

# **Institutional Assessment and Program Review: An Accreditation Requirement**

Presented to the Hawaii Community Colleges, January 2004

By Barbara Beno



## **General Accreditation Expectations**

- An institution of higher education engages in continuous improvement of “institutional effectiveness.”
  - This continuous improvement is achieved through a cycle of “analysis of qualitative and quantitative data in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.” (Std. I. Preamble)

## **General Accreditation Expectations 2**

- Throughout the Standards, there is reference to the requirement that the following components of institutional functioning be assessed:
  - Institutional structures (including policies and procedures) and resources;
  - Student achievement (student enrollment, persistence, completion, graduation, job placement, transfer)
  - Student Learning Outcomes
    - (These areas correspond to the evolution of Standards)

## **Have Accreditation Expectations Changed?**

- Expectations that institutions engage in assessment are NOT new.
  - The Eligibility Requirements, which institutions met before gaining accreditation, required institutional planning and evaluation (See ER 19).
  - Institutions have always been required to engage in an external audit, which is a form of assessment of fiscal management practices (See ER 18).
  - Each self study must necessarily be based on institutional assessment if an institution is to honestly address the accreditation question: “How well do we meet standards?”

## **Have Accreditation Expectations Changed? - 2**

- Accreditors initially allowed institutions to engage in their own form of assessment, according to capacity.
- The ACCJC, in the 1990’s, began to define expected institutional data with the MIS data element project done for California and Hawaii Community Colleges; these data elements became the “standard”.
- The US Congress has, through its legislation about accreditation, codified the expectation that accreditors collect these data.
- What may have seemed optional is now, and has been for more than five years, required.

## What Congress Expects of Accreditors

- That accreditors collect and review data on an institution's student achievement, including "enrollments, graduation rate, completion rate, job placement rate, and transfer rate", as well as "student achievement of learning outcomes" as well as financial aid-related data such as loan default rates and policies.
- That accreditors assure that the institution has sound fiscal and other management processes and the capacity to function effectively and achieve its mission.
- That accreditors require institutions to report annually on some of these data elements (these vary with various pieces of HERA legislation). Distance education enrollments and success are currently under special scrutiny.

## What the ACCJC Requires

- Overall institutional assessment:
  - "The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning. Implementation and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which its mission is accomplished. (Std. 1, Preamble).
  - The institution "demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve learning. (Std. I B)

## A Closer Look at Standard I B

- 1. Ongoing, self-reflective and collegial dialogue about continuous improvement of learning.
- 2 and 3. Sets goals for improvement, assesses its progress.
- 4. Provides evidence planning is broad based and leads to improvement.
- 5. The institution uses documented assessment results to communicate matters of quality to the public.
- 6. Institution assures effectiveness of its planning and resource distribution by assessing all parts of the system.
- 7. The institution assesses its assessment strategies.

## Institutional Assessment, Planning and Program Review

- Accreditation requirements, and federal requirements of accreditors, call for institutions to conduct regular "program review."
- "Program Review" is the assessment, analysis, improvement and re-assessment of a coherent "chunk" of the institution.
  - The federal government requires accreditors to require review of educational "programs", which accreditors have operationally defined as either "departments" or courses of study or educational experiences leading to a degree or certificate or other student-centered objective.
  - Institutions must also assess overall institutional effectiveness – assessing financial management, planning, etc.

## A Closer Look at Standard II

- A. "The institution offers high quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer.." and
- Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes."
- These provisions are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

## A Closer Look at Standard II

- 1. a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics and economy of its community. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs, and assess student progress.
- 1.c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates and degrees, assesses student achievement and uses assessment to improve.

## A Closer Look at Standard II

- A.2.e. “The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, future needs and plans.”
- A.2.f. “The institution engages in . . .evaluation . . .to assure currency and measure achievement of stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general education, vocational education and degrees.”

## A Closer Look at Standard II

- Standard II B. Preamble: “The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve effectiveness.”
- 3. “The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population, and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.”
- 4. “The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting student needs and provides evidence they contribute to student learning.”

## A Closer Look at Standard II

- Std. II.C. “Library and other learning support services are sufficient to support the institution’s instructional programs and the intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered.
- The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve their effectiveness.

## What is Program Review?

- The process through which an institution meets the standards listed above, and assures:
  - Student needs are assessed and programs designed to meet student educational needs.
  - Programs are designed to be relevant, current, and lead to desirable and useful educational outcomes.
  - Student achievement is tracked and analyzed, and the program makes plans to improve student achievement.
  - Student learning outcomes are achieved, and assessment of outcomes is used to improve the educational service, including its pedagogy and educational design.

## What Data Should Program Review Include?

- Data on student demographics and needs upon entering the program or institution (their starting point).
- A review of the programs mission and educational objectives to ensure they are relevant, current, and useful and address student educational goals (including comparisons to other programs, or workforce needs analyses).
- A review of the student learning outcomes designed for the program and the related pedagogies.
- Data on student enrollment in the program, on student achievement, on student learning outcomes.

## What Data Should Program Review Include?

- Analyses of the above data, an discussion of the meaning of those analyses, and identification of strengths and weaknesses of the program.
- Plans for improvement of the program, with resources and other needs identified, or plans for discontinuation of the program.
  - These plans should be integrated with overall institutional planning.
  - The plans should form the priorities for both the program and institution’s distribution of resources.

## What Data Should Program Review Include?

- Some program review data will be quantitative data: assessment scores for entering students, number of entering students, completion, graduation, transfer, job placement rates or numbers, etc.
- Some program review data will be qualitative: descriptions of student learning outcomes, of student special needs, of pedagogical design, etc.
- Program review should always be done in a historical context: how has the institution improved (or not) over time, how have student needs changed (or not) over time.
- Program review *should include longitudinal data.*

## A Closer Look at Standard III

- Std. III Preamble: “The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to achieve institutional effectiveness.”
- See Std. III A. 6. , III B.2.b, III C.2, and III D.3. which all require assessment of other campus functions: human resources, facilities management, fiscal management and technology.

## A Closer Look at Standard IV

- Std. IV B 2.b says “The *president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning process by*
  - Establishing a collegial process that sets goals and priorities.
  - Ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions.
  - Ensuring educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student learning outcomes, and
  - Establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.

## Time for Questions

[accjcb@pacbell.net](mailto:accjcb@pacbell.net)  
[accj1@pacbell.net](mailto:accj1@pacbell.net)  
(415) 506-0234