Program Assessment of Student Learning

Program assessment activities are used to review and understand teaching (learning) effectiveness within a program. The VCSU Abilities framework and national standards aid in the development and assessment of program goals and student outcomes. The assessment of these goals and student outcomes feed into the overall program review. Program review identifies strengths and challenges, develops goals for program direction, determines budget and curriculum changes, and other program revisions. The program revisions are implemented while continuous assessment of student learning outcomes occurs. Figure 4, below, illustrates the cycle of program review and assessment.

Aims of the Program Review

- Assure program effectiveness
- Assess learning outcomes and Abilities as established by the department
- Provide an overview of the current program
- Identify strengths and challenges
- Develop short and long term goals for program direction
- Determine (provide rational for) budget and curriculum changes
- Develop or review program goals to guide program planning
- Provide continuous assessment of student learning and outcomes (methods of implementation and effectiveness of assessment)
- Provide evidence of learning and program quality

Ability Assessment and Program Review

Ability assessment at the academic program level is designed to develop an overview of student competencies in the major. The Abilities provide a framework for examining and understanding of student learning in the program. With the VCSU Abilities imbedded into the program content, divisions/departments can document student learning.

All programs have developed Ability maps which identify (by project and course) the development of the major-specific Abilities in the program of study. Faculty revised these maps in 2010. Majors must demonstrate the major-specified Abilities and skills at an advanced level in their digital portfolios when they graduate. Using their own “Ability Assessment Rubrics” for the portfolio, and/or the University-wide Ability Assessment data, academic programs then examine the proficiencies demonstrated in the senior portfolios to measure their students competencies against the University norm and make decisions about curriculum and student learning in their programs.

This process provides data on the student learning in each academic program. In addition, beginning with the 2010-2012 catalog, each department has delineated Learning Outcomes that target learning objectives to the specific programs, providing more specific assessment of content knowledge in each program.

The Process of Program Planning and Review:
Faculty complete two complementary program review activities. The first, the annual program update, provides documentation of short term goals, annual assessment data, and annual budget/curricular decisions. The second, the formal program review which is completed every six years, provides a comprehensive review of the program, shapes long-term goals and assesses program viability. The results of both activities are reviewed in turn by peer reviewers on campus and a summary of results reported to APAC and Cabinet.

**The Annual Program Update**

Each fall, faculty in each program identify short-term plans for their programs. In the spring they are asked to report on the achievement of these plans, provide assessment data for their Learning Outcome measures and portfolio review, and recommendations for the future. Any budget or curricular requests arising from these updates must be documented by material included in the program update.

The update must include the following information:

- Annual student information—# in major; # graduates
- Success of recent graduates
- Learning Outcomes—annual data
- Abilities—annual portfolio data
- Narrative: short term annual goal and progress made/success
- Updates on actions identified in program’s strategic plan
- Short term goals set for upcoming year

The Annual Program Updates are reviewed each year by campus peer review teams, and recommendations summarized by the VPAA and presented to APAC and the Cabinet.

**Formal Program Review**

Formal program review generally occurs on a six-year cycle, although some programs are reviewed more frequently because of the rapidly changing nature of the field or the demands of accreditation. The VPAA has established the program review on a six year rotation.

Formal program review is mandated by State Board Policy 403.1.2, and must include the following information/processes:

1. A comprehensive self-study by the program faculty, a discussion of the evaluation results with the relevant dean or vice-president, a written statement of the evaluation's findings, and a written action plan describing follow-up activities. Each succeeding evaluation of a given program shall address the extent to which the program has successfully dealt with the concerns of the preceding evaluation;

2. Diverse assessment activities, such as:
   - a site visit and review by a qualified consultant from another institution
   - a review by one or more faculty members from another program within the institution
• an assessment of student learning (for example, pre- and post-tests, performance on professional or Graduate Record examinations, or other appropriate methods)
• a survey of program alumni to determine their current positions and opinions of the program
• a survey of current students to determine whether the program is meeting their needs
• review and advice from the program advisory council or other representatives of the employers of program graduates.

The formal program review at VCSU must include the following information:

• Program goals, external standards, and strategic plan
• Ability maps, Learner Outcomes, and related assessment data from annual updates
• Student data and student survey/evaluation results; success of graduates
• Additional assessment activities (see A-F, above): each program should provide three separate assessment activities, with data collected annually.
• Assessment of Program Quality—strengths/weaknesses/ opportunities/challenges
• Recommendations; new long-term goals

The formal program review is examined by campus peer reviewers who meet with the VPAA and program leaders to discuss recommendations. An executive summary of the program review and recommendations is shared with APAC and the Cabinet; a further summation of this review is forwarded to the Chancellor, in accordance with SBHE policy 403.1.2.