

PROGRAM REVIEW AND LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT UPDATE

A periodic report on work and activities from the Office of Academic Program Review and Assessment – Ellen Wentland, Director

December 2009

FOURTH EDITION

This is the fourth edition of what is planned as a periodic newsletter. As noted in the first April 2008 edition:

The major goal is to share with the entire campus community the significant work – significant in terms of the commitment of time and effort as well as in the results - that is being done by NECC faculty and administrators on program review and outcomes assessment activities. Individuals from outside NECC have also been engaged, including representatives of area four-year colleges and employers. It is hoped that through sharing, the work that has been done will be supported, and the work that will be done will be encouraged and better informed.

For a detailed list of other purposes, see the first edition at:
http://www.necc.mass.edu/program_review_and_outcomes/docs/fs_pr_0804_newsletter.pdf.

PROGRAM REVIEW & OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT WEBSITE

Over the past year, the website devoted to program review and outcomes assessment activities has been greatly expanded, with two major goals:

- To provide guidance and resources to those working on reviews, assessment plans, and assessment activities, and
- To serve as a “public” space for the display of work being done at the college on these two important processes.

With respect to these goals, the website includes such materials as:

- the program review schedule,
- the *Institutional Program Review Handbook*,
- the *Guide for Developing and Implementing an Outcomes Assessment Plan*,
- completed program outcomes and curriculum maps,
- sample outcomes assessment plans,
- sample completed program reviews,
- assessment tools developed and used at NECC,

- agendas, sample handouts, and PowerPoint presentations from the annual Program Review and Assessment Summits.

(For these and more, see:

http://www.necc.mass.edu/program_review_and_outcomes/index.php.

Assessment Tools Developed and Used at NECC

One of the very impressive results of NECC’s outcomes assessment work has been the development and use of a large number of assessment tools, mostly in the form of **rubrics**. These rubrics are carefully developed, usually involving input from a number of program faculty members, and are typically distributed to students along with their assignments. **Anecdotal feedback indicates that these tools have been helpful in a variety of ways to students and faculty alike. Students are pleased to be more aware of specific expectations related to their assignments and faculty increase their shared understanding of these expectations.** Often, in addition to their use for program level assessment, these rubrics are used for the purposes of course grading.

Although only a sample of all of the rubrics that have been created, **15 rubrics are currently posted on the assessment website!** These serve both as documentation of work done and guides for those now designing rubrics, and include criteria related to such skills as:

- **oral and written communication,**
- **critical thinking,**
- **computer/technology, and**
- **lesson plan development and delivery.**

Other tools on the website include a **graduate survey** and **practicum evaluation forms**.

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Outcomes Assessment Work – The Process

The assessment of learning outcomes at the program level begins with the program’s development of an **assessment plan**, typically done in conjunction with a

program review. A central document in these plans is a **curriculum map**, which lists **broad program objectives, the learning outcomes associated with those objectives, as well as the courses in the program that support those learning outcomes.**

Assessment activities typically begin in the academic year following the completion of the assessment plans, with the major questions being:

- **Have students learned what we are intending them to learn?**
- **What is the evidence in this regard?**
- **What information do assessment activities provide that can be useful in improving our programs?**

Once begun, this work is an ongoing activity with more programs joining this endeavor each year as assessment plans are completed.

The first work using the NECC process developed in academic year 2005-06 was completed in academic year 2006-07. By approximately the end of the 2009 calendar year, 22 degree programs and 5 certificate programs will have developed outcomes assessment plans using the NECC process - an effort involving program faculty, faculty from other programs and divisions, and external reviewers, for example, area employers or representatives of four-year colleges.

In addition to program specific outcomes, degree programs always included outcomes related to the existing three college wide competencies of critical thinking, writing, and computer fluency. In the fall of 2008, the college adopted a **new set of college-wide objectives, referred to as Core Academic Skills.** Beginning in the fall of 2009, these five skills – **Communication, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, Global Awareness, and Science and Technology** - became the basis for college-wide outcomes to be included in program assessment plans. A draft description of the five skills is available at: http://www.necc.mass.edu/vpacademicaffairs/docs/vpaa_draft_core_academicSkills.pdf

Outcomes Assessment Work – The Results

The first annual Assessment Summit, during which program coordinators present results of their recent assessment work, was held in the fall of 2007. All faculty and staff at the college are invited to attend these summits. **Agendas, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations related to each of the three summits held to date are available at:**

http://www.necc.mass.edu/program_review_and_outcomes/assessment_summits.php

Faculty who presented at the fall 2009 summit are as follows:

Fall 2009 Presentations

Accounting – Kristen Quinn
Business Management/ Business Transfer – Bill Zannini
Early Childhood Education – Gail Feigenbaum
Human Services – Jane Gagliardi
Liberal Arts: Journalism/Communication Option – Amy Callahan
Paramedic Technology – Ralph Wade

Fall 2009 Presentation Highlights

Assessment work in 2008-2009 included methods such as embedding questions in tests, rating products using rubrics, and compiling results of state administered examinations. For these assessments, students were assigned a variety of tasks including writing papers, viewing and reporting on a videotaped interview, presenting a report in class, and taking a standardized practical examination.

Participant feedback included noting a common concern expressed in the various presentations related to student deficiencies in writing skills.

