

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

May 2009

THIRD EDITION

This is the third 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.

To view all editions of the newsletter, go to:

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

PROGRAM REVIEWS

Spring 2009 Completers

The following programs, listed with their review team leaders, completed reviews in spring 2009:

Liberal Arts: Computer and Information Sciences

Option - George Medelinskas

Liberal Arts: Earth Science Option - Mark Reinhold

Liberal Arts: Philosophy Option - Meredith

Gunning

Liberal Arts: Theater Option - Susan Sanders

Paramedic Technology Certificate - Ralph Wade

With these reviews, the total number completed to date is 22!

The Liberal Arts: Earth Science Option team ended up recommending the development of a new program - Liberal Arts: Natural Sciences Option - which would combine Earth Science with the Liberal Arts: Chemistry and Physics Options

programs. Essentially, then, those two programs were included in this cycles' reviews, which brings the total to 24!

External Participation

All of the programs had external representatives on their review teams. These representatives included faculty from Merrimack College, Salem State University, Stonehill College, and The University of Massachusetts at Lowell, as well as an advisory committee member from an area employer.

Program Review Summit

Team leaders presented the results of their reviews at an April 7, 2009 college-wide summit. Sample PowerPoint presentations shown at the summit, which highlight review findings and recommendations, can be found at:

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

General comments offered by various summit attendees include the following:

I always enjoy watching presentations as it gives me a sense of others' work and meaning to the college...I am particularly pleased as I see fellow faculty acknowledging strengths and areas to improve all written in a very positive context.

All of the presentations were strong. It was interesting to see four Liberal Arts Options and to compare them to each other and to the one career program...The presenters and their teams are to be commended for their hard work, open minds, and honesty in exploring their programs and weaknesses and strengths.

I really enjoy the presentations, particularly in areas I am unfamiliar with.

Everyone seems to come to program review kicking and screaming, but they come away appreciating what they've learned about their programs and how they can make it more productive. ...Very informative session; I always walk away with new ideas for my programs.

I really enjoy attending the summits; I learn so much about what the other programs are doing and I always walk away with information that can help me in my outcomes assessment work.

Scheduled for 2010

Early in the 2009 spring term, 11 programs - 6 degree and 5 certificate – began their program reviews with orientation sessions. These are:

Business Management Hospitality Option – Sandra Kauffmann

Business Management Hospitality Certificate – Sandra Kauffmann

Community Support Human Service Practitioner Certificate – Jane Gagliardi

Criminal Justice – Paul Cavan

Healthcare Practice Management Option – Kathy Hudson

Law Enforcement Certificate – Paul Cavan

Liberal Arts: History Option – Steve Russell

Medical Assistant Certificate – Kathy Hudson

Paralegal Studies: Career Option – Judith Ciampi

Paralegal Studies: Transfer Option – Judith Ciampi

Paralegal Studies Certificate – Judith Ciampi

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 or me know!

Program Review and the NEASC Report

Some of the information provided in program reviews has turned out to be useful for those working on the NEASC accreditation report. For example, in program reviews, faculty report on the effectiveness of various campus resources, including the library. The team working on **Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources** reviewed the information on this topic provided in reviews completed to date, and found it

to be very useful. Also, the team working on **Standard Five: Faculty** was able to learn a great deal about the professional development activities engaged in by faculty from information provided in faculty charts as part of the review process.

Update on Program Review Action Plans

Program strengths and areas for improvement identified in the process of program review are posted on the website, along with action plans to address the improvement needs. Regular updates are also provided on progress made in carrying out the plans. To view these summaries, plans, and updates, see:

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

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Outcomes Assessment Work – The Process

The first outcomes assessment work using the NECC process developed in academic year 2005-06 was completed in academic year 2006-07.

Once begun, this work is an ongoing activity with more programs joining this endeavor each year as assessment plans are completed, usually in conjunction with program reviews. **Typically, actual assessment work begins in the academic year following the completion of the plans.**

By the end of 2009, it is expected that 23 degree programs and 8 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. Once outcomes are identified, programs conduct various activities to assess those outcomes, 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?***

It is important to note that certain programs, most commonly those with external accreditation, have assessment plans in place and regularly conduct assessment work outside of the NECC process.

The outcomes developed by programs mainly focus on program specific knowledge and skills.

Recently, NECC has adopted five core academic skills that define the areas in which students at NECC are expected to develop. These five skills will be the focus of insitutional-level assessment. In addition, when articulating program outcomes, coordinators and faculty will be asked to consider which of these five skills are most important/evident in their programs and to establish learning outcomes for them as appropriate.

Assessment work usually begins with faculty identifying:

- An assignment or product required of students in the program, and
- The program outcomes related to that product.

