Conducting Comprehensive Student Affairs Program Reviews at Large Research Institutions

Custom Research Brief • June 14, 2011

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THE ADVISORY BOARD COMPANY
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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Project Challenge:
A member institution approached the Council with the following questions:

- What process do institutions employ for comprehensive program reviews in the student affairs division? Do other institutions incorporate a student affairs program review committee? What standards of evaluation are used for various units within the division (e.g., CAS standards, learning outcomes developed for the division or individual units, standards identified by national associations, etc.)? How is an external review included in the review process? What is the duration of the program review process? How was the cycle of program review established?
- What metrics are used to assess program effectiveness and quality? How is information gathered during the review cycle reviewed and analyzed? Who is responsible for assessing the program review and how is this assessment conducted? How are judgments made regarding overall program and service quality?
- How are recommendations made for program or service quality improvements? Who is responsible for monitoring progress towards these goals? What examples of positive changes or actionable recommendations resulted from this process?
- What recommendations do other institutions offer universities considering implementing a program review in student affairs? How do institutions prioritize certain programs or services selected for program review?

Sources:

- Education Advisory Board’s internal and online (www.educationadvisoryboard.com) research libraries
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (http://nces.ed.gov/)
- Various institutional student affairs websites

Research Parameters:
The Council interviewed student affairs directors of research and assessment or senior administrators overseeing the comprehensive program review process at large research institutions.
## I. Research Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Enrollment (Total/Undergraduate)</th>
<th>Carnegie Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornell University</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>20,600/13,900</td>
<td>Private: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>27,900/22,500</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>55,000/41,300</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>48,700/38,800</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California-Los Angeles</td>
<td>Pacific West</td>
<td>38,500/26,600</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska-Lincoln</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>24,100/18,900</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>28,900/17,900</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech University)</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>30,800/23,500</td>
<td>Public: Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics
Key Observations:

- **Institutions operate program reviews in student affairs using one of two models: 1) assign each unit to be reviewed on a regular cycle, systematically evaluating each unit or department within student affairs, or 2) on an as-needed basis.** Only two contact institutions employ the second model. At universities conducting systematic program review cycles, contacts consider the timing of professional accreditation processes for unit such as the student health center and the size and complexity of the unit when determining the order of units for program review.

- **The standards of evaluation used and metrics collected throughout program review processes vary by unit, which contacts attribute to the diverse nature of student affairs units.** Contacts most commonly employ the Council for the Advancement in Higher Education (CAS) standards as an evaluative framework. Many administrators also work with department or unit directors to craft additional unit-specific areas of inquiry. Common methods for collecting data include unit self-review reports and surveys of students or faculty who interact with the unit in question.

- All contact institutions convene internal university committees that gather information and often write a final report about the unit undergoing program review; committee members may include staff members from the department being reviewed or other university faculty and staff members. Several institutions also incorporate external review committees either for all program reviews or for select units; these external committees perform similar functions and are composed of experts in the field from outside the institution. Two contact institutions combine external experts and internal university personnel into one review committee, which contacts believe allows the external experts to gain a better sense of the institutional culture.

- **Recommendations identified during program reviews are typically delivered in a final report authored by the internal or external review committees and shared with senior student affairs administrators.** Implementation of these reforms is a challenge for some institutions, while others have crafted a clearly delineated system of accountability.

- **Student affairs administrators primarily rely on informal conversations and surveys of program review participants along with exit interviews with committee members to gauge the overall effectiveness of the program review process.**

- Contacts offer several promising improvements as a result of program reviews: for example, developing a new case management system for judicial affairs and incorporating learning outcomes into the recreation department’s operation. Several contacts suggest the most beneficial aspect of the program review process is the self-reflection it requires of departments and staff members rather than the specific changes it may produce.
III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROGRAM REVIEWS

Introduction

Contact institutions conduct program reviews for student affairs units and departments according to one of two models: 1) review all units or departments on a regular cycle; 2) review specific units or departments as needed.

Institutions employing the first model typically include some combination of unit self-study, internal and external review committees, and an action plan as part of the program review process. Of contact institutions, only Cornell University and Iowa State University conduct program reviews only as needed. Regardless of the model employed, contacts reiterate the importance of ensuring that the program review process remains focused on continuous improvement rather than punitive actions to prevent undermining the integrity of the process.

