

California State University, Stanislaus
An Evaluation of the Academic Program Review Process

The Academic Program Review (APR) process at CSU Stanislaus is the most important method by which the university evaluates the effectiveness of its academic programs. In 2000, a review of the APR process was initiated, primarily as a result of the increased emphasis on the demonstration of the quality of student learning, a general dissatisfaction with a burdensome process and timeline, and the perceived inconsistent use of outcomes at the college and university levels.

The Chancellor Office requirements changed to focus on assessment for program enhancement for student learning. For every program completing the academic review process in a given year a summary including the results of the assessment of student learning outcomes, the implications of the results for modification of program requirements, standards, and the changes made as a result of the assessment findings, is included in the annual academic Planning and Program Review reports.

Academic Program Reviews are also a critical component of the university's assessment and quality assurance processes, and a review of the Academic Program Review process is a stated outcome for CSU Stanislaus' reaccreditation efforts as part of its Capacity and Preparatory Review.

Under the guidance of the University Educational Policy Committee (UEPC), the Academic Program Review procedures are viewed as a dynamic, subject to continual examination and refinement, and a process that implements the APR policy in accordance with the university's *Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning*. As such, UEPC continues to evaluate the procedures and makes appropriate changes.

Chronology for the Review of APR

A summary of key actions related to the review of the Academic Program Review process follows:

2000/01

The Provost formed a committee to evaluate the 1996 Academic Program Review Process and to recommend a new pilot APR process. Membership includes administration and faculty governance members.

2001/02 and 2002/03

The APR pilot process was implemented.

2003/04

As a result of the pilot process, revisions were made to the 1996 APR process and are reflected in the new 2005 APR.

2004/05 through 2006/07

The new APR process was approved and initiated for programs undergoing 2004/05 review and thereafter.

2007/08

An assessment of the 2005 Academic Program Review process was initiated as part of the university's reaccreditation self study and in consultation with the University Educational Policies Committee.

External reviewer Dr. Mary Allen evaluated the Academic program review process as part of her review of university-wide assessment.

*Summary of Changes Made to the 1996 Academic Program Review Process
As Reflected in the 2005 Academic Program Review Process*

The following is a summary of changes, guided by campus values, which are reflected in the 2005 academic program review process:

Streamlined Process/Greater Depth

1. A review cycle of 7 years rather than 5 years.
2. Reduction of the number of review criteria with greater focus on commitment to student learning, faculty expertise, and future program planning and action.

Student Learning

3. Centrality of the establishment and evaluation of programmatic student learning goals.
4. Greater reliance on data and assessment of student learning goals.
5. Addition of a "curriculum matrix" that displays student learning goals addressed in each course and other related information (e.g., assessment methods).

College Accountability

6. Greater decentralization for review by the faculty in the colleges rather than university level, including streamlining the process by eliminating the Academic Program Review Subcommittee of the University Educational Policies Committee.
7. Strengthening the role of the dean in ensuring departmental follow-up and accountability for program quality.
8. Meetings by provost with dean, department chair, and program faculty to affirm implementation plan based on APR.
9. Greater linkage between APR, program planning, strategic planning, and budgetary decisions.
10. Greater integration between undergraduate and graduate programs, with option of integrated documents for undergraduate and graduate.

External Review of Quality

11. Incorporation of accreditation review procedures into APR.
12. Opportunity for external program review during period of self-study.
13. Greater clarity of APR for interdisciplinary programs.

Improved Infrastructure

14. Better centralized institutional research support to departments in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
15. Accountability for the implementation of the APR process shifted back to the vice provost.

DRAFT PROPOSAL

Assessment of the 2005 Academic Program Review Process

Methods

An assessment of the 2005 Academic Program Review process will include the following methods:

External Review – Fall 2007

An external review of the Academic Program Review process was conducted by Dr. Mary Allen. Recommendations resulting from this review will be incorporated into the findings.

Interviews – Fall 2008

Structured interviews will be conducted with department chairs, college deans, and provost for those programs that completed the new 2005 APR. The purpose of these interviews is to evaluate their experiences with the APR process and to secure their recommendations for improvement. (Criminal Justice, Gender Studies, Physics/Physical Sciences, and Political Science)

Components for Interviews

1. Review Criteria, especially Student Learning
2. Institutional Research Data
3. Implementation Plan
4. Timeline
5. Department/College Review
6. Meetings with Dean and Provost
7. Overall effectiveness of APR
8. Other Criteria Identified by the Participants
9. Recommendations for Improving APR
10. WASC Rubric

Engagement Pilot - 2008/09

As part of the case study, programs undergoing APR in 2008/09 will be invited to add an "engagement" criterion under the section on "Commitment to Student Learning" in which programs describe departmental efforts/accomplishments to promote student engagement in learning. They will also be asked to indicate their views for adding student engagement as a permanent criterion. Academic departments undergoing APR in 2008/09 include Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Cognitive Studies, Economics, English, and Spanish.

