vitality Reviews

"Program Vitality" reviews were scheduled during the spring 2011 semester with the head of every SJC academic program and the VP and AVP for Learning. The goals of these two-way discussions were to provide Learning administrators with the information needed to support our programs, identify steps that could enhance student performance and degree success as well as faculty development and satisfaction, and lay the foundation for the five-year cycle of comprehensive program reviews. Enrollment and completion trends were analyzed for potential connections to curriculum, staffing, scheduling, facilities and other components of program delivery and design. Compliance with Gainful Employment regulations was also discussed.

Comprehensive Program Review

The Learning Leadership Team (LLT) determined that a comprehensive program review would be conducted for every academic program and discipline on a 5-year cycle. The LLT developed a recommended comprehensive program review model and cycle in the fall of 2011 that will be presented to the faculty in School meetings during the fall semester; the first five programs are slated to begin this process in January of 2012. The current Higher Learning Commission criteria provide the framework for the program review model, which includes four primary components and seven guiding principles.

Four Primary Components:

? Internal analysis of Key Performance Indicators

- ? Stakeholder surveys (Employers, Graduates, Current Students)
- ? Peer and Market analysis
- ? Curriculum Review and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Seven Guiding Principles:

1. How well does this program fit with the purpose of the School and the mission of the College?
2. Does the program have adequate resources to ensure educational quality?
3. Does the program (if vocational) prepare students for jobs that are in demand? Given that demand, what is the competitive environment for this program offering (i.e., market share)? Does the program (if a transfer program) prepare students to successfully transfer and complete a higher level degree?
4. Is progress toward program goals or benchmarks for Key Performance Indicators being met?
5. Is the current curriculum timely and relevant? Does the program advance the mission and strategic goals of San Juan College?
6. Are the learning outcomes (course, program, general education and CSLO's) being met by students? Is student learning effective, based upon evidence provided?
7. What improvements are recommended for continuous improvement in student learning, program quality, and program delivery? What resources are required to implement these recommendations?

WEAVEOnline

Finally, the comprehensive program review process will use WEAVE Online to organize programs' responses to the 7 guiding principles and to store associated data and documents in one central location. Annual assessment data and documents will also be stored in WEAVE Online. This information repository and tracking system facilitates the use of student performance data by faculty for program improvement.

R: In the process of developing a model to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of your course delivery systems, the Learning Leadership Team discovered the Desk Audit Model provided significant obstacles and was reconstituted into the Annual Academic Program-Discipline Trend Report Model. This more comprehensive approach indicated the seriousness of the LLT about generating usable data for evaluating the relevancy, currency, and quality of the curriculum program at SJC. The use of the WEAVE software helps to provide a consistency of reporting the data gathered.

The fact that the trend report will be provided only to Program Directors on an annual basis may limit the usefulness of the data. If the trend report is to be most effective, discussion of its results might be more valuable if discussed with significant employers in the community, representatives of the baccalaureate institutions to which SJC students most often transfer, alumni, and current students. This discussion would be in addition to the significant internal stakeholders.

Since 15 academic programs and disciplines had completed the model in Fall 2010, what were the most significant results? What program improvements have been made based on the results? Were there emerging issues identified and what changes were made based on the issues presented?

The newly developed comprehensive program review is a significant step toward developing a consistent and workable model and provides the formalized systematic review needed for working at continuous improvement. However, progress on this action project has been fair. The fact that the project began in 2008 and was to be completed in June 2010 is concerning and should provide a basis for discussion about the future of the project on campus. It is imperative that a reporting of the progress of this comprehensive review include significant discussion of the results and how improvements will be incorporated based on the strategic plan, campus mission and AQIP categories.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The review of the Desk Audit model included participation of individuals throughout Learning, including the VP and AVP, School Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty. The redesign of the Desk Audit to the expanded Annual Program/Discipline Trend Report was a result of this collaboration; the Institutional Research Manager and VP and AVP of Administrative Services also contributed to this work.

The Program Vitality Review model also included the participation of individuals throughout Learning, including the VP and AVP, School Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty. This process was developed by the LLT as a mean to begin a systematic process of program review required for accreditation. These "mini" reviews also served to quickly enhance our mutual understanding of program successes and needs, and to help us all work toward ongoing program development.

The comprehensive program review model was collaboratively developed by the VP and AVP for Learning and the School Deans, and will be piloted in January 2012. The Deans will be presenting the program review model to the faculty in School meetings and will share their input with the LLT. The Program Directors who will be participating in the initial cycle of program review will be introduced to the model and to WEAVE Online during the fall semester. As with any new process, the input of those participating will be used to make on-going improvements.

R: **The Desk Audit Model, the Program Vitality Review, and the comprehensive program review model were primarily developed by some combination of VP, AVP, School Deans, Program Directors, and faculty. If SJC's mission/vision focuses on ensuring relevancy, currency, and quality in their curricular program so that completers will be prepared to successfully enter the workforce or transfer to baccalaureate institutions, why are there no representatives of the workforce, students, or baccalaureate institutions involved in their program review model and the type of data to be gathered? External stakeholders provide a more objective view of the process. Since this AQIP category focuses on helping students learn, the key internal stakeholders-the students- should have significant involvement in the process.**

The formalization of this review process is a laudable accomplishment, the stakeholders involved need to be expanded in the future. Although it is easier to include employee stakeholders, the data generated will lead to more effective decision-making if all relevant parties are represented.

3: Next Steps

A:

After several earlier attempts, the College has developed a program review process that is comprehensive, integrated with annual assessment activities, and provides a mechanism for both validation and improvement. The process and cycle have been endorsed by the LLT and is supported by the Schools. The College believes that the time and energy devoted to the full program review process will build upon what was learned from the Vitality meetings and will expand our capacity to generate actionable information that is valued by faculty and administration. The adoption of WEAVE Online will allow programs to document their work and provide greater access and transparency to academic program improvement efforts and results.

