

Ithaca College

Academic Program Assessment and Planning Guidelines

“Assessment is a process that focuses on student learning, a process that involves reviewing and reflecting on practice as academics have always done, but in a more planned and careful way.” (*Assessment Essentials*, Palomba and Banta, p.1)

Introduction: The continuing quality and strength of its academic programs* ensure that Ithaca College will remain a vital and attractive learning community. One means for the college to preserve the quality of its academic programs is to review and assess its curricula and student and faculty accomplishments periodically, using a variety of established and reliable measures of success. Some disciplinary accrediting bodies have adopted a student outcomes assessment model for certifying their programs, and various state, regional, and federal accrediting and funding organizations are increasingly using outcomes assessment as a basis for determining program effectiveness. One of these is the Middle States Commission, which requires that Ithaca College implement an institutional outcomes assessment program during the 2001-02 academic year.

Information gathered through assessment can be beneficial for planning the future direction of an academic program or department. Program strengths and weaknesses can be identified through a comprehensive assessment in order to enhance quality or address problems. To bring focus to the Academic Program Assessment and Planning effort at Ithaca College, the mission statement and goals set forth in the Institutional Plan (Fall 2000) developed by the Planning and Priorities Committee will serve as the basis for individual department and program assessment and planning projects, the guidelines for which are given below.

Self-study: The most common method for reviewing and assessing an academic program is to conduct a self-study once every five or six years. To address our Middle States obligation we will begin the cycle of program assessment and planning during the 2001-02 academic year with approximately seven academic departments/units conducting a self-study and reporting the results by May 2002. With the goal of fostering objective review and thoughtful planning, the academic department/unit should consult closely with the dean or appropriate administrator throughout the process and submit its report to the dean or appropriate administrator with a copy to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. A comprehensive presentation on assessment in higher education is found in *Assessment Essentials* (1999: ISBN 0-7879-4180-8, Jossey-Bass) by Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta.

Timeline: The department in consultation with the dean will decide on the year during which it will undertake the assessment and planning project. The assessment and planning project should be initiated at least one year in advance of submitting the report. Generally, the department should organize its project and begin to gather data during the spring semester a year prior to the final report date, make analysis and drafting assignments for the following fall semester, and compile the final report during the spring semester of the report year. The report should be submitted to the dean and provost no later than June 1.

*An academic program is the courses and curricula offered by an academic department or unit.

Guidelines and Format for Self-study Report:**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (one or two pages)

INTRODUCTION:

Overview narrative

- Describe the process used to establish the assessment and planning procedure.
- Identify the information sought that is the basis for the assessment, the questions asked in the process, and the sources that were used to provide this information.
- How will the information be used to positively influence student learning outcomes?
- How will the assessment results be used to influence program planning in the department/unit during the next 3-5 years?
- Other

ASSESSMENT:

A. Program mission and goals

- What are the program mission and goals?
- Relate the mission and goals to those in the college's Institutional Plan and the respective school mission.
- Describe progress toward the attainment of the program goals.
- Identify specific program strengths and weaknesses with proposed remedies.
- Identify innovative program features/developments.
- Describe the most critical issues and challenges facing the department and the steps planned to address them.
- Describe departmental efforts in place to participate or assist in student recruitment.
- Describe the relationship your department has with internal and external programs and/or organizations.
- What relationship does the department have with other fields or disciplines within the college (e.g., interdisciplinary courses, programs, minors, etc.)?

B. Curriculum structure and review

- Describe the structure of the curriculum and how it was determined.
 - How is the curriculum structured at the introductory level?
 - What is the structure and rationale of the intermediate and advanced courses?
 - Identify the capstone course(s) and give their goals.
 - In what ways are the students involved in research and/or creative activities?
- Discuss ways in which the curriculum meets standards and expectations established nationally within the discipline.
- Review and assess the department's curriculum. Describe the ways in which the department assesses the degree to which it meets its mission and goals.

- How does the department assess the success of its individual courses and programs?
- Has the department identified student learning outcomes that are to be achieved (e.g., performance standards, skills levels, etc.)?
 - What means are/will be used to measure their accomplishment?
 - What meaningful data are available and how can they be obtained from sources in the field for the purpose of determining how well the program is preparing students for their work in the field?
 - When did the most recent curriculum review occur and what was its impact?
 - What plans are there for future curriculum review and revision?
 - What do alumni think were their most beneficial experiences?

C. Student learning outcomes

- Identify student learning outcomes that are to be achieved (performance standards, skill levels, and culminating projects and/or activity).
- What means are being/will be used to measure their accomplishment (e.g., student test scores on final exams or standardized tests; review of portfolio or senior projects; student focus groups; exit interviews; alumni feedback and accomplishments)?

D. Faculty profile

- Provide a current *curriculum vitae* for each faculty member that includes scholarly and professional accomplishments for the last 3-5 years.
- Detail the future direction for this activity, identifying both individual and collective plans.

E. Quantitative data and analysis (for the last three years)

- application, acceptance, and enrollment data
- annual student credit hours generated by majors
- annual student credit hours generated by program
- annual FTE faculty (breakout full-time, part-time, and adjunct)
- annual cost for instruction based on FTE faculty (FTE salary total divided by the number of student credit hours generated)
- annual faculty-student ratio
- annual number of degrees awarded
- program components that add value to the college community or student learning environment
- student placement record
- market trend analysis
- How does this information influence program planning for the next five years?
- Provide information on placement and accomplishments of departmental graduates in the last five years.

F. Resources

- Summarize the departmental budget over the last three to five years considering operating, capital, library expenditures.
- Summarize anticipated departmental personnel, space, and specialized resource needs based on the information presented in this self-study.

G. Outside consultant's/evaluator's assessment (specialist in the academic discipline familiar with the program philosophy and institutional context). The outside consultant/evaluator should be provided with information on the curriculum, faculty accomplishments, and student outcomes with an explanation of anticipated future direction and plans. A campus visit should be planned as part of the assessment. If the Introduction and Assessment portions of the self-study are complete, they may be sent as the documentation for the outside consultant/evaluator's review. The consultant/evaluator's report should consist of an oral presentation for the department and dean at the conclusion of the visit and a written report submitted to the dean within one month. The dean will share the report with the department.

H. Assessment of student preparation by persons in the field (student field experience supervisors, alumnae/i, employers, etc.) An inventory and/or anecdotal information, including recommendations, from the assessors may be used.

I. Analysis and Interpretation: summary of assessment information and conclusions that will influence planning for the future

ACTION PLAN:

Provide a report that details the department's plan for the next three to five years in the areas of curriculum and program development, student learning outcomes, staffing, resource needs, and other aspects of the department's work. This plan should result from analysis and assessment of the information and data gathered locally by the department, the external consultant/reviewer's report (Item G, above), and information from persons in the field who are able to assess student preparation (Item H, above).

**Depending on the nature of their course offerings and degree programs, some departments/units may not be able to address specific items in the report format. A brief explanation will satisfy the discussion.

GLB:3/01

Approved by APC: 4/20/01