For example, a topic paper may be assessed with regard to specific program knowledge, but also considering such general skills as critical thinking and writing.

For the 2008-09 academic year, approximately 14 programs will be working on assessing their program outcomes, with results presentations to be scheduled in the fall of 2009.

Outcomes Assessment Work – The Results

Fall 2007 Presentations

In the fall of 2007, at an all-college forum, results of assessment work in academic year 2006-07 were presented for the following programs:

Accounting – Kelly Lalonde
Dental Assisting – Kerin Hamidiani
Early Childhood Education – Gail Feigenbaum
Graphic Design – Patricia Kidney
Liberal Arts – Suzanne VanWert

Fall 2008 Presentations

In the fall of 2008, again at an all-college forum, faculty from the following 11 programs presented the results of assessment work completed during the 2007-08 academic year.

Business Management/ Business Transfer – Bill Zannini
Dental Assisting – Kerin Hamidiani
Early Childhood Education – Gail Feigenbaum
Electronic Technology – Lori Heymans/Paul Chanley
Elementary Education – Jeri Bayer
Graphic Design – Patricia Kidney
Liberal Arts: Journalism/Communication Option – Amy Callahan
Paralegal Studies: Career Option/ Transfer Option/ Certificate - Judith Ciampi

Some highlights of these presentations, and comments from attendees at the fall 2008 assessment summit were described in the December 2008 edition of this newsletter.

Early Childhood Education: Progress on Outcomes Assessment

The Early Childhood Education Program was in the first group of programs that in 2005-06 used the newly developed processes to complete a program review and develop an outcomes assessment plan. The program outcomes were mapped onto the standards of the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the organization which accredits this program. Accreditation was awarded in September 2007.

Gail Feigenbaum, coordinator of the program, began work in the fall of 2006 to assess the 23 developed outcomes. These included 6 outcomes related to the college-wide competencies. The method most commonly used by programs for assessment is to identify a student product reflective of program outcomes, and to evaluate the product with respect to those outcomes. It is usually the case that multiple outcomes can be assessed using a single product.

For example, in the Early Childhood Education Program, students' construction of and oral presentations concerning a model early childhood classroom were used to evaluate four outcomes related to students' oral presentation skills, creation of a developmentally appropriate learning environment, identification of appropriate classroom materials, and articulation of a teaching philosophy.

As another example, students' completion of a lesson plan was used to assess their ability to plan and implement appropriate learning experiences, make and implement leaning accommodations, and apply knowledge of content areas in their lesson planning.

As a result of the efforts of Gail and other Early Childhood Education faculty, as of the end of the spring term 2009, nearly all of the outcomes in her program will have been assessed!

As a way of sharing the work done in the program, Gail has participated in the past two Assessment Summit meetings, and has also invited members of her Advisory Committee to results' presentations.

In the fall, plans include identifying methods for assessing the remaining few outcomes, as well as strategizing about an ongoing assessment process for the Early Childhood Education program.

Methods Used by Programs to Assess Outcomes

Faculty at NECC use a **variety of methods** to assess students' achievement of the program outcomes. The methods are selected which are judged to be best suited to obtain the information relevant to the particular outcomes being examined. This information can involve demonstrations of knowledge or skills.

The most common method involves the development of a **rubric** which details the criteria to be applied to the students' products. These rubrics are typically developed by program coordinators and faculty, with input from the Director of Academic Program Review and Outcomes Assessment. Most often, they are shared with students as a way to communicate faculty expectations regarding the assignment.

Examples of programs which have used rubrics include Business Management, Business Transfer, Elementary Education, Human Services, Liberal Arts, Liberal Arts: Biology Option, and Liberal Arts: Journalism/Communication Option.

Another method, used by the Accounting Program, involved the **embedding of particular questions** related to program outcomes in students' examinations.

In programs which include a practicum experience, such as Dental Assisting or Early Childhood Education, **practicum evaluation forms** have been developed or revised to include information related to program outcomes.

Other methods used include **surveys**, used by Graphic Design and Dental Assisting, and analysis of **licensure examination data**, used by Dental Assisting.

Typically, completed forms are given to the Director of Academic Program Review and Outcomes Assessment for analysis and summary, after which the results are shared with the program coordinator and faculty.

THE PROGRAM REVIEW – OUTCOMES ASSESMENT WEBSITE

The new website has been made "live"! Please see: http://www.necc.mass.edu/program_review_and_outcomes/index.php

There are still many features on this site that need to be populated, but eventually, it will include many new tools and features such as:

- Sample completed program reviews
- Agendas and sample PowerPoint presentations from the program review summits
- Program outcome and curriculum maps
- Sample outcomes assessment plans
- Sample program outcomes assessment summary reports
- Assessment tools used at NECC
- Sample PowerPoint presentations from the assessment summits

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