

Educational Effectiveness Review

Program Review

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WASC ACCREDITATION

PROGRAM REVIEW

As A Means to Ensure Educational Effectiveness and Improvement

1. Introduction

The successful integration of the research mission of a university with its undergraduate and graduate academic missions requires rigorous, periodic, and comprehensive external reviews of academic programs and faculty intellectual directions. UC Santa Cruz has long been committed to external reviews of its academic departments, and continually strives to improve the process.

The UCSC administration, in concert with the academic senate, comprehensively reviews the mission of its academic *departments*, for the following reasons:

- 1) In most cases, departments are the cognizant administrative units accountable for the quality of programs. The department chair controls resources, space, and teaching assignments, and has significant decision-making authority.
- 2) Faculty members are appointed to departments. Therefore, the intellectual direction of the faculty, including matters of appointment, promotion, and tenure, is subject to the quality of the governance of the department. Perhaps the most important and useful outcome of an external review is the perspective afforded by an external visiting committee on the intellectual direction of the department.

This review structure, which tracks the administrative and accountability structure of the university, best serves the need for a holistic review of undergraduate programs, graduate programs, and the research and creative activities of the faculty.

In order to assure the rigorous, timely review of departments, reviews are administered jointly by the central administration and by the cognizant academic division or school. In addition, the academic senate plays an integral role throughout the process. The outcome of each department review is a mutually agreed upon set of action items on which departments report progress within eighteen months of a closure meeting.

2. Historical Background

UC Santa Cruz was founded in the mid-1960's, at a time of widespread public dissatisfaction with the academic mission of the public research universities. The UCSC founders developed a collegiate-based campus, comprising very strong undergraduate programs, and a few very visible and distinguished doctoral programs. In the early days of the campus (1965-1979) responsibility for the academic mission of the campus was divided between the colleges and the departments (formerly Boards of Study). In that early period, faculty had dual appointments, one in a Board of Study and one in a College. Courses were sponsored by either the Boards or by the Colleges. This experimental arrangement proved to be unsustainable, and in 1979 the academic mission

was transferred almost entirely to the academic divisions, with the colleges responsible for administering the freshman core course and many co-curricular activities.

Although in a technical sense the original collegiate model was unsuccessful, the tradition of a strong commitment to undergraduate education remained in place. This tradition is reinforced by the physical manifestation of the colleges, which are living-learning “villages” in which almost all frosh, most sophomores, and many upper-class students reside, and which are overseen by a college provost, who is a faculty member.

3. Core Principles

UC Santa Cruz is committed to excellence as a public research university, and defines that excellence through its commitment to excellence in research and scholarly activity; and through the seamless integration of undergraduate and graduate education with the research mission. The External review process provides both a quantitative and qualitative measure of the progress that individual academic units (departments) make toward this goal. As a consequence, the external review process is founded upon the following set of principles, agreed to by the administration and the academic senate:

1. The intellectual directions of the faculty, the graduate academic programs, and the undergraduate academic programs shall be rigorously and periodically reviewed by a distinguished panel of scholars from outside the campus.
2. The academic senate shall have a major voice in setting the review agenda, debating with the department and administration the review report, and recommending action items for follow-up.
3. The reviews shall be conducted in a timely manner, to assure a meaningful relation between the self-reflection of the department and the eventual action items.

4. Objectives

Consonant with the principles expressed above, the administration and the academic senate have agreed upon the following *objectives* of the external review process:

1. The intellectual directions of a department under review, as expressed in departmental planning documents and realized in recruitment plans, shall be significantly informed by the views of external reviewers, as well as by the department faculty, the administration, and the academic senate.
2. Changes to the undergraduate academic program, including curriculum, degree requirements, and teaching quality shall be both motivated by and significantly informed by the views of the external reviewers, as well as by the department faculty.
3. Changes to the graduate academic program, including admissions, curriculum, examination requirements, degree requirements, and teaching quality shall be both motivated by and significantly informed by the views of the external reviewers, as well as by the department faculty.

4. The resource needs of the department (*e.g.* staffing, equipment, space) shall be evaluated in comparison with similar institutions and appropriate recommendations shall be put forward.
5. The educational effectiveness of instructional programs shall be measured by multiple methods including comprehensive student feedback and standard data utilization to facilitate comparison of findings.

