

## Appendix A: Program Review History, Purpose and Design

### PLNU History of Program Review

Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) introduced the first formal Program Review process in 1990. The first Program Review Guidelines were released in the 1992-1993 academic year laying out the requirements for a successful Program Review. This initial phase of outlining a formal Program Review process was used by Academic Units to guide them through the initial assessment of the academic programs. According to Dr. Ruth Heinrichs, PLNU's first Director for Institutional Effectiveness, "In 1994, program reviews became an integral part of assessment at PLNU when the academic deans and chairpersons approved a formal plan for program review. An ad hoc committee was formed to develop assessment strategies."

In PLNU's Capacity Preparedness Review (CPR) of October 2006, it was noted that, "In 1994, Dr. David Strawn, Dean of Liberal Arts, developed a 5-year program review system after substantial research of post-tenure review processes and program improvement systems at other schools in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Subsequently, no academic department could submit curricular changes without completing a well-researched, evidence-based program review that grounded their curricular recommendations. All PLNU academic departments have now completed at least one cycle of program review and most have completed two cycles. For many departments, program review resulted in substantial program improvement or development. The Department of Business, for example, sought and achieved professional program accreditation from the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in 2000, based on its 1995-1996 program review. Several other similar professional accreditations were later sought and achieved through the program review process, including Athletic Training (2003), Music (2003) and Dietetics (2005)."

"An ad hoc Assessment Committee was created in 1994 and Dr. David Strawn was named chair. The committee agreed upon a definition of assessment, started an inventory and joined the CCCU/FIPSI project. In preparation for the 1996 WASC visit, the ad hoc Assessment Committee prepared a report entitled, "Assessment at Point Loma Nazarene College," which contained an assessment plan, expected uses of assessment data, an assessment inventory and resulting changes, assessment instruments in use, and future directions."

"The 1996 WASC reviewers' report commended the college for these efforts but found assessment to be at an "embryonic stage" and said the process would require "monitoring and energy to move it forward." While the University had made a start, it still needed a systematic analysis of data, an

integration of data into the overall assessment of the institution, and the use of this data to inform decision-making and strategic planning. In addition, data needed to focus on student learning outcomes rather than exclusively on quality of input measures.”

<http://wasc.pointloma.edu/Content/Accreditation/InstitutionalPortfolio/cpr/CPRGroup6.htm>

A PLNU Program Review schedule, called Department/Program Review Cycle 1 (Cycle 1), with a modified review conducted five years later called Department/Program Review Cycle 2 (Cycle 2), was developed with the expectation that each academic department would complete a full program review every ten years. According to Dr. Heinrichs, “Four departments at PLNU were the first to conduct Cycle 1 reviews beginning in 1995-1996: Biology, Business, Chemistry, and History/Political Science. The final department completed its Cycle 1 review in 2001-2002. No departmental curricular or program changes could be made until Cycle 1 reviews were completed. The Cycle 1 PLNU Department/Program Review model provided specific content and directives for the academic departments.”

As reported in the University’s Educational Effectiveness Review, October 3-5, 2007, the Cycle 2 model was introduced in 2001

<http://wasc.pointloma.edu/Content/Accreditation/InstitutionalPortfolio/eer/GroupThree-ProgramReview.htm>). This model was a modified departmental program review designed to assess the current status of each department, evaluate curricular trends, identify strengths and weaknesses and set a clear direction for the future. In some cases, Cycle 2 program reviews were used to “fine tune” changes made after Cycle 1. In other programs, significant changes were made following Cycle 2 reviews. In the interim, departments/schools had also engaged in more informal assessment strategies. By 2002 these strategies were formalized using the Nichols Assessment Model (James O. Nichols, *A Practitioner’s Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation*, Agathon Press: New York, 1995).