The Office of Institutional Research is working to obtain reliable employment and continuing education data for program graduates as an input to program review. The College has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) and is also working with the National Clearinghouse to obtain this data to supplement review of learning outcomes, curricular analysis, and enrollment studies.

R: The formalized review process is a laudable accomplishment. The data generated is to provide actionable information valued by faculty and administration. The next step might include discussion with the stakeholders-both external and internal. Based on these discussions, specific data should be identified and a determination made as to what information is needed to better help students learn. The inclusion of these stakeholders in future collaboration will increase the transparency of academic program improvement efforts. Gathering information from outside sources would likely occur after internal and external stakeholders provide their input.

The existence of the Office of Institutional Research indicates a commitment to formalizing data gathering efforts. If SJC utilizes data from the New Mexico Higher Education Department and the National Clearinghouse, how will that data be used? Data from both sources provides value in AQIP Category 1 if it will be used to help students learn. Focus data collection on what can SJC do with this data to improve student learning outcomes. If the type of data gathered is specific and based on internal/external stakeholder input, the Office of Institutional Research will have a directed focus for the type of information they gather.

The College measures outcomes across four levels of assessment. SJC needs to consider that there is a possibility of becoming too complex in program reviews. Consider each new process or level of assessment before implementing. Discuss how and if the additional assessment improves the learning experience for students. If not, SJC may want to reconsider.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:**
1. Program administration and faculty collaborated to define student learning outcomes for courses and programs that are clearly stated and measurable. Program content reflects industry, State, or National standards where applicable. Institutional learning outcomes (Common Student learning Outcomes – CSLO’s) have been defined and all courses and programs are appropriately mapped to the CSLO’s. CSLO assessment rubrics have been updated and help faculty to document the quality of student performance relative to the common learning outcomes.
 2. Key indicators will be reviewed and analyzed annually for all programs, regardless of their position in the Program Review rotation; the KPI’s can be used to track improvement efforts initiated following a comprehensive program review and to identify emerging issues that may lead to additional improvement initiatives. These indicators may also prompt an “out of cycle” program review.

3. The College implemented a multi-phased approach to building databases, support, processes, and clear, measurable outcomes across four levels of assessment. This multi-phase process has helped to educate faculty and staff about quality assessment processes and helped build support for the implementation of more complex and comprehensive program reviews.
4. The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTX) created and hosted a 4-part curriculum and assessment series of workshops designed to provide the professional development resources needed for faculty engaging in annual assessment activities, and in preparation for the launch of the new program review process.

R: The creation of well-defined learning outcomes based on industry, state, or national standards, where applicable, provides a solid base for evaluating student performance. Development of CSLOs and coordinating assessment rubrics indicates a strong commitment to your students-the primary stakeholders.

The inclusion of an out-of-cycle program review recognizes the possibility of emerging issues and provides flexibility in your review process to address opportunities in a timely manner. Quick response to issues illustrates commitment to students and their learning environment.

Any Center for Teaching Excellence must be faculty-driven. That being said, it should involve collaboration with administration and other stakeholders that may have meaningful input into what should be included in the Center. All parties have a stake in helping students learn.

5: Project Challenges

A: While the College has made several attempts at institutionalizing a program review process, its efforts had met with minimal success until the campus-wide implementation of the collaborative Program Vitality reviews. The Program Vitality program review model helped to build broader faculty understanding of assessment methods, benchmarking curriculum, and early collection of information needed to support budget requests, renovations, and equipment purchases.

It is important that the final process that has been developed is accepted by all involved parties, and that the comprehensive program review model is recognized as one that (1) is necessary for continued accreditation, program quality and program improvement, (2) produces valuable information and insights that are consistent with the time and energy devoted to it, and (3) is based on best practices in higher education and should not be subject to substantial revision when changes in leadership occur. The latter point may be the most challenging, given recent and anticipated changes in College leadership and the need for the process to be in place for 3-5 years before the full benefits can be realized.

Providing Program Directors with access to needed data is another institutional challenge. To meet this need, the College has invested in iStrategy, a new data warehouse and business intelligence system for higher education institutions provided by BlackBoard Analytics; however, it will likely be 2 years before customizable data queries can be built to support program review. In the interim, the Institutional Research Manager is working to develop Datatel queries to provide needed information, including the annual Trend Report. Another challenge is staffing the Institutional Research Office appropriately to meet the growing demands on the institution, both internally and externally, for data reporting and analysis (currently, the IR Office is staffed by a Manager and a 9-month faculty member on reassign time).

R:

One of the greatest challenges for any higher education effort is acquiring the firm commitment and support from the administration. That support should come from the Board of Trustees through the President and downward through the organization. Without a serious administrative commitment, individuals and groups within the institution may make valiant efforts in continuous quality but little progress will be visible. In the original program review efforts, it appears that the minimal success may have been the result of faculty and others who felt that this process was being pushed upon them. Once the model was expanded to include a broader base of stakeholders, the process became more transparent. This transparency allowed for others to participate and develop their own sense of "ownership" of the process. It is easy to become administratively heavy in developing the processes needed on campus. For success, the process must be both top-down and bottom-up.

Programs such as AQIP and HLC focus on best practices in higher education. College leadership should be cognizant that students look at educational opportunities from where they can get the best possible education. Recognized accreditation affirms the SJC quality status. In addition, changes in educational practices cannot report instant results and take several years to see the ultimate outcomes of improvement in persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

If the SJC assessment program wants to develop continuous improvement, a commitment to institutional research is essential. Data reporting is a complicated process and will be valued by SJC in providing data for accreditation, continuous improvement, and governmental agencies (state and federal.)