5. Description of process

External Review Team The *sine qua non* of an effective review process is the recruitment of a distinguished panel of external reviewers. To achieve the goal of an effective team, the academic dean solicits from the department under review a slate of reviewer nominations, to which the dean appends additional candidates, possibly vetoing some departmental candidates. The entire slate is reviewed by the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, who approves the final slate. The academic dean then makes the final appointments, and sets the date for the review, based upon the availability of the reviewers and internal personnel.

When selecting reviewers, the administration seeks distinguished national and sometimes international scholars, ideally with a blend of administrative experience. One reviewer is always selected from the faculty of the University of California.

Charge to the reviewers The administration and the academic senate have jointly developed a universal charge to the reviewers, subject to amendment (for example, some departments have no graduate programs). The universal charge is organized into the same four areas as the self-study, so that the reviewers can easily reference the self-study and organize their report accordingly.

Self-Study In parallel with the panel nomination process, the department under review prepares a self-study, organized into the standard four areas. The body of the self-study comprises roughly twenty pages of text. Most importantly, very specific historical data is appended, some of which is supplied by the department, some by the dean's office, and some by the central administration. This data provides the reviewers, the administration, and the academic senate, with indicators of absolute quality and of changes in quality.

Senate Commentary The self-study is due for submission on September 1 of a given academic year. The self-study is transmitted to the three key academic senate committees: Planning and Budget, Educational Policy, and Graduate Council. The senate committees then have roughly eight weeks to review the self-study and to append optional letters, drawing the review team's attention to elements of particular concern. The dean and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs may also append similar letters to the standard charge.

Review Agenda The review team visits the campus some time in the January-April time frame. Their meeting is organized around an agenda that consists, at a minimum, of the following elements:

1. Entrance interview with the Dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and the Graduate Dean.
2. A meeting with the faculty committee in charge of undergraduate curriculum.
3. A meeting with a representative group of undergraduate students.
4. A meeting with the faculty committee in charge of the graduate program.
5. A meeting with a representative group of graduate students.
6. A meeting with department representatives of other departments served by the department in question.
7. Meetings with individual faculty members and groups of faculty members, as appropriate.
8. An exit interview with the dean.
9. An exit interview with the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, and the Campus Provost.

Post-review closure The External Review Team is asked to submit its final report within four weeks of the review. Upon receipt of the report, the dean asks the department to provide, within two weeks, a written response to the report. The dean then responds to both the review report and the chair's comments. The three reports are then circulated to the three principal academic senate committees, who themselves assign a lead reviewer and discuss the outcomes. The senate committees are invited to suggest questions for the 18-month follow-up report.

Closure meeting A closure meeting is scheduled after the submission of the review report, allowing time for the various reports to be prepared. The closure meeting convenes the department chair, the dean, the Vice provost, Academic Affairs, and representatives from the three principal senate committees. The purpose of the closure meeting is to:

1. Reconcile differences in matters of fact.
2. Report on any actions taken subsequent to the review meeting.

The Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, then prepares a closure report, which includes a detailed list of items for the 18-month follow up report.

18 Month follow up report The department and the academic division prepare responses to the list of questions stated in the closure report.

6. Mechanism for process review

In any organization, administrative procedures can take on a life of their own, and may ultimately fail to serve the purposes for which they were intended. As a consequence, we have established an annual procedure in which we 'review the review.' In late April, the VPAA requests of the dean and the three key senate committees written commentary on the process that year. The VPAA then incorporates changes into the procedures for the subsequent year that he or she deems appropriate and beneficial to campus goals.

7. Recent Evolution of the Process and recommended future directions

The current process is the result of a recent, significant revision of the review procedures that had been in place over the decade of the 1990's. The new process is intended to better address several objectives.

- a) The process is now far more timely. Ideally, from the moment the self-study is delivered to the central administration on September 1, the process takes exactly one academic year from Senate review to completion of the closure report. This is a significant improvement over the previous schedule. Timeliness at each organizational level is essential to ensure focus on immediate issues.
- b) The self-study now incorporates historical, quantitative data on the performance of the department. Produced primarily by the central Planning and Budget Office, consistent comparative data will inform a wide audience (department faculty, deans, senate committees, central administration and external review teams) as they evaluate educational effectiveness of instructional programs.
- c) Student surveys are now incorporated into the review. Undergraduate and graduate students are asked a wide variety of questions about the quality of their learning experience and are given the opportunity to freely comment on the academic experience.
- d) During their visit, the review team is required to speak to a representative group of undergraduate majors, and to a representative group of graduate students. The reviewers will have the student survey data in hand to guide their inquiry.
- e) The academic senate committees play a strong, systematic role in the review process. The Committee on planning and Budget (CPB); the Committee on Educational policy (CEP); and the Graduate Council (GC) have two months to review the departmental self-study and provide (optional) input to the reviewers. These committees also review the final external review report, and contribute written evaluations of the report. The committees are represented at the closure meeting, and contribute suggested questions to the department and dean for the 18-month follow-up report.

