Fullerton College Program Review and Planning Committee

Handbook for Instructional Programs

13-Aug 2021

Introduction

       If program review did not exist, we would have to invent it. We are a college, a community of scholars who believe that research and empirical data are the building blocks of responsible planning and improvement. Planning for improvement necessarily means analyzing the past and discussing how to make the future better. Even if program review were not legally mandated, the Fullerton College faculty would create it.

       Serendipitously, there already exist legal requirements and institutional mandates that have led to the widespread adoption of program review and planning by all 114 California Community Colleges. Aptly, the accrediting commission that certifies each college every seven years makes it clear that the commission expects colleges to engage in regular, meaningful program review and planning. The state's academic senate expects program review and planning, and it offers guidance on best practices. Program review and planning also anchor the College's compliance with California Ed Code and Title 5. According to Ed Code, "improv[ing] the quality of undergraduate education" is "a central priority of California's colleges and universities." (Sec. 66050) Crucially, the authorities just cited insist that when a college carries out program review and planning, it should be a faculty-led effort. Each faculty elects a Faculty Senate[1] endowed with the legal purview known as "10+1." Number 9 on the 10+1 list is "processes for program review." (Title 5, Sec. 53200 (b)(c))

       So let's get to it, shall we?

       Every four years Fullerton College faculty members in each instructional program[2] write a comprehensive program review and planning self-study. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provides each program with data that show how the program has performed over the past few years.

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[1] Most California Community Colleges use the term "Academic Senate." Fullerton College has always used the term "Faculty Senate." (*Insert shrug emoji here*.)

[2] For the purposes of simplicity, this handbook will use the term "program," which means any series of courses leading to a degree or certificate. Usually each academic department writes one program review self-study that encompasses all of its programs. Some departments may decide that each program needs its own self-study. In consultation with the Program Review and Planning Committee, those departments may decide to write separate self-studies for each program, or they can choose to write just one self-study.

Faculty members can also find more data by using [Tableau](#). They may also decide to include additional data they collected on their own, such as student survey results. Program faculty meet and discuss what the data reveal about the program's strengths and weaknesses, paying special attention to areas where the program can be more equitable and inclusive of all students. In planning for improvement, faculty members are encouraged to think creatively about improvements they can make that are fully within their ambit, for example classroom policies, grading practices, communication with students, and course curricula. Sometimes more money is needed. Funding requests can range from requesting a new full-time faculty member, to requesting new software, to requesting lab equipment, to requesting professional learning opportunities for faculty (what we used to call "staff development activities"). At the end of a self-study, therefore, faculty will have a new plan for improvement and potentially a brief list of funding requests that will help them implement the plan.

In the interest of treating every program fairly the College has developed a process for handling the funding requests that faculty include in their comprehensive self-studies. Incidentally, this is the same process we use every year for handling funding requests that derive from annual update forms. The first step in the process is for the department to turn in the self-study to the division dean, who might have advice on polishing the draft and wording the funding requests.[3] The second step is for the Program Review and Planning Committee to read and comment on all self-studies. This is a big job, so the committee divides into teams to accomplish it. The majority of the Committee is faculty members, one per division, so reading and commenting is faculty-driven. To avoid a conflict of interest, the Committee ensures that no faculty members are directly commenting on any self-studies from their own division.

In reading the comprehensive self-studies, the Committee is looking for a few things: 1) common themes among programs that the Committee will report to the Faculty Senate, 2) earnest efforts by program faculty to identify areas for improvement (especially regarding equity and inclusion) and make plans to address them, and 3) funding requests that are supported by data analyzed in the self-study. If the Committee feels that a self-study is lacking these elements then it will ask the program faculty for additional information in written form. If the Committee feels that a self-study is satisfactory then it will endorse it.

