Faculty Senate Executive Committee
Post-Review of the University Program Review
Final
4/27/20

In compliance with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidelines and requirements, Wright State University undertook a program review self-study during the late fall and early spring semesters, 2019-2020. After this review, the WSU Faculty Senate expressed a need for faculty to be involved conducting in a post-review of the program review process in order to obtain a better understanding of said process; to increase transparency of the process and its outcomes; and to understand how these outcomes might be used moving forward. The Senate worked with university administration to ensure that Senate Executive Committee (EC) members would be involved in reviewing the processes utilized in the various colleges.

Thus, a subcommittee of the EC crafted a form (Appendix A), which would be used by EC members to collect information within their own Colleges/Schools on both the processes utilized and the veracity of the data provided for the program reviews. This report seeks to summarize and share with the administration a narrative review of the results of the post-review data collection (Appendix B). The report follows a modified SWOT analysis (in order to remain as positive as possible and secure integrity of the process, we choose not to gather any information on threats). Hence, this report details the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, by examining and summarizing both the integrity of the process and the integrity of the data, which emerged from select college/school post-review analyses and from the EC discussion. All but one college/school (but not all programs) are represented in the data that follow.

STRENGHTS

Integrity of the Process

Several of the respondents commented that it was great to involve the faculty in the process, as it gave faculty not only an opportunity to gain a perspective on what was involved in the program review, but also permitted a few to use this review as an alternative approach to ensuring that particular degree programs were in-line with their accreditation requirements. Additionally, comments also indicated that the program review would assist the HLC in understanding what is going on with all the colleges.

Dr. Carl Brun was given credit as a valuable resource for explaining the process, and ultimately, the goal(s)of the program reviews. Further, faculty across the University were glad to have been a part of the review process, as they believed that this would enable sharing of a common understanding of the current state throughout the colleges.

Individuals in several colleges remarked that falling back upon existing college committees strengthened data interpretation and review, and the committees would be experienced with, and knowledgeable about, the curriculum of specific programs. Further, it was believed that including representatives from the Faculty Senate assisted college members in grasping the larger, institutional picture, and university processes. Faculty reported their appreciation of having a program director show them the data so that they could comment and provide feedback. Completing the forms as a department, or as a curriculum committee gave more eyes to the process. The consensus seemed to indicate that participants appreciated and valued an opportunity to view data from more than one year at a time. Putting five years' worth of data before the faculty and the committees encouraged a broader view of the task at hand, and how the data might inform university decision making in the future.

Integrity of the Data

As a unifying theme concerning the integrity of the data, a common response reflected the large amount of data available, as compared to the one year of data that is typically seen. Many of the comments indicated that it was great for program faculty to see financial data, ratios, and other details on a department or a program basis. As a whole, the review committees believed that the program review was asking the proper questions, safeguarded by the ability that each form (on the excel spreadsheet) afforded the opportunity to comment on inaccurate data or information. The abundance of data raised the question of why none of this data had been shared prior to the present time.

Considering all of the possible issues, the overall belief is that faculty involvement in the program review process was a positive experience, one which should be repeated again during future review cycles. The faculty gained a much broader perspective as to the data with which the University is working but failed to realize any appreciation for how the data will be used in moving forward. One suggestion was to consider sharing this data on a yearly basis. This would permit examination of a smaller amount of more focused data. It would give the faculty an understanding of, and experience with, the data before being asked to review a large and overwhelming amount of data in a very short period of time.

From this perspective, the strengths of the review process and data, the faculty believe it to be a valuable experience, one which permitted them a larger and broader perspective into the University and how it functions.

WEAKNESSES

Integrity of the Process

The program review process involved the faculty and college committees and was conducted under a very tight timeframe during an already busy time of year with many competing activities. Many participants believed that this timeframe did not encourage understanding of the data and its limitations. Additionally, there were questions as to the source(s) of the data. It was believed that some of the data came from the central University administration while other data had been supplied by the department or program chairs prior to the review taking place. Not knowing what came from where hampered the data interpretation for some of the committees.

This lack of integrity was coupled with difficulty with using the templates, navigating excel, and using the same templates for both undergraduate and graduate programs. There was no clear set of instructions nor guidelines for the excel spreadsheets.