Overview of Systematic Program Review Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Program Review Cycle</th>
<th>Length of Individual Program Reviews</th>
<th>Program Reviews Conducted Per Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>8 to 9 years</td>
<td>12 months¹</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>6 to 9 months</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California-Los Angeles</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska-Lincoln</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 to 10 months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 to 6 months²</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech University</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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¹Initially each program review took eighteen months to complete. However, the new Vice President of Student Life condensed the timeline to twelve months in order to receive the final report at the beginning of the semester. Contacts admit this new schedule, which preserves all the original program review elements, is very challenging for some units to complete in a condensed timeframe.

²This schedule does not include time for implementation of recommendations, which contacts are still determining for the first review cycle.
### III. Institutional Models for Student Affairs Program Reviews

#### Model 1: Systematic Division-wide Program Review Processes

**Ohio State University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Step 1: Preparation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the summer, the Student Life Program Review Administrator hosts orientation meetings with staff in the unit scheduled for program review to answer questions about the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Director invites unit staff members to serve on the self-study team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Life Program Review Administrator and unit staff discuss potential members of internal and external review panels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President for Student Life, unit director, and Program Review Administrator finalize list of topics and standards of review.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Step 2: Self-Study Report</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit staff draft self-study report in the fall using agreed-upon unit topics and performance criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-study report is submitted to Student Life Program Review Administrator by December.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Step 3: Internal Review Panel</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Review Panel includes eight to nine members, none affiliated with Student Life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel conducts its review through the winter using self-study report as a model while pursuing their own questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel submits report to Program Review Administrator in late March.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Step 4: External Review Panel</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>External Review Panel includes up to three members from outside the university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel receives copies of self-study and internal review panel reports prior to site visit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel conducts a two- to three-day site visit, then submits a report within three to four weeks of visit to the Internal Panel and Program Review Administrator.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Step 5: Action Planning and Implementation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Panel drafts final report using external and self-study reports, submits it to the Vice President, Assistant Vice President who oversees reviewed unit, and unit staff by June to July.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At August staff retreat, units begin developing action plan from the final report recommendations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action plan is submitted to and approved by Vice President in late fall to accommodate budget process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Units report on progress through annual report process to Student Life administrators.</td>
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</table>
III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS
PROGRAM REVIEWS

Texas A&M University

Step 1: Preparation
- Department leadership selects self-study team.
- Self-study team undergoes three-hour training conducted by the Department of Student Life Studies.
- All department staff attend two six-hour workshops, involving issues related to assessment (e.g., the importance of self-study) and discussing many of the questions that self-study will address. These workshops produce about 50 percent of the content included in the final self-study report.

Step 2: Self-Study Report
- Self-study team assesses the department based on indicators aligned with Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards and Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Education Criteria for Performance Excellence.
- Self-study culminates in a written report.

Step 3: Peer Review Team
- Peer Review team includes five members.
- Peer review team conducts off-site review of department’s self-study report and an on-site visit across two or three days.
- Team compiles findings into peer review report and delivers report to department director within four weeks of site visit.

Step 4: Action Planning and Implementation
- Within two months of receiving peer review findings, self-study team merges self-study report and peer review report into an action plan. This plan will be used across the next five to seven years (until the next program review).
- Office of the Vice President reviews action plan progress six months after creation, and again every year until the next program review.
III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROGRAM REVIEWS

University of California-Los Angeles

Step 1: Preparation
- Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) requests the department director provide program review coordinator candidates. Coordinator manages all aspects of department’s program review process in collaboration with SAIRO.
- SAIRO staff host orientation sessions with department staff.
- Department director, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and the member of the Student Affairs Executive Management Group (EMG) overseeing that unit select performance criteria and questions for program review.
- Departments under review collect required data relevant to performance criteria.
- Department director, program review coordinator, Vice Chancellor, and appropriate EMG member identify self-study review and external review panel members.

Step 2: Self-Study Review Panel
- Self-study review panel includes five to eight members.
- The review panel drafts a report, using the agreed-upon questions and performance criteria as a framework.
- This report is submitted to Director of SAIRO, Vice Chancellor, EMG supervisor, and each member of the external review team.

Step 3: External Review Team
- External review team includes two to three members.
- External review team reviews self-study report and conducts a two or three day on-site visit.
- Within four to six weeks, the team submits its final report to the department director, director of SAIRO, Vice Chancellor, EMG supervisor, and self-study review panel.

