The History of Program Reviews at California Lutheran University

The history of the program review at Cal Lutheran stretches back to the mid-1990s. Historical memory attributes the initiative to a College Dean who had concerns about a program or two, but realized that external reviews could serve all programs well.

Initially the Educational Policies and Planning Committee (EPPC) was charged with implementation. That is, program review at Cal Lutheran began as a faculty run enterprise. Thus, early on, there was little involvement by administration in the review process. The first round of reviews ranged in quality. Some departments turned in thorough formal reports. Others were informal, and even haphazard. Some departments submitted two-page documents that were possibly the reflection of an individual rather than the collaborative effort of a department. Some of the reviews even appear to have been in the form of an in-person report to EPPC. A former EPPC chair recalls a department chair who scrawled notes on pages of a 3 x 5 tablet of paper and submitted those as the department's report. Generally, departments got feedback from the external reviewer and from the EPPC. Unless, however, a department initiated changes in response to their review feedback, the EPPC did not feel it was empowered to act.

By the end of the 1990s there was a collective call for greater formality and consistency with program reviews. The result was the beginning stages of the development of a uniform template for program reviews. The Provost's Office also suggested clearer ties between program reviews and strategic planning. By 2000, Cal Lutheran established the office of the Associate Provost for Assessment. The Associate Provost then produced a more sophisticated blueprint for program Reviews. These initiatives resulted in regular revisions and refinements in the Cal Lutheran Program Review Handbook and Template. In 2004, the Provost established the Director of Assessment. In 2011 that position was renamed to the Director of Educational Effectiveness and Institutional Research. Three individuals have served as director of what is now the office Educational Effectiveness and Institutional Research:

2004-2006 – Millie Murray-Ward, PhD

2006 - 2010 – Halyna Kornuta, EdD

2010-2011 – Search for new director

2011 (Summer) - present – Rodney A. Reynolds, PhD

By the time of the 2006-2007 WASC review, three academic programs (English, Math, and Religion) had completed the program review under the new system. The WASC report recommended further devotion of energy and attention to improving our program review processes.

Today program reviews are administered by the Office of Education Effectiveness and Institutional Research (under the office of Academic Affairs [Provost]) . Faculty oversight and input comes from the Educational Effectiveness Committee.

By Fall 2014, each program will have conducted at least one review. Some will have completed two, and a few will have embarked on a third review.

The first program review template imagined the academic quality of the program largely by "input" measures: the academic credentials, expertise and experience of faculty; the ratio of full-time faculty to SCUS, the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty, conformity of curriculum to established standards in the fields, the quality of resources, etc. That template did not altogether omit attention to student learning, but assessed it in terms of student satisfaction and professional achievement (survey of majors), graduate school and employment placement, and alumni satisfaction. All of these are important things to know and have retained their place in the current program review.

In 2006-2007, however, in response to the WASC review, Cal Lutheran started a push to include more sophisticated assessment of student learning in the program reviews. Cal Lutheran had already begun in 200 to define university-wide learning outcomes. Besides explaining how they incorporated University SLOs into their curricular, programs now must provide program-specific learning outcomes (PLOs) and to map their curricula, showing how students learn, practice, and master learning outcomes. Programs now must identify and archive key (signature) assignments as evidence of student learning.