Components for Engagement Pilot

1. Review Criteria, especially Student Learning
2. Engagement as a Pilot Criterion
3. Internal/External Review Components
4. Institutional Research Data
5. Implementation Plan
6. Timeline
7. Department/College Review
8. Meetings with Dean and Provost
9. Overall effectiveness of APR
10. Other Criteria Identified by the Participants
11. Recommendations for Improving APR

Alignment – Spring 2009

University governance groups will be asked to assess the degree to which the university has integrated student learning assessment into its formal academic program review processes.

Department Chairs, deans, the Assessment of Student Learning Subcommittee, the Assessment Council, and the Assessment Leadership Team will be requested to use the *Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning into Program Reviews* (Dr. Mary Allen, October 2007), a rubric that provides guidance for assessing the degree to which the university has integrated student learning assessment into its formal academic program review processes.

Case Study - 2009/10

As a result of deliberations resulting from Reaccreditation Inquiry Circle 1, CSU will employ a case study as one method for evaluating the effectiveness of the APR. This methodology was adapted from the case study method as described in University of California, Berkeley's *Educational Effectiveness Analytical Essay for Improving Academic Program Review* (2002). Academic departments undergoing APR in 2009/10 cycle will be invited to participate in the case study (Agricultural Studies, Art, Child Development, Computer Science, Geography, History, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Sociology).

Components for Case Study

1. Review Criteria, especially Student Learning
2. Engagement as a Pilot Criterion
3. Internal/External Review Components
4. Institutional Research Data
5. Implementation Plan
6. Timeline
7. Department/College Review
8. Meetings with Dean and Provost
9. Overall effectiveness of APR
10. Other Criteria Identified by the Participants
11. Recommendations for Improving APR

Use of Results

The results of this assessment of the Academic Program Review process will be a list of recommendations for improving the APR for consideration by the UEPC Subcommittee for the Assessment of Student Learning, the Assessment Council, and the Assessment Leadership Team. Actions, as appropriate, will be taken by the University Educational Policies Committee.

Attachments:

1. Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning Assessment into Program Reviews
2. Student Engagement in Academic Program Review

Recommendations to Date

April 2008

Various groups or individuals (indicated in parentheses) have made the following recommendations for improving the current Academic Program Review procedures. These recommendations will be reviewed by the University Educational Policies Committee and the Graduate Council.

1. *Implementation Plan*. The submission of the *Implementation Plan* after meeting with provost has not occurred under the transition to new colleges/deans. Oversight of APR and ensuring complete cycle is imperative. (Staff) *Remediation underway as of 10/30/07*
2. *Faculty Position Allocations*. The use of APR as a key variable in deans' decisions for faculty position allocation/budget. (Department Chair)
3. *Assessment Report*. Require program assessment reports as part of the APR process. (Program Assessment Coordinators; Dr. Mary Allen, Consultant)
4. *Student Engagement*. Add criterion for student engagement under the section on "Commitment to Student Learning" in which programs describe department efforts to promote student engagement in learning. (Reaccreditation Inquiry Circle 1)
5. *Executive Summary*. For graduate programs (master's), require a 1-2 page executive summary indicating priority actions in the Implementation Plan. (Graduate Council)
6. *IDEA Departmental Reports*. Include IDEA aggregate departmental reports as part of the APR Data Information. (Faculty, APR Workshop/Department Chair)
7. *External Reviewer*. Include a requirement for review of the program by an off-campus disciplinary expert(s). Clarify procedures for departments/colleges' hiring of external reviewers and the expectations for the conduct of their work. (Council of Deans, Department Chairs).
8. *Assessment Processes and Reporting*. Work towards greater alignment of the Academic Program Review and the Student Learning Assessment processes and reporting. (Dr. Mary Allen, Consultant)
9. *External Reviewers*. Greater use of external reviewers, with disciplinary and assessment expertise, in the Academic Program Review process. (Dr. Mary Allen, Consultant)
10. *College Committees*. Increased understanding of assessment for College committees that provide feedback on Academic Program Reviews. (Dr. Mary Allen, Consultant)