Step 4: Action Planning and Implementation
- Departments use the self-study and external review reports to craft an action plan.
- Action plan is submitted to Vice Chancellor and EMG member overseeing that department for approval.
- Progress on action plan is presented in department’s annual budget and year-end reports.

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III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS
PROGRAM REVIEWS

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Step 1: Preparation
- Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs meets with unit scheduled to undergo review a semester or six months in advance to discuss potential on-site review committee members.
- All units use the CAS standards, if they exist, as performance criteria. Units without CAS standards might develop standards from a professional association.
- Units assemble internal documents including the unit’s budget and organizational chart four months to a year prior to the program review.

Step 2: Self-Study Document
- Unit staff members draft a self-study document relying on the unit’s performance criteria and internal documents.
- Self-study document is posted online through Blackboard at least two weeks prior to the on-site review committee’s visit.

Step 3: On-Site Review Committee
- On-Site review committee membership varies by unit though it always includes internal university representatives along with experts external to the institution.
- Review committee conducts a two to three day site visit and drafts a final report within thirty days of the visit, which is submitted to Vice Chancellor and Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

Step 4: Action Planning and Implementation
- Unit directors provide a written response to the report within six weeks of receiving it, outlining their thoughts on the recommendations and their plan for implementation; the report goes to Vice Chancellor.
- Units report on progress on an annual basis through the departmental profile, which includes a section for unit goals and recommendations.
Contacts at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill only recently conducted their first program review in student affairs and stress that the process is still evolving and may, for example, include external review committees for future units undergoing program review.

**Step 1: Preparation**
- Senior student affairs administrators collaborate with department leadership to select the standards and questions used for review.
- Department leaders also work with senior student affairs administrators to select members of the assessment committee.

**Step 2: Assessment Plan**
Units or departments undergoing program review develop an assessment plan; this plan includes necessary questions and standards of evaluation, and may include relevant data collected by unit staff regarding unit performance or basic characteristics (e.g., unit budget or organization chart).

**Step 3: Assessment Committee**
- The first assessment committee included four members who were internal to university but external to the department undergoing program review.
- The committee meets with various stakeholders, gathers data, and produces a report.
- The final report is submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and the Associate Vice Chancellor with reporting relationship to that department.

**Step 4: Action Planning and Implementation**
Contacts have not implemented changes from the inaugural program review; however, they envision discussions between the department director, Vice Chancellor, and supervising Associate Vice Chancellor about which recommendations to implement.
Virginia Tech University

Contacts at Virginia Tech University opted for a less complex program review process which excludes an external committee and tasks the internal self-review committee with leading the review.

**Step 1: Preparation**
Student affairs administrators work in consultation with the director of the unit undergoing program review to select members of the self-review committee.

**Step 2: Self-Review Committee**
- The self-review committee includes five to eight members.
- Committee members review department processes using a variety of assessment standards, such as CAS or internally-developed learning goals.
- Committee leaders compile and submit self-review reports to a student affairs executive committee.

**Step 3: Action Planning and Implementation**
- The student affairs executive committee receives and reviews the self-review reports.
- The Vice President for Student Affairs offers final approval and authorizes any additional resources needed to implement the committee’s recommendations.
III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PROGRAM REVIEWS

Model 2: As-needed Program Review Processes

Cornell University

Initially, administrators in the Division of Student and Academic Services at Cornell University envisioned a systematic program review of all units within the division; however, because of major structural changes to the division that involved reorganizing units, contacts have conducted program reviews of select units on an as-needed basis. For example, contacts oversaw a program review in Cornell Dining that was initiated by the new dining director. In addition to the program review process outlined below, units may also undergo a peer consultant review, which is a much shorter process that includes less data collection and focuses on a narrow aspect of a unit’s operations (such as convenience stores) rather than evaluating the entire unit.

**Step 1: Preparation**
- Unit staff members assemble an internal self-study committee composed of unit staff, faculty, and students.
- Unit directors discuss potential external review committee members with senior student and academic services administrators.
- Unit directors select assessment standards (e.g., CAS) in consultation with senior student and academic services administrators.

**Step 2: Internal Self-study Committee**
- Internal self-study committee membership varies by unit.
- The committee names a staff leader who coordinates both the internal and external review committees and contributes to drafting the final reports.
- The committee also creates work groups, teams of three to five staff members who collect relevant data.
- The staff lead authors the final committee report, which is submitted to senior administrators in the division and to the external review committee.

