

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Central Arizona College

Project Details		
Title	Academic Program Review	Status REVIEWED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated 09-14-2010
Timeline		Reviewed 10-08-2010
Planned Project Kickoff	01-01-2005	Created 11-24-2009
Target Completion	10-31-2010	Version 3 of 3

1: Project Goal

A: Develop and implement a program review process that is clear and consistent, providing the institution with information to improve educational programs.

2: Reasons For Project

A: As an AQIP institution, CAC is constantly reviewing processes for effectiveness. Recent program reviews have identified gaps and inconsistencies in the process. Providing quality academic programs is a high priority for CAC. It was determined the program review process should be reviewed and revised appropriately.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Academic Divisions and Programs, Advising and Career Services

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Program Review, Curriculum Process.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The Program Review process is typically initiated in the Fall semester. The new process should be in place prior to the start of the next cycle.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The Program Review Committee is a standing committee at CAC. Minutes are published on the district shared drive for all to review. Currently, the VP of Academic Programs and Services owns the program review process. Regular reports regarding the status of the project are submitted to him. This information is then shared with the College President and other College Cabinet members.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Central Arizona College delivers quality programs. Program leaders understand the program review process, requirements and expectations. Program review is a credible process. Program review is a learning experience resulting in program improvements.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The Academic Program Review (APR) Committee consists of district-wide members to include representatives from each of the college's constituency groups. Academic year 2009-2010 marked the second year the college has reviewed academic program using the self-study instruments developed during the summer of 2008. This year was the first year that annual reviews were done using the instrument. The process was nearly identical to 2008-2009. Programs undergoing comprehensive review, submitted a preliminary self-study and upon receiving feedback from the review committee were given time to make adjustments and improvements before submitting their final version. Annual reviews for all other programs were submitted to academic Deans and placed on CAC's shared drive for recordkeeping and accessibility to staff.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The members of the Academic Program Review Committee are selected to represent the sites and/or campuses across the college's entire district and all employee levels (administration, faculty, managerial/technical, and support staff) are represented on the committee. A committee members' role is to represent and communicate the interests of their college site, area/unit/department, and employee group. In addition, members are expected to report the committee's work to each of these groups and, in return, provide feedback to the committee from these groups. Work is documented in meeting minutes, shared with academic programs, during Faculty Senate meetings, and reported and available online via committee meeting minutes, emails announcements, with division reports and presentations available via the college's shared drive.

3: Next Steps

A: The current self-study instruments will again be used for both comprehensive and annual program reviews for 2010-11. This committee is awaiting membership appointments and once it meets will discuss incorporating the reviewer's suggestion of including "a manageable number of action items (as outcomes) for each program to focus on in the following year".

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Effective practices that have been reinforced this past year include the close mentoring relationship between the Academic Program Review Subcommittee and the program undergoing review, increasing the multiple modes of communication to ensure all stakeholders received consistent information regarding the project's current status, and annual evaluation of this process. In addition, this process is serving as a model for revitalizing efforts to develop a process for reviewing CAC's support services and programs, such as facilities, student services, and finance.

5: Project Challenges

A: The chair of the Academic Program Review Committee expressed several challenges and recommendations to the retiring Vice President of Instruction. With a solid self-study instrument and process in place, the large and "traditional" committee format of 20 or so members does not need to meet on any type of regular basis, due to the "real" work being completed by mentored subcommittees. The make-up of these subcommittees is essential to the success of the CAC's Academic Program Review process.