The Nichols Assessment Model as presented in *A Practitioner’s Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation*, by James O. Nichols (1995), is available through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and can provide helpful guidance to the program faculty as they consider the possible approaches to better assess their Learning Outcomes. The Nichols book also provides the faculty excellent tools for evaluating program alignment with the University mission, core values and learning outcomes. It is recommended that each Academic Unit obtain a copy of this resource as well as with WASC endorsed book *Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review*, by Marilee J. Bresciani (2006). Both of these texts serve as valuable resources during your review cycle.

In the fall of 2010, the PLNU faculty determined that a permanent faculty committee, the Program Review Committee, should be formed to support the Academic Units, to oversee the review process, and to provide recommendations on their findings to the Provost. The faculty selected the first members of the committee along with a general description of their charter. The Program Review Committee initially met in spring 2011, with the purpose of updating and Program Review process and

guidelines. The Program Review Guidelines document and the Program Review Self Study Template are the products of the Committee's actions.

### **Purpose of Program Review**

PLNU seeks to be a collaborative learning community where the faculty manage and share responsibility for both the program review process and the quality of the academic programs. Program Review is designed to engage faculty periodically in enhancing each Academic Unit's (1) academic excellence, (2) student learning, (3) continuous improvement, (4) alignment with the Institution mission, core values, learning outcomes, and strategic planning, (5) development of appropriate resources, and (6) design of an action plan for future program improvements.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) define Program Review as follows: "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," (WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review, September 2009, p. 3).

Program review is built on the annual assessment process which includes a systematic, periodic, collection, analysis and interpretation of data to lead to a continuous program improvement of the quality of a department and/or program. It is the stakeholders' effort to arrive at an objective statement as to how the department or program contributes to the fulfillment of the university mission, how it fits with similar programs in the academic community, and what are the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats. The program review is the formal process by which Academic Units link program assessment with the allocation of University resources and strategic plans.

In the area of strategic planning and resource allocation the University decided in 2011 to adopt the Dickeson model for the prioritization of academic programs and services as outlined in Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: reallocating resources to achieve strategic balance, Jossey Bass, 2010. The program review documents incorporate the Dickeson prioritization criteria. By aligning the Program Review process with the strategic planning and resource allocation processes the program review then provides important data and analysis for these functions as well as faculty input. The Dickeson model includes the following prioritization criteria:

## DICKESON, PRIORITIZING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Criteria 1: History, development, and expectations of the program

Criteria 2: External demand for the program

Criteria 3: Internal demand for the program

Criteria 4: Quality of program inputs and processes

Criteria 5: Quality of program outcomes

Criteria 6: Size, scope, and productivity of the program

Criteria 7: revenue and other resources generated by the program

Criteria 8: Costs and other expenses associate with the program

Criteria 9: Impact, justification, and overall essentiality of the program

Criteria 10: Opportunity analysis of the program



The action of gathering evidence; analyzing data; aligning the program with Institutional mission, core values, and learning outcomes; enhancing educational effectiveness; creating an action plan and communicating these through a successful program review process informs the University strategic planning processes and Institutional resource allocation. The program review components provide the foundation for effective growth and program innovation. New resources such as faculty positions, staff increases, technology improvements, budget increases, space allocations, and facility

upgrades are based on a successful program review that supports the University strategic planning initiatives.

**PROGRAM REVIEW MODEL DISTINGUISHING FEATURES**  
WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review,  
(September 2009, p. 5)

- **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 (cf., WASC Evidence Guide). 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 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 assess achievement of these outcomes; and analysis and reflection on learning results, retention/ graduation rates and other outcomes data (qualitative as well as quantitative) over a multiple-year period.

- **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.

A program review is a means of measuring quality through the collection of evidence and benchmarking with best practices and comparable programs in the discipline. The analysis of this information presents the opportunity to reach conclusions about overall quality and recommendations for improvement. A systematic program review validates meaningful and successful programs and provides information for future directions of the institution.