Endorsed self-studies serve several purposes. First, they are an official record of the College's efforts to continuously improve our service to students. In the accreditation process, for example, program review provides essential source materials used by the authors of the College's institutional self-evaluation report to the accrediting commission. Second, self-studies inform the Faculty Allocation Committee and the Deans' Council when they meet every fall to advise the College president of their faculty hiring priorities. Third, self-studies provide the President's Advisory Council (PAC) with a list of resource requests (i.e. funding requests) above and beyond the requests for hiring full-time faculty members. PAC makes final decisions about funding these requests.

One key thing to notice in this process is that the Program Review and Planning Committee does NOT make funding decisions. Neither does it issue any evaluation of programs or departments. Program review and planning is NOT an evaluation process. Let me repeat: NOT an evaluation. Faculty

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[3] This year, the deadline to turn in the self-study to the dean is Fri, 12-Nov 21.

evaluations occur in a totally separate process, laid out in the UF/NOCCCD [contract](#).[4] It is also important to stress that there is absolutely no link between program review and program discontinuance, which is another entirely [separate process](#) that follows formal [Board Policy](#). Program discontinuance is exceedingly rare. The program review and planning process is designed to assist faculty as they work to improve their programs, not bring their programs to an end.

Here is some advice for writing the Fall 2021 comprehensive self-study.

Cover page

Participants in the self-study
Please list all the members of your program who participated in this self-study. This should include all the full-time members of your program. Even if a member did not actually type the words in the self-study, they should be part of the discussion so please include their names.

Authorization
Please fill out with the proper signatures. Electronic signatures are okay.

Section 1: Executive Summary
You should probably write this section last, but please put it first with a page all to itself because your self-study will have multiple audiences. The College's Accreditation Steering Committee, for example, will go through the self-studies to find examples to demonstrate that the College meets accreditation standards. A well-written executive summary will tell them if the self-study has what they are looking for.

Please make sure that the executive summary highlights the main issues discussed in the body of the self-study, without diving into the data analysis found there. Please also give the reader a brief description of the specific plans detailed in the self-study and highlight the plans that require funding. Make sure the executive summary does not make new funding requests that are not thoroughly explained and justified in the main body of the self-study.

It goes without saying that the entire self-study should be proofread for grammar and spelling, but this advice especially applies to the executive summary as the most outward-facing section. Please circulate drafts among several colleagues to make sure it looks and sounds professional -- you know, like maybe a group of college professors wrote it.

Section 2: Mission
The Fullerton College [mission](#) statement is broad enough to encompass every program the College offers, so please explain how your program fits under that umbrella.[5] Please also explain how your program helps the College focus its vision, maintain its core values, and reach its goals.

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[4] "Program and curriculum development," UF-NOCCCD Contract, Sections 4.8, 17.4.1.1.3, and 18.3.2.
[5] Please also note that "to prepare students to be successful learners" is no longer FC's mission statement. Please click on the [link](#) for the current mission statement, which is a tad more intricate.

It is not required that every program have a mission statement, but if your program has its own mission statement then please write it in this section and draw a connection from it to the College mission statement.

Section 3: Students

Students delight, surprise, and inspire their instructors. Sometimes they frustrate their instructors. Because each student is a vibrant individual, it might seem cold and clinical to look at them by sifting through large piles of numbers and percentages. But in order for the College to improve, it must look for overarching narratives and long-term trends. To do this, we look at data provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and data that programs have gathered on their own.

3.1.1 Enrollment is one basic measure of program performance. It can suggest how well the program is attracting and retaining students and how well programs are meeting the demand for their courses. If your program is thinking about requesting a full-time hire then enrollment data will be a key piece of evidence, especially if it shows recent program growth or unmet student demand.

3.1.2 Some programs are flat and some have levels. A program with levels usually has introductory and intermediate courses that students must pass in a specific order to complete the major. A flat program allows students to take courses in whichever order. If it is not obvious that your program has a gateway class, the OIE data might show that one of your courses is essentially serving as a gateway. Please also comment on the demographic profile of all students, majors and non-majors, who take your courses. Do you see trends, changes, possible inequities, possible roadblocks?

3.1.3 For some strange reason, 10:00A Tuesday/Thursday classes are mighty popular. But when we offer