**Step 3: External Review Committee**
- External review committee membership varies by unit and includes experts at other institutions as well as private sector consultants.
- Committee members conduct two to three day site visits and draft a final report of their findings.

**Step 4: Action Planning and Implementation**
- The Vice President of Student and Academic Services receives the final internal and external reports.
- Reports may not contain formal recommendations; if they do, contacts form an implementation team to verify the reviewed units act upon them.

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III. INSTITUTIONAL MODELS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS
PROGRAM REVIEWS

Iowa State University

Contacts at Iowa State University admit their program review process is more informal than at other institutions, with units undergoing program review infrequently. The process does not necessarily include external teams or formal recommendations. The student affairs division conducts three primary forms of assessment: program reviews, assessment audits, and topical reviews.

Program Reviews

Program reviews include the formation of an internal review team composed of staff from the unit under review. The team selects the assessment standards and metrics, which are approved by the Vice President for Student Affairs. Some units may also include an external review team. Following the completion of its assessment, the review team authors a final report which may include recommendations and is submitted to the Vice President.

Assessment Audits

According to contacts, assessment audits occur with greater frequency and are more likely to include actionable recommendations and to result in unit changes than program reviews. Some student affairs units such as financial aid, the registrar’s office, or student health are audited on a regular basis. The Vice President for Student Affairs can also request an audit for a particular unit. If the auditors recommend an actionable item, the unit in question must reach an agreement with the auditors on next steps and a final date for implementation. The auditor must also sign off on this plan and the unit must provide written progress reports. For example, all staff in the registrar’s office are required to sign a confidentiality agreement at least once a year. Contacts report in the past staff would sign this agreement when they began their employment but often failed to sign agreements in subsequent years; the audit revealed this inconsistency and registrar staff begin signing the forms annually.

Topical Reviews

The institution’s Board of Regents may request topical reviews on a particular area of importance within a student affairs unit, such as privacy and access standards in the registrar’s office. As with the program reviews, these topical reviews require staff to conduct research and collect relevant data although they do not necessary require formal recommendations (as with the assessment audits). Student affairs staff author a final topical review report which is submitted to the Board of Regents.
Assessment Standards

CAS Standards

Student Affairs administrators tailor assessment standards to the unit under review either by using an existing assessment framework or developing their own indicators. The CAS Standards exist in forty-one functional areas of higher education and are the most commonly employed assessment tools for program reviews in student affairs; both the University of Nebraska and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill use them in their program review process where available. In the absence of CAS standards, contacts at both institutions create their own assessment standards based on professional association guidelines or discussions with experts. For example, Student Affairs Information Technology (IT) lacks CAS Standards. Contacts at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed internal assessment standards for the Student Affairs IT unit in collaboration with the larger university Information Technology office.

Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award Education Criteria for Performance Excellence

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Education Criteria for Performance Excellence are also popular assessment standards among program review organizers. Contacts at Ohio State University believe the Baldrige Criteria are more robust than the CAS Standards, offering an organizational performance excellence approach that is well-suited to the program review process. However, contacts frame the Baldrige questions using CAS standard categories of inquiry, as unit directors are often more familiar and comfortable with these categories. Texas A&M University’s program review process relies on a similar set of assessment indicators based on both the Baldrige Criteria and CAS standards.

Professional Accreditation Standards

Units or departments that undergo mandated professional accreditation processes, such as the student health center, may use this process to meet some or all of the assessment requirements of program review—as is the case at University of California-Los Angeles (which based its program review process, in part, on the Ohio State model). All contacts consult with department directors and staff about the assessment standards used for review and often add areas of inquiry unique to each unit’s needs.

“I view the CAS standards as just that—minimum standards, not aspiring to excellence.”

–Council Interview
IV. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS AND DATA COLLECTION

Methods of Data Collection

The data collected through each program review varies greatly, which contacts attribute to the diverse nature of student affairs units; common methods for data collection include surveys and self-study reports. Many departments are not regularly collecting data, a reality often uncovered through the initial program review process. Contacts report many units are now embracing accurate and consistent data collection, which is likely to greatly improve the efficacy of subsequent reviews.