According to WASC, improvements from the program review process should include some of the following (WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review, September 2009, p. 3-4):

- 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 students 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
- Developing specific action plans for modification and improvement
- Informing decision making, planning and budgeting, including resources re/allocation
- Linking and, as appropriate, aggregating program review results to the institution's broader quality assurance/improvement efforts

An academic program is a defined set of courses and other requirements which students must successfully complete to obtain a specific degree, credential or certificate, as indicated in the University undergraduate and graduate catalogs. An Academic Unit is used here to refer to an academic department (e.g., Music) or school (e.g., School of Education). An academic center (e.g., Center for International Development) is a supporting function housed in an Academic Unit with a faculty director and an academic support purpose and mission. The Academic Unit with more than one program and/or center may choose to conduct a program review of all of the programs and centers housed in the Academic Unit in a single program review cycle or may elect to stagger the program reviews over more years. The assumption made here is that the Academic Unit conducts a program review of all programs and centers simultaneously. The chair or dean of the Academic Unit should notify the provost if it is the faculty's desire to conduct the program reviews for each program sequentially and over multiple Program Review cycles.

## **MOST COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PROGRAM REVIEW**

### **Misconception 1: Program Review is used to evaluate faculty performance.**

No. The Program Review is designed to assess, evaluate, redesign, and improve the academic program, not the faculty. Faculty awareness, participation, engagement, and ownership are essential for a successful Program Review and is not be used to judge or evaluate individual faculty performance.

### **Misconception 2: Our program is excellent, our students are learning, and we do not need to bother with a Program Review.**

Wrong. The primary purpose of a program review is continuous improvement of the quality of the educational program learning outcomes and student experience. Even if the faculty believes the quality is already excellent, there is always room for improvement. The Program Review is designed to inform the faculty, based on years of evidence and external review, about those areas that can be improved or strengthened.

### **Misconception 3: The Chair/Dean assigns one single faculty member to conduct the Program Review in order to expedite the process and avoid conflict.**

No. Program Review is only effective when it is a collaborative effort based on the evidence, reflection, synthesis, and analysis of all of the Academic Unit faculty and staff. Each person brings a different perspective and skill set to the table that contributes to the improvement of the program(s). Without everyone's involvement it is difficult to receive "buy-in" and ownership of the action plan for improvement.

### **Misconception 4: Assessment is a waste of time and does not benefit the students.**

Wrong. Assessment is the process by which the Academic Unit (1) identifies the important learning outcomes, (2) aligns the program to the Institutional mission and outcomes, (3) identifies best practices in the discipline, and (4) the university links future resource planning to program improvements. Anything that enhances and improves the student learning outcomes is an immense value to the student, the Academic Unit, and University.

### **Misconception 5: Program Review sounds like a great idea but it is too time consuming, costly and complex.**

Program Review is designed to build on the Academic Unit's annual assessment plans. The Program Review is a shared responsibility of all the Academic Unit personnel aided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Program Review Committee. A successful Program Review engages the faculty, staff, students and alumni, and is well worth the individual contributions made by each member of the team.

## **External Regional Accreditation, Specialized Accreditation and Institutional Program Review**

The program review, while not the same as accreditation, is designed to align the program review process with the information to support the University's accreditation objectives. Program review is the evaluation of a single Academic Unit or program and is used internally to assess the effectiveness and quality of the programs in achieving student learning outcomes. Internal assessment processes, including the program review, build the foundation of evidence for external accreditation, including regional accreditation (WASC) and specialized accreditation.

WASC defines specialized accreditation as reviews conducted, "...by outside agencies which certify the professional quality of particular programs. Specialized accreditors evaluate whether or not a program meets the standards set by the disciplinary or professional body or a State licensing agency. Examples of this type of accrediting body include the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the American Bar Association (ABA), the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing (CCTC)," (*WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review*, September 2009, p. 4).

WASC regional accreditation is a review of the whole University and "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. WASC 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" (*WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review*, September 2009, p. 4).

