

Georgia Southwestern State University

Comprehensive Program Review of Academic Programs

Overview

Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) of Academic Programs provides a common base for internal review and evaluation of all Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) academic programs. The Faculty, Academic Unit Heads, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs participate in the CPR and incorporate CPR findings in their recommendations for short- and long-range institutional planning.

As a collaborative venture between academic units and the Office of Academic Affairs, Comprehensive Program Review serves four primary purposes:

- To elicit informed judgments about how well an academic unit is performing given its collective resources.
- To make projections about emerging opportunities and the ways a unit may best take advantage of those opportunities.
- To ensure that the unit has a strategic plan and a plan for implementing it.

In addition, the CPR process assists academic units in maintaining high academic quality and stimulates change that enhances the unit's performance. When done well, the process is both an honest evaluation of current circumstances and a candid dialogue about future possibilities and mutual commitments. The discussion and thought invested in the process leads to actions designed to increase the value of the unit's contributions to undergraduate and graduate education, to the disciplines and professions through the generation of new knowledge, and to society through application of knowledge and outreach.

GSW is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and for the university as a whole to meet the requirements of reaffirmation, each unit within GSW must individually meet those requirements that apply to academic programs. A demonstrable relationship between an academic unit's mission and GSW's mission is a crucial basis for demonstrating compliance with the SACSCOC accreditation principles that apply to academic programs. The specific accreditation principles that apply to academic programs include:

- The unit is composed of competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the unit mission and the goals of its programs
- The faculty identifies expected outcomes for its programs; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results
- The unit assesses student success with respect to program completion, job placement rates, and state licensing examinations, where appropriate.
- For each major in a degree program, the unit assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field.

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- The unit's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the unit's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with unit and institutional goals, and at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals
- The unit's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs
- The unit has adequate financial resources to support its mission and learning outcomes
- The unit has adequate physical facilities that appropriately serve the needs of its programs

In addition, graduate programs need to demonstrate that those programs also meet the following requirements:

- The unit's graduate programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs
- The unit structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research or appropriate professional practice and training experiences

Academic Programs in the School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Nursing maintain external accreditation, and therefore, CPRs for these schools are aligned with the regular accreditation reviews, and follow the format dictated by their accrediting organization. The frequency of these reviews is determined by the external accrediting organization, although none exceeds ten years. Academic Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Computing and Mathematics participate in an internal CPR process as outlined below. Bachelor programs are reviewed every seven years, and graduate programs every ten; minor programs and single discipline specific certificate programs are reviewed as part of the regular CPR process at the same time as the degree programs in the academic unit that houses them. The General Education Program (the Core) is reviewed every five years at the time of the SACSCOC Interim Fifth-Year Report and the time of SACS COC reaffirmation, and multi-disciplinary certificate programs are reviewed every ten years as part of the SACS COC reaffirmation process. Academic Units undergoing either external or internal CPR are not expected to file annual reports for those academic years in which they are under review, i.e., if the CPR occurs during 2014-15, no 2014-15 annual report will be due in fall 2015.

Responsibilities for CPR Process

The Office of Academic Affairs oversees the CPR process by setting the schedule of internal reviews, or implementing the schedule set by the external accrediting organizations, and insuring that all parts of the process are complete; however, the process begins within the academic unit under review and places the following responsibilities on the faculty serving each program:

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- Development of a self-study that draws evidence-based conclusions about the current strengths and areas for improvement of the program, shows how the program has improved since its last review, and identifies specific areas of focus for future improvement
- Participation in an external review of the program
- Development of a response to conclusions and recommendations of the external review, and of a strategic plan for enacting these recommendations.

Deans overseeing each program under review have the following responsibilities:

- Providing feedback on the self-study while in development
- Recommending an External Reviewer to the Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Participation in all external reviews
- Forwarding completed self-study, external review report, and unit response to the external review report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Deans may choose to include their own conclusions or recommendations regarding the program under review.

In addition to overseeing the CPR Process, the Vice President of Academic Affairs has the following responsibilities:

- Participation in all external reviews
- Approving and inviting the External Reviewer
- Discussion of review results with the academic unit representatives and the deans
- Submitting the results of all CPRs to the University System of Georgia by June 30 of the fiscal year in which

The Self-study

The self-study is intended to help faculty and administrators assess a unit's current situation, its emerging opportunities, and its plans for the future. The members of the unit itself undertake the self-study in order to take a thorough and reflective look at the unit as a prelude to developing plans for its future. The questions below are intended to guide a unit in its self-study and planning efforts. They are also framed to focus the attention of the review team that adds an external perspective to the process. The self-study narrative does not need to take the form of itemized questions followed by a specific answers, but each question that applies to the unit should be addressed somewhere in the self-study. Each self-study should include an executive summary of the unit's strengths and areas for improvement, its progress since last being reviewed, and its plans for the future. In addition to addressing the guiding questions, the self-study narrative should contain a brief history of the unit and its programs, descriptions of all degree or certificate programs offered by the unit, and any other information that will

enable the review team to make good use of their time on campus. Units are encouraged to provide data and data-driven analyses by making use of reports routinely available through Institutional Research, and their discipline's professional societies in addition to data collected by the unit.

The material in the self-study should reflect continuous and ongoing planning, information gathering, self-review and use of results. The idea is to reflect on these things:

- What are we trying to accomplish as a unit/program?
- Are we accomplishing our goals?
- How do we know?
- How do we use the data to improve?
- Have attempted improvements worked?
- What assessment activities were planned? What activities are on-going? What activities were completed?
- What changes (if any) were implemented as a result of assessment? What changes (if any) were proposed but are not addressed yet?
- What curricular and/or degree changes have there been since the unit's last CPR, and why?