One suggestion that we are exploring at the moment is to ask the external review team to “grade” the department in areas where weaknesses are discerned. The categories might be as follows:

- a) **Deficiency:** Something that would make the program unworthy of accreditation, as by not satisfying accreditation criteria. This requires immediate action and follow-up within one year.
- b) **Weakness:** Something that has a good chance of becoming a deficiency in the near future. This generally requires follow-up within three years.
- c) **Concern:** A specific accreditation criterion is presently satisfied, but there is a possibility that this may change in the future. Concerns are issues that must be addressed during the next six-year review.

- d) Observations: Additional comments that are made to the aid the specific program. No relationship with respect to accreditation outcome.

Such a “report card”, which is modeled after the ABET reviews of engineering programs, would be very effective in galvanizing administrative attention to departments with important issues in need of resolution. It would also provide an historical pattern that would draw attention to long-term trends in the department.

8. Case Studies

In the case studies that follow, we consider the departmental review of the Economics Department, which was conducted under the previous review guidelines, and the departmental review of the Environmental Studies Department, a review in progress under the revised guidelines. Both case studies reflect the fundamental objectives embedded in UCSC program review: an assurance of public accountability by the institution; and the encouragement of continuous self-improvement on campus, viewed in the context of the campus’s own mission. UCSC’s traditional commitment to strong undergraduate education in the context of a research university is evident by the diligent focus on the intersection of undergraduate and graduate programs throughout the review process.

A case study: Economics (completed)

Economics Review Process (old protocols)

Overview: The Economics Department was previously reviewed in 1996-97 and per campus guidelines was scheduled for subsequent review six-years later, 2002-03. During this six-year interval the department established a new undergraduate major, *Business Management Economics*; developed their Ph.D. program in *International Economics*, which was launched in 1990-91; and continued the *Economics* and *Global Economics* undergraduate majors and the *Applied Economics and Finance* M.S. program. Undergraduate student enrollments doubled, with the driving force coming from strong student interest in the *Business Management Economics* curriculum.

Assessment Criteria: A charge to the external review committee was drafted by the Social Sciences Dean and informed by Academic Senate committees on Planning and Budget, Educational Policy, and the Graduate Council prior to final approval by the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs. Despite good intentions, this lengthy process tends to result in extensive lists of somewhat disconnected topics and tends to consume significant faculty and staff workload. The final economics charge was re-structured to fit the format of the developing universal charge, dividing topics into scholarship, graduate program, undergraduate program, and support resources. Specific issues related to undergraduate education included comparable major requirements with other institutions, and assessment of student advising and mentoring. (See appendix A - Economics External Review charge)

Self-Study and Data Appendices: Departments prepare for program review by producing a self-study document focused on the issues in the charge, plans for the future, and responses to issues raised by the previous review. The self-study is sent to the external review team along with the final charge, previous review reports, and data appendices. Campus guidelines prescribe the data appendices, with departments responsible for compiling the information as best they can. Examples include history of instructional budgets, contributions to campus wide General Education requirements, and enrollment statistics. No student surveys were required. (See appendix B – Economics Self-Study List of Appendices)

Review Process: The Economics Department review process followed established procedures where the external review committee conducted a two day visit to meet with faculty, select students, and key administrators. Subsequent to the visit, the external review committee produced a report which was commented on in turn by the department, academic dean, and three relevant Academic Senate Committees. A campus closure meeting was convened by the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, to resolve any differences between the documents and report on actions taken since the review. A final campus closure report was prepared by the Vice Provost, Academic Affairs including post-review follow-up questions the department is asked to report on within eighteen months.

Economics Review Effectiveness

The Economics review took place within a timely twelve month period, between the May 2002 approval of the draft charge, the November 2002 campus visit by the external review team, and the May 2003 closure meeting. Our observations of the effectiveness of this external review are positive and based on evidence of: 1) institutional focus on the undergraduate curriculum; 2) faculty responsiveness to concerns raised; 3) data utilization as evidence of program assessment.