WASC accreditation is based on four standards (listed on following page). These WASC standards then form the basis of the three stages of the accreditation cycle: Institutional Proposal, Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR), and Educational Effectiveness Review (EER). Each of the four standards is further supported by underlying Criteria for Review (CFR) used by peer evaluators to identify those key components required for an effective assessment structure within a university. A university undergoing a WASC accreditation review is required to demonstrate the strength of the embedded assessment processes including appropriate requirements for annual assessment planning and the program review cycle. During this time the WASC review team conducts an in-depth examination of recent program review self-studies and review processes. WASC primarily focuses on those Academic Units that do not adhere to external specialized accreditation. Therefore it is assumed that most program review documents and processes are scrutinized by internal committees and constituents with external accreditation agencies including, either regional (WASC) or specialized accreditation agencies (e.g. NCATE, CCTC, ACBSP, CBRN, CCNE, NASM, etc.).

## WASC Core Commitments and Standards

### Standard 1

- Defining Institutional purposes and ensuring Educational Objectives

### Standard 2

- Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

### Standard 3

- Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

### Standard 4

- Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

**Source: WASC Handbook of Accreditation, July 2008, p. 7.**

A program review is intended to be simple, informative, and a meaningful process based on continuous improvement and flexible enough to adjust to the Academic Unit's unique needs. Program review is a collaborative process involving all of the program stakeholders: students, faculty, staff, community members, school and university administrators, and external specialists in the discipline. It increases the sense of shared purpose among the many diverse academic and co-curricular programs and reinforces the need for coordinated planning for the future by all university units. The involvement of faculty from Academic Units outside the one being reviewed promotes university-wide understanding of the contributions of each unit to the mission of the institution. The involvement of community members who have an interest in the program emphasizes the importance of PLNU's connections with the community it serves, furthers community understanding of the program and of PLNU, and promotes civic engagement.

In addition to the University's regional accreditation (WASC) and internal program review process, some academic programs adhere to specialized accreditation standards that certify the professional standards and quality of the program. For example, the School of Education is required by the State of California to be accredited by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) and meet these Standards for credentialing programs. The Program Review Committee works with the Academic Units in coordinating the timing of the internal program review cycle and specialized accreditation reviews.

**WASC Criteria for Review (CFR), in direct support of outcome-based and evidence-based program review:**

- The institution's student learning outcomes and expectations for student attainment are clearly stated at the course, program and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and expectations are reflected in academic programs and policies, curriculum, advisement, library and information resources, and the wider learning environment (CFR 2.3).
- The institution's expectations for learning and student attainment are developed and widely shared among its members, including faculty, students, staff, and where appropriate, external stakeholders. The institution's faculty takes collective responsibility for establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating the attainment of these expectations (CFR 2.4).
- The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, challenge them to meet high expectations, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved (CFR 2.5).
- The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated levels of attainment and ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work (CFR 2.6).
- All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes analyses of the achievement of the program's learning objectives and outcomes, program retention and completion, and where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations (CFR 2.7).
- Planning processes at the institution define and, to the extent possible, align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological needs with the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution (CFR 4.2).
- Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness (CFR 4.3).
- The institution employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes at each level of institutional functioning, including periodic program review. These processes include assessing effectiveness, tracking results over time, using comparative data from external sources, and improving structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy (CFR 4.4).
- Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation and assessment used throughout the institution. The faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and uses the results for improvement. Assessments of the campus environment in support of academic and co-curricular objectives are also undertaken and used, and are incorporated into institutional planning (CFR 4.6).
- The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, as well as into the conditions and practices that promote the kinds and levels of learning intended by the institution. The outcomes of such inquiries are applied to the design of curriculum, the design and practice of pedagogy, and the improvement of evaluation means and methodology (CFR 4.7).
- Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, and others defined by the institution, are involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs (CFR 4.8).

*The number following each CFR represents which of the four WASC standards and criteria is supported by the measurement.*

Those Academic Units that have recently received specialized accreditation or reaccreditation are asked to work with the Program Review Committee to identify ways to streamline the Program Review process. For example, if the specialized accreditation requires an external visit, this same external team report may be used for Program Review. In addition, some of the Academic Units may find that similar issues have been addressed in the specialized accreditation Self Study Report and that the Program Review can make use of that previous work to respond to those Program Review issues.