Format of the Internal Self-study

Executive Summary should include (1-2 pages in Times New Roman 12pt or similar font, single-spaced with 1 inch margins all around):

- Major Strengths
- Areas for Improvement
- Key Opportunities
- Key Challenges
- Draft Strategic Plan to maintain the unit's strengths, address its weaknesses, take advantage of its opportunities, and meet its challenges during the next seven years. To the extent that it is possible, this plan should correlate to GSW's current strategic plan; however, the primary purpose of a unit strategic plan is to improve the fulfillment of the unit's mission.

Major strengths might include such things as strong career or graduate school placement rates, continuing success of graduates in their careers, or strong retention, progression and graduation rates for the program. Areas for improvement might include the same indicators if they are weaker than one would hope. Key opportunities might be any practice or environmental factor that you anticipate will contribute to future improvement in program outcomes, and key challenges might be any factors that you anticipate will hinder future improvement in program outcomes.

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Self-study Narrative should be limited to twenty-five pages, and should address in detail the five points covered in the executive summary providing some evidence to support the conclusions drawn in the executive summary. The narrative should include a brief history of the unit and its programs, descriptions of all degree or certificate programs offered by the unit, and any other information that will enable the review team to make good use of their time on campus, as well. Wherever possible, the narrative should demonstrate continuity with previous CPR improvement plans.

Appendices should be limited to the material necessary substantiate the claims made in the narrative that are not available on the unit's or the university's web site. The appendix must include a current vita for each tenured, and each tenure-track faculty member who has a full or part-time appointment in the unit. Each vita should be limited to four pages covering the period since the last CPR, and should not include personal information, such as home addresses or phone numbers, or cell phone numbers.

The External Review

Since fresh perspectives improve assessment and planning, an external reviewer will be invited to familiarize him or herself with the unit and to take part in the deliberations about the unit's assessment and planning. External reviewers will be expected to provide candid assessments of the program's current strengths and weaknesses and their best judgment on where the unit should invest its intellectual and other resources in the future. The external reviewer will head the review team that will also include a GSW faculty member from outside the school or college that houses the academic unit under review.

The external review team will be chosen by the Provost with advice from the academic unit, the Dean of the school or college and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and planning. External reviewers will be established scholars whose areas of expertise represent a diversity of interests coinciding with the areas of importance to the unit and whose programs are regarded as successful, innovative, and effective in managing resources. The GSW Faculty members on the team should come from an academic unit that is externally accredited and have experience with assessment and planning. For units with graduate programs, GSW Faculty member should have graduate faculty status. Review Teams may include a current student or an alumnus of the program, but this is not compulsory.

To help the VPAA identify appropriate external reviewer candidates, the academic unit provides a list of two to four programs or departments at other institutions that model different forms of excellence to which the unit aspires. To the extent that it is possible, recommended external reviewers should come from programs with roughly the same number of faculty and the similar financial resources; recommended reviewers should be from SACSCOC accredited institutions, primarily from outside Georgia. To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, individuals with particularly close relationships to the program (former faculty, former mentors or students of program faculty, research collaborators) should not be recommended and will not be used as external reviewers. The Office of Academic Affairs will identify and contact individual scholars at the institutions nominated and make arrangements with them to do the review online.

Procedures for the External Review Report

There will be two web conferences required during each review, an initial meeting to get the review started and an exit interview after the external review is complete.

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After the initial meeting, the review team, including students or alumni, will be provided with access to the self-study through Google Docs, as well as a template for the external review report. The review team will have two to three weeks to complete the review report.

Once the final report is received by the Provost, the exit meeting will be scheduled between the GSW Provost, Dean, and department chair, if applicable to discuss the external review report. The external reviewer will receive an honorarium after the completion of the exit interview.

The Review Report

After reviewing all the pertinent information, the team will prepare a final report addressing how the unit's strengths can be maintained and improvements made in the future. If there are choices to be made, for example, among sub-disciplines for a unit's focal point, the alternatives should be outlined and critiqued. Obviously, if the University invested more resources in a program, the University would reap additional benefits. What the University asks of reviewers is a much more crucial task; they are asked to provide advice about the quality of what the unit does, how current resources are used, and how they might be used better to achieve the unit's aspirations.

The review team should agree during its deliberations on a single, consolidated report (typically about five pages of single-spaced text). Use of bulleting for items is acceptable. The report should address the items highlighted in the Self-study Executive Summary, as well as any other issues deemed pertinent by the review team. The report should conclude with recommended strategic priorities for the unit and GSW designed to improve the effectiveness of the unit's programs.

Disposition of the Reports

The external reviewer should notify the Provost when the report is completed. Copies will be downloaded from Google Docs and forwarded to the unit, and to the unit's Dean, each of whom will have an opportunity to respond in writing to the report, sending their responses to the VPAA, and to participate in the exit. The Provost will prepare the Office of Academic Affairs response and send it, along with copies of the consultants' report, unit's response and Dean's response, to the President. Copies of this packet and of the Self-study will be posted in GSW dedicated CPR area of the university web site, which is accessible to Deans, the unit, and others within the University who have been involved in the evaluation process. The Provost will also submit the report to the University System of Georgia by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the review occurred.