One of the main purposes of outcomes assessment is to identify both program strengths and weaknesses, and to use these as a basis for developing action plans for program improvement. **Examples of these action plans, taken from the PowerPoint presentations offered at the November 2009 Assessment Summit, are presented below:**

Accounting Action Plan

- *Greater emphasis on the treatment of sales discounts not taken in both the net and gross methods*
- *Encouragement for students to take their upper-level accounting courses as soon as possible*
- *Encouragement to get tutoring and increasing the availability of tutoring for both evening and day students*
- *More detailed explanation of the net and gross methods of recording sales in the introductory accounting courses*
- *Reinstitution of higher English and math proficiencies for ACC101 and ACC102 which were eliminated recently*

Business Management/ Transfer Action Plan

In response to the results of the assessment,

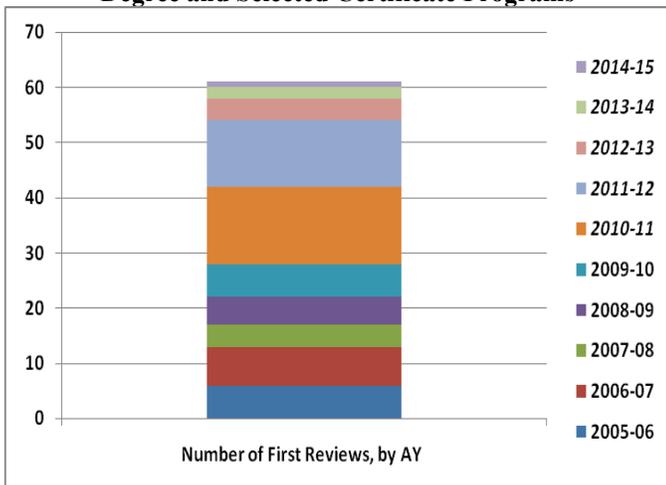
- We will work with the Instructors to assist business students on improving their delivery skills.
- One way of doing that may be to videotape students doing presentations and have the students critique each other.
- Peer appraisals allow the students to both see and experience the issues in delivering effective presentations.
- Delivery of presentations is a critical skill for business students in today's business world.

PROGRAM REVIEWS

Completed To Date

The current program review process was developed to begin in the fall of 2005. A schedule for reviews was also created, and included all degree programs as well as selected certificate programs. The first program reviews following the new process were completed in the spring of 2006. By the end of the 2009-10 academic year, 28 programs will have completed reviews, with 14 fourteen additional programs scheduled to start their reviews in the spring of 2010. In the next four academic years – 2011-12 to 2014-215 – 10 degree and 9 certificate programs will develop their first reviews.

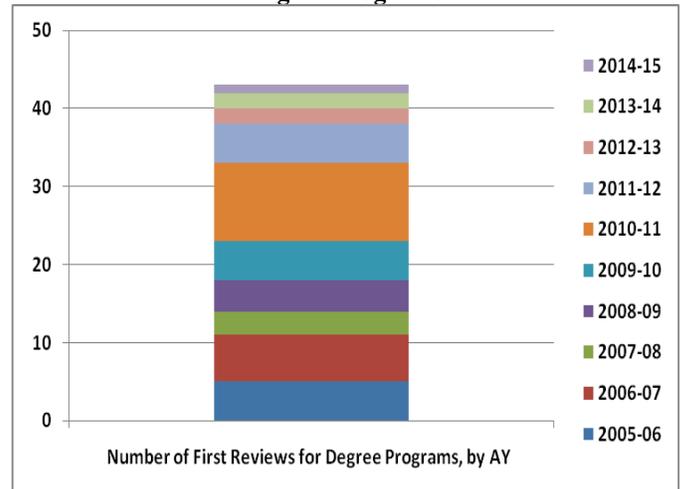
First Program Review Completion and Schedule: All Degree and Selected Certificate Programs



Note: *Italics indicates scheduled in future.*

Considering just the degree programs, all first reviews will be essentially completed early in 2013. The three reviews after that time are for programs created subsequent to 2005, one of which – Liberal Arts: Physical Sciences Option – was developed based on program review results!

First Program Review Completion and Schedule: All Degree Programs



Note: *Italics indicates scheduled in future.*

Also during 2011, programs reviewed in the first years of the process will begin their second review cycle. ((See http://www.necc.mass.edu/facultystaff/docs/fs_prog_review_cycle.pdf.)

The following programs are now completing their reviews:

Business Management Hospitality Option– Sandy Kauffmann

Criminal Justice– Paul Cavan

Liberal Arts: History Option – Steve Russell

Paralegal Studies: Career Option/ Transfer Option/ Certificate – Judith Ciampi

Scheduled for 2010

Programs scheduled to begin reviews in early 2010 include:

General Studies

General Studies: Multi-Media Option

General Studies: Music Option

Illustration

Engineering Science

CAD Certificate

Liberal Arts: Political Science Option

Liberal Arts: Psychology Option

Liberal Arts: Writing Option

Alcohol-Drug Abuse Counseling Certificate

CIS: Information Technology Option

Help Desk Certificate

Web Page Design and Development Certificate

IMPORTANT - You can help (and learn)! If you are able to help your colleagues in the above programs by participating on their review teams, please let them know!

Or contact ewentland@necc.mass.edu.