

Program Review at CWU

2002-2007

Overview

Program review is mandated by several agencies including the Higher Education Coordinating Board, as a part of Standard Two “Educational Program and Its Effectiveness” for the Commission on Colleges, and in the program goals established by Central Washington University’s Board of Trustees.

In the “Guidelines for Program Planning, Approval, and Review” the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) has established the following policy:

On a biennial basis, beginning January 1, 2001, institutions shall submit Program Review Reports on programs reviewed in the previous biennium. In addition, institutions shall submit an inventory of programs scheduled for review in the upcoming biennium.

The institution is responsible for determining the appropriate process and criteria for program review. Similar programs offered by a single academic unit (e.g., department) may be reviewed at the same time and incorporated into one program review. However, when an existing program has spawned a new site or a new distance learning modality since its last institutional review, the new site or delivery mode will receive a separate focus within the single program review.

Each continuing program will be reviewed on a cycle (for example, every 5, 7, or 10 years) adopted by the institution. After the internal program review has been completed, a Program Review Summary Report will be submitted to the HECB. The Report will be reviewed by HECB staff. At its discretion, the HECB may request a copy of the complete program review document.

Based on the information provided in the Program Review Summary Report and/or additional information provided by the institution, staff will determine whether there is reason for the HECB to consider making a recommendation to modify, consolidate, or eliminate the program. On a biennial basis, staff will report to the HECB on program reviews conducted during the previous biennium, (January 2001, p. 10 – 11).

The Commission on Colleges in its Standard 2.B states, “Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which program prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution” (p. 28). Specifically in 2.B.1, “The institution’s

processes for assessing its educational programs are clearly defined, encompass all of its offerings, are conducted on a regular basis, and are integrated into the overall planning and evaluation plan” (Accreditation Handbook, 1999, p. 29).

The Board of Trustees is also interested in program review. In 1999, they passed Resolution 99-03 calling for program review. In fall 2001, they developed Goal# 6 for the academic year 2001-2002 that calls for the “Development of a functional academic program review protocol.”

Since November 2001, the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies has been working with the Provost, the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies, and the Deans from the Colleges of Science, Business, Arts and Humanities and Education and Professional Studies, to discuss and develop the contents of a self-study for departmental program review. Based upon these discussions, the decision was made to implement a pilot program review in order to assess and evaluate the procedures and contents of the self-study. It was felt that as an institution we needed to begin the process of program review as soon as possible knowing that not all of the issues have been fully addressed. A major expectation from the pilot was to broaden the discussion about the role, function, and administration of program review. Each dean was asked to select one department from her/his college to serve as the representative from that college for the purposes of the pilot program review. It was also decided that for the purposes of the pilot program review, a program would be defined as the department rather than as the individual programs housed within departments or units.

Based upon the results of the pilot, adjustments were made to refine the contents of the self-study document, process and procedures. Having completed the pilot and evaluation, a regular rotating schedule has been developed to standardize the timing of the program review for each department. It is expected that every department will have some form of review every five years.

Goals

Three goals for the process and product of program review have been defined:

- A process that is elegant, well organized, clearly structured and parsimonious.
- Self-study contents that engenders thoughtful, worthwhile results.
- An artifact that represents the best of each program, its faculty and students.

Purposes

The purposes of program review are to provide useful information that can assist in decision-making, continuous improvement, and meet academic expectations for accreditation standards.