All units at University of Nebraska-Lincoln conduct a survey prior to the program review process, which is offered to students, faculty and staff who interact with each unit. The type of survey depends on the unit: some may conduct a satisfaction survey, or a statistical survey around facilities usage. The university is now a member of StudentVoice, a private campus data collection firm, and contacts plan to use their services for subsequent program reviews. For their recent program review in Student Affairs IT, contacts at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill adapted a survey conducted by the university IT office, supplementing it with questions specific to student affairs, and offering it to every staff member in the student affairs division.

Typically staff members in the unit undergoing program review will gather documents and data relevant to the assessment standards, synthesizing the information into a self-study report which informs the later work of the internal and external review committees. These self-study reports may include budgetary information, organizational charts, learning outcomes or business outcomes data, past unit annual reports and a unit self-assessment based on the standards employed (such as the CAS standards). The self-study report requirements at Ohio State University, outlined below, are similar to those at University of California-Los Angeles and University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Required Self-study Documents at Ohio State University

- Mission, Vision, and Values documents
- Organization chart
- Strategic Plan
- Previous annual reports (from past three years)
- Previous budget reports (from past three years)
- Cost/revenue data (from past three years)
- Assessment results/reports including:
  - Customer service surveys
  - Benchmark data
  - Data that measures progress of performance goals
  - Student learning outcomes data
  - Business/service outcomes data
- Professional staff resumes
- Summary of staff contributions to the University’s academic enterprise and their respective professions
V. REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Internal Review Committees

Contacts report three models for internal review committee membership:

1) All committee members are external to the department under program review
2) Committee members include staff from the department under program review
3) Committee members include representatives from the university as well as members external to the institution.

1 Internal Review Committee Members are External to the Department under Program Review

Ohio State University

Membership: The internal review panel includes eight to nine members who must be university faculty, students, or staff; staff from the Student Life Division are not eligible to sit on an internal review panel. Contacts report that previous review panel members have become advocates for Student Life.

Responsibilities: The unit self-study report guides the work of the internal review panel, which may conduct interviews with staff or focus groups with customers of the unit under review. This work culminates in a ten- to fourteen-page internal review report. Following the completion of the external review committee’s work, the internal review panel composes the final report which includes recommendations for the unit. Contacts recommend allowing the internal review panel to author the final report since its members understand the peculiarities of the institution.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Membership: The assessment committee for Student Affairs IT included four individuals, though contacts explain this number may change for future units. Selected members were external to the unit under review but internal to the university and were recommended by the department director, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the university IT director.

Responsibilities: Members of the assessment committee review the unit’s assessment plan (self-study report) and meet with various stakeholders before authoring a final report.

2 Internal Review Committee Members include Staff from the Department under Program Review

University of California-Los Angeles

Membership: The self-study review panel (internal review committee) includes five to eight members who may be staff members from the unit under program review. Two panel members must be external to the unit but affiliated with the university (e.g., staff, faculty, or students). Contacts report including unit staff on the review panel allows staff members to begin reflecting on the unit’s work.

Responsibilities: The self-study review panel submits a final report to student affairs administrators. The external review panel submits a separate report.
V. REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Virginia Tech University

Membership: The self-review committee includes five to eight members, with the department director and other department staff serving alongside student and faculty representatives.

Responsibilities: Committee members review department processes according to assessment standards including CAS, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) accreditation criteria, and internally-developed learning goals. Following their assessment work, the committee authors a self-review report.

Internal Review Committee Members include Internal University Stakeholders and External Consultants

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Membership: The size of on-site review committees (internal review committee) varies by unit. Rather than creating separate internal and external review committees, contacts at University of Nebraska-Lincoln form one committee, the on-site review committee, which includes representatives from the institution along with external experts. According to contacts, this one-committee approach allows the external reviewer to better understand the campus culture through discussions with university students, faculty, and staff serving on the committee.

Responsibilities: The on-site review committee reviews the unit self-study document and conducts a two to three day on-campus site visit, which culminates in a final report.

Texas A&M University

Membership: The peer review team (internal review committee) includes university students and personnel along with external experts. Typically the team is led by a national or regional expert in the topic area selected by the vice president of student affairs, and includes one undergraduate student, one graduate student, one faculty member, and one director of another student affairs department.

Responsibilities: The peer review team reviews the unit self-study report and conducts two to three day site visits before authoring a peer review report. Unit staff merge the peer review report and self-study report into an action plan.
External Review Committees

Student affairs administrators convene external review committees composed of experts unaffiliated with the institution who review internal documents (e.g., self-study or internal review committee reports), conduct site visits, and compose final reports. Institutions incorporate external review committees into program reviews with varying frequency: for all program reviews, some program reviews, or not at all. Texas A&M University and University of Nebraska-Lincoln use a blended review committee model with internal university personnel serving with external experts on one combined committee.