Integrity of the Data

Many reviewers were overwhelmed by the amount of data. The program review, which involved faculty and college committees was conducted under a very tight timeframe. Many participants believed that this timeframe did not encourage understanding of the data, where it came from, and its limitations. Additionally, there were questions as to the source(s) of the data—this was particularly problematic when trying to do a comprehensive and accurate review—how could a program make informed decisions? Moreover, data were reported at different levels—some at the department level, some at the program level. Student-faculty ratios were skewed by the fact that only TETs were reported—some departments rely heavily on NTEs and some faculty are shared between programs and colleges (e.g., cross-listed courses), again having the potential to skew the data—particularly for cost/benefit analysis.

Alternately, some reviewers were distressed to find that the data was incorrect, or that segments of data were missing. There was uncertainty as to what data came from internal versus external sources. And, while the reviewers believed that it was valuable to gain access to the data, others believed that not knowing the source of the data precludes confidence in the validity and reliability of the data. One program director indicated that the data reflected that 18 individuals had been admitted to her new program, while she in fact, knew that only one had been admitted. Other specific issues and concerns related to student data included multiple concerns expressed that "intending" students were included in retention data when they never matriculate into the department as majors, yet that are included as "majors" in retention numbers, thus lowering retention rates—this can be very misleading.

Employment data for graduates did not seem to match the data maintained by individual programs or departments. Not knowing where the data came from, or how the data was arrived at left no solid basis for interpreting the integrity of the data. Moreover, populating employment data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) grossly underrepresents the employment status of our graduates due to large numbers of alumni who are employed by the federal government (largely WPAFB) and those who are self-employed as entrepreneurs, among others who may not be captured by ODJFS. There was fear expressed that this skewed data (among others) could be misinterpreted by outsiders.

OPPORTUNITIES

Ways to Improve the Process

1. Keep involving multiple people in reviewing program. Putting faculty and administrative eyes on financial data, graduation trends, enrollment data, etc. is important. People who serve in a diversity of roles need to know what these numbers are and need to strategize (at a program level) about how to improve them over time.

2. Ensure transparency about the purpose of the data collection and analysis from the start. (Are data being used for HLC reporting? Program enhancement/closure? Self-reflection? Program improvement? Student/employer needs?)
3. Make sure to include/provide training for all who will be responsible for writing/contributing to the reports.
4. Find a program that is more user friendly than the current excel spreadsheets. Create unique templates for undergraduate vs. graduate programs that acknowledge the distinctions and uniqueness between them.
5. Standardize and enforce the process across departments and colleges to ensure comparability of the reports. This standardization can assist where departments have cross-listed courses and faculty who teach in multiple departments, among other nuances.
6. Establish a routine to make this a regular process that can be implemented more uniformly – create a process for involving faculty and program directors and ensuring that what they sent actually contributes to and gets included into the documents. Create rubrics or thresholds for making recommendations as a result of the data reported.

Ways to Improve the Data

1. Be open and clear about from where it originates. Transparency of data is key to an informed and open process.
2. Organize financial data by program and by department to allow for a more rigorous assessment of resource allocation across the department. To do this would require a formal, iterative process between faculty, chairs, deans, and Institutional Research to determine and quantify the costs associated with each program, including faculty effort and cost per program. This iterative process would also allow for correction of all

incorrect data at program and department levels, including faculty numbers, financial indicators, ratios, student outcomes, retention data, etc.

3. Include NTE faculty numbers in the data. In many programs, NTE's play a significant role in supporting the programs, and yet their data is missing. [This should be included whether or not it is required by HLC.]
4. Ensure that the data are correct prior to writing the narrative portion of the program review.
5. Where appropriate and available, utilize program accreditation data to inform the university program review process.

SUMMARY

In general, faculty felt that involvement in review of program data was important to their understanding of the "big picture" of program review and also important to informing decision making at both the department and program levels. Due to differences in the data collected at the department level and the data presented in the program review, faculty members and program directors were concerned about the integrity of the data. Moving forward they are interested in ensuring that the data accurately reflect current data in both number and kind of data collected/reported. Additionally, faculty members are most interested in understanding in how the data will be used. In all, other that the very abbreviated timeline this past year, faculty felt positive to be involved in the process and want to continue to be involved moving forward.