The chair proposed that every program undergoing COMPREHENSIVE review would be assigned a subcommittee of four staff. The subcommittee would have at least two "seasoned" staff, who have participated in the program review process. The subcommittee would have 3 people from the academic side of the college, from 3 DIFFERENT academic divisions, none of which obviously are from the area under review. One of these 3 "academic" people would be either: an academic dean, division chair, or program director. The other two would be faculty members. The fourth member of the committee should be from a non-academic area of the college. Also, the program review process needs to meet its full potential. The process really needs support and buy-in from all involved, including program directors/chairs, deans, and the VP. The new and incoming Vice President of

Instruction will need to send a stronger message about the importance of the program review process to the programs, deans, and directors.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The Institution should be commended on the completion of their second cycle of program reviews, and the first using the self-study instrument. Additionally, the Institution has embedded a feedback loop within their program review process to ensure that select key stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input, which suggests an orientation to **collaboration** and **learning**. What is also impressive is that program review results have been made available to staff, which serves to enhance an emerging theme in higher education...transparency. Process improvement theory suggests that to be effective in identifying performance trends, one must have a minimum of three data points to determine if there might be any emerging trends in institutional performance. As the institution continues to **measure its new process and tools for effectiveness** against its customer (i.e., key stakeholders) requirements and project goals, it may be helpful to anticipate data collection efforts for at least two more program review cycles using the new process and tools. This will provide another two data points worth of data from which process performance trends may be identified and used to support **continuous improvement planning**.

2: Institution Involvement

A: In the deployment of their Academic Program Review process improvement initiative, the Institution has done a wonderful job in engaging key internal stakeholders across the College's entire district including all employee levels and the institution's governance. This approach will enhance enthusiasm for the new process tools and increase likelihood of stakeholder buy-in and adoption. Again, this approach has demonstrated a clear orientation to **collaboration** and **valuing their people**. In the initial Project Declaration, which was published in 2008-2009, the Institution suggested that one of the objectives of this project was to increase academic program quality. Depending on how 'quality' is defined in this context, there may be an opportunity to engage additional key stakeholders external to the Institution who do not appear to have been previously engaged. For instance, students, employers, alumni, and regulatory bodies may provide an additional perspective as Central Arizona College (CAC) evaluates its academic program quality. The approach may further enhance CAC's ability to **understand your students' and other stakeholders' needs**.

3: Next Steps

A: In regard to the initial Project Declaration, it appears that the Institution has successfully accomplished one piece of its action project in that they have, "...created and implemented a new program review process (and tools) to improve educational programs." The next piece of the project goal suggests that the new academic program review process should be 'clear', 'consistent', and result in 'quality' programs. Depending on how the Institution defines clear, consistent, and quality, this may entail on-going process results evaluation, which may extend beyond the original project completion milestone of 10/31/10. If so, CAC may consider closing out this project and starting a phase II project, which would focus on evaluation and measurement of the CAC academic program review process to ensure it has met its stated goals (clear, consistent, quality programs).

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The mentorship approach is an effective strategy for ensuring project success and the Institution has demonstrated a commitment to staying **focused** and **involving** subject matter experts to increase process deployment success—well done. The sharing of best practices to assist in accomplishing other distinctive objectives (i.e., support services) is another impressive outcome of this particular action project and CAC should be recognized for their **leadership**.

5: Project Challenges

A: Central Arizona College has identified two essential elements that assist in determining the long-term sustainability of a project like this, which include team member succession planning and on-going executive administration support. The proposed strategy to maintain a sub-committee composition which includes a minimum of two seasoned members will go a long way in supporting 'consistency' in the administration of the academic program review process. Conversely, two new members may provide an opportunity to inject a new perspective, new insight, and build team enthusiasm and motivation. Further, maintaining executive administrator support will be essential to the long term success of this process. This is particularly true as CAC strives to balance the allocation of limited resources across all of the institution's functional areas. As such, the Academic Program Review Committee may consider developing a business case for maintaining said process, and take explicit steps toward engaging the new VP of Instruction in the Academic Program Review decision making process early. The proposed business case could highlight the contribution(s) that the Academic Program Review process makes to student learning (e.g., grad rates, employment placement, etc.), institutional brand awareness (i.e., quality awareness), student and stakeholder (e.g., faculty, staff, etc.) satisfaction with the learning process at CAC, and institutional P&L.