Institutional Focus: The external review report noted the accomplishments of department faculty and their rapidly rising scholarly reputation. While very positive, and helpful in suggesting future fields to broaden scholarly excellence, the comments on the undergraduate program lacked specificity. Some senate committees called attention to the minimal analysis of the undergraduate program, and the closure meeting discussion resulted in an agreement to launch a supplemental inquiry to the external review committee. For example, the Committee on Educational Policy wrote “*While materials provided by the department demonstrate the sheer volume of demand for and likely trajectory of undergraduate class slots, some external advice on, for example, the ‘impacted major’ issue and other possible remedies would have been helpful. Similarly, the issue of the availability of advising, especially given both the number of majors and the relatively high proportion of first generation college students among them, deserves careful consideration.*”¹

Faculty Responsiveness: In response to concerns raised by the senate, the department faculty produced an additional “fact sheet” focused on the Business Management

¹ CEP Chair Donald Brenneis to VPAA George Brown, Response to Economics Department External Review, May 28, 3003.

Economics curriculum, including student diversity, enrollments, and workload. Course requirement comparisons between similar programs offered in economics departments within the University of California system were incorporated. Chair Michael Hutchison noted at the closure meeting that in spite of the tremendous surge in student enrollments, ladder faculty teach the majority of required courses, with lecturers, including one with security of employment, assigned to accounting, math, and law. Students are offered field placements to provide application of academic economics, business, and management to issues and problems in the real world. Fieldwork experience builds marketable job skills and employment networks. To reduce their overall numbers and sustain a quality experience for undergraduate majors, the faculty implemented increased student selectivity beginning fall 2003.

Data Utilization: The department self-study provided a comprehensive view of the department's overall activities. The "fact sheet" produced by the department in response to senate comments provided specifics on the undergraduate major that were not addressed in the original review. Data compiled by the department is a workload burden that can be relieved by central distribution of common elements. While economics provided excellent materials, the material lacked campus comparisons. Under the revised review guidelines, summary tabular data compiled by the Office of Planning and Budget will be distributed to departments. (See Appendix C - Economics Fact Sheet on Business Management Economics, Diversity, Enrollments and Workload).

A missing element throughout the economics review process was satisfactory feedback from students. Select students met briefly with the external review committee, but full representation of student views was not built into the review process. Student assessment of their own experiences will be a component of future reviews. Summary information from undergraduate and graduate major surveys, administered centrally by the Office of Institutional Research, will be a required element. Pilot surveys will begin spring 2004.

Next Steps: The campus requires the department to prepare a post-review audit, or follow-up report. Informed by issues identified through the review, the Economics Department follow-up report is due June 2005. Faculty appraisal of their undergraduate program is expected, including identifying how the department evaluates the outcome of student learning experiences. The department's next comprehensive external review is scheduled to occur in 2008-2009.

A case study: Environmental Studies (in progress)

Environmental Studies Review Process (new protocols)

Overview: The Environmental Studies Department was last reviewed in 1998-99 and was routinely scheduled for subsequent review six-years later, 2004-05. During this six-year period the department established a new combined undergraduate *Environmental Studies/Earth Sciences* major with the Earth Sciences Department; developed their Ph.D. program in *Environmental Studies* which was launched in 1994-95; and continued to offer the *Environmental Studies* and combined *Environmental Studies/Biology* and

Environmental Studies/Economics undergraduate majors. Undergraduate student enrollments were constant while campus enrollments grew rapidly. The department encompasses an interdisciplinary vision; faculty appointments are divided between research emphasis in the social sciences and in the biological sciences.

Assessment Criteria: The external review committee will be asked to assess the department in comparison with nationally ranked research universities and provided with the new universal charge. Topics are grouped by scholarly direction, graduate program, undergraduate program, and support resources. Issues related to the undergraduate program include focus on the quality of teaching, comprehensive exit requirement, and student advising and mentoring, in addition assessment of the breadth and structure of the curriculum. The dean notified the Environmental Studies Department in December 2004 of their upcoming review and provided them the revised campus guidelines, including the universal charge. The universal charge did not require additional campus consultation, reducing workload for the dean, central administration, and Senate. The department benefited by having early access to a final charge as they were preparing their self-study. The Senate may choose to supplement the universal charge after the relevant committees review the department's self-study in fall 2004. (See appendix D – Universal Charge to External Review Committee)

Self-Study and Data Appendices: Departments prepare for program review by producing a self-study document following explicit guidelines and addressing issues related to scholarly direction, graduate program, undergraduate program, and administration. In each category, departments are asked what goals they are willing to set for the subsequent review. Faculty members are asked to describe their current circumstances, and express department aspirations for the next six year period. The previous external review and campus closure report is enclosed to inform the department faculty and other readers of program changes that have, or have not, occurred over the last six years. Data appendices are divided between information the department is expected to provide, and statistics the central office of Planning and Budget will provide. Student surveys at both the graduate and undergraduate level are a new and essential element intended to provide objective measures regarding student satisfaction.