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<td>Ohio State University, University of California-Los Angeles</td>
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<td>The external review committees at Ohio State University and University of California-Los Angeles include two to three external consultants who are experts in the functional area undergoing program review. In addition to an external consultant’s expertise, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at University of California-Los Angeles prefers to include members who are creative thinkers and members of the University of California system and thus familiar with the current system-wide budget constraints. Committee members at both institutions review the relevant unit documentation off-site prior to conducting site visits. The committee at University of California-Los Angeles authors its own separate final report which is sent to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs along with the internal self-study report. At Ohio State University, the external review committee authors one report but the internal review committee writes the final report, incorporating the external report’s insights and including the full external report as an addendum.</td>
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<td>For the initial program review, contacts at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill did not use an external review committee but anticipate employing them for future reviews. Similarly, administrators at Cornell University and Iowa State University convene external review committees for certain program reviews. Contacts at Cornell University directly supervised past program reviews for the Community Development, Dining, and Program House units, all of which employed external review committees with between two to five members. The external review committees review unit documents, conduct site visits, and author final reports.</td>
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<th>Institutions Never Employing an External Review Committee</th>
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<td><strong>Never Employ an External Review Committee</strong></td>
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<td>Virginia Tech University</td>
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<td>Student Affairs administrators at Virginia Tech University never use an external review committee; contacts designed a simpler, more streamlined process that is largely driven by the internal self-review committees.</td>
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Ohio State University and University of California-Los Angeles designate student affairs staff members to oversee the program review process. The Student Life Program Review Administrator at Ohio State is a former Assistant Vice President with Student Life who was brought out of retirement with a twenty-five percent appointment to develop and manage the process. She directly oversees two program reviews a year, which includes helping to select the review committees; another fulltime staff member in student life devotes twenty-five percent of his time to managing the third program review. Rather than assigning administrators to oversee all program reviews, contacts at the University of California-Los Angeles require each unit to select a program review coordinator from their staff who performs a similar function to the Program Review Administrator. According to contacts this method allows units to retain ownership of the process, which may allow for better self-reflection among unit staff.
VI. EVALUATING THE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

Methods for Evaluating the Program Review Process

Contact institutions evaluate the program review process through surveys and exit interviews with review panel members. Many contacts also report holding informal conversations with staff from the departments under program review and with review committee members; participants in the program review process generally describe the exercise as a time consuming yet worthwhile experience.

Contacts in the Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) at University of California-Los Angeles survey self-study and external review panel participants for feedback about the program review process. For example, external review members suggested including times during the site visit for meals and holding a conference call between external review panel and self-study members in advance of the on site visit. Student affairs administrators at Texas A&M University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offer review committee members a similar survey.

The on-site review committee holds a brief exit interview with the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at University of Nebraska-Lincoln to discuss their findings and reflections on the program review process. The Director of Student Life Studies at Texas A&M University also interviews the peer review team before they depart campus, asking them about the quality of the self-study report and the program review process.

Positive Changes Resulting from the Program Review Process

Contacts offer several promising improvements as a result of program reviews; ss several contacts note, the greatest benefit from the program review process may be the self-reflection it requires of departments and units.

- **Secure additional funding for case management system:** At Ohio State University the process helped the Judicial Affairs unit secure additional funding to develop a case management system that linked to Residence Halls and University Crisis Management cases, which enables administrators to better track the behavior of certain students.

- **Constructing new facilities:** One suggestion from the program review process for Campus Recreation at University of Nebraska-Lincoln culminated in a successful student referendum for the construction of two new recreation facilities.

- **Providing accommodations for students with disabilities:** The program review for Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at University of Nebraska-Lincoln revealed a lack of private accommodations available to students with disabilities for testing, which was subsequently rectified.

- **Incorporating learning outcomes:** The recreation department at University of California-Los Angeles better understood and began using learning outcomes because of the program review process.

“For me, [program review] is more about the process than the end product. It forces departments and department heads to self-reflect on their program.”

–Council Interview
Conducting Comprehensive Student Affairs Program Reviews at Large Research Institutions

Networking Contacts • June 14, 2011

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