Environmental Studies self-study was being prepared at the time this case study was written; it is expected to be distributed to the campus September 1, 2004, and to the external reviewers one month prior to their scheduled February 2005 visit. Informal feedback from the department manager, who has supported external reviews multiple times over her thirty year career in the position, is this self-study was easier for the department to produce due to the coherency of the topics and explicit responsibilities assigned to the department, division, and central administration. Over burdening departments with review preparations is to be avoided, out of respect for overloading faculty, and to increase cooperation in program assessment. The department received statistical data produced by the Planning and Budget Office in April 2002. Data on recent department instructional activity and several elements related to graduate majors was unavailable due to lack of comprehensive campus systems support. Student major surveys were launched in late spring 2004, and summary reports are pending distribution

to the department in summer 2004. (See appendix E – Environmental Studies Self-Study – Preliminary List of Appendices June 2004; and appendix F – Environmental Studies Student Survey Summaries)

Environmental Studies Review Effectiveness

Environmental Studies review process is in progress, complete consideration of its effectiveness is pending until the review is closed, anticipated summer 2005. Our initial observations are based on data utilization as evidence of program assessment.

Data Utilization: The department self-study was informed by appendices supplied by the central Planning and Budget Office, including historical comparisons of student enrollments, ethnicity, and gender. Student feedback was provided via student surveys, the first time student views have been systematically incorporated into the program review process. Reviewers will also meet with representative students during their campus visit. Student surveys are considered pilots and will be evaluated by the administration and relevant senate committees, with revisions anticipated to inform future surveys. Annual student surveys will be distributed to all departments, which over time will provide faculty with historical comparisons of their undergraduate and graduate major satisfaction. Survey focus on subjective elements such as student satisfaction with advising and faculty mentoring, adds a new category to the conventional statistical data used in reviews. We anticipate that department faculty members will find survey results useful tools on an on-going basis.

Data identified for graduate program assessment is less available from central systems than that supporting undergraduate program assessment. Graduate student financial support, recruitment statistics, and time to degree historical trends are future priorities necessary to inform faculty and improve review effectiveness.

Next Steps: Environmental Studies external review committee will conduct a campus visit in February 2005 after receiving the universal charge, department self-study with data appendices, and previous review reports. Faculty, students, and administrators will meet with the reviewers to further discuss the department's programs, aspirations, and challenges. Following receipt of the external review committee report, the department, divisional dean, and senate committees will contribute written responses. Review closure may occur as early as late spring 2005, with department follow-up report on actions taken in response to the review expected winter 2007. Informed by the review content and process, the campus may implement additional revisions to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiencies.

9.Recommendations

The WASC Program Review subcommittee has the following recommendations for continually assessing program review and integrating reviews with student learning outcomes.

- Develop department-specific measures of student learning outcomes that can be tracked over time. Consider utilizing campus wide student course evaluations and selective course pass rate histories.
- Assure that the relevant deans and senate committees are involved in follow-up actions resulting from the program review closure report. Consider linking review actions as a measure of accountability necessary to justify new resources.
- Strengthen the review follow-up report mechanism so the campus can more easily assess progress and outcomes resulting from recommended actions. Consider a review grading system to focus the relevant units on high priority issues.
- Assess initial student major surveys in collaboration with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy and Graduate Council. Revise as recommended.
- Continue development of comprehensive campus systems to provide all required data appendices for the department self-study.

We remain committed to continuing the UCSC historical practice of reviewing all academic and research programs as a major component in our ongoing assessment of educational effectiveness.

CASE STUDY APPENDICES

Economics

- A. Economics External Review Charge, August 2002.
- B. Economics Self-Study List of Appendices, August 2002.
- C. Economics Fact Sheet on Business Management Economics, Diversity, Enrollments and Workload, June 2003.

Environmental Studies

- D. Environmental Studies – Universal Charge
- E. Environmental Studies – Preliminary Self-Study List of Appendices as of June 2004.(pending from J. Nama via B. Moses)
- F. Environmental Studies – Student Surveys
 - a. Graduate Student Survey Method and Results June 2004.
 - b. Undergraduate Student Survey Method and Results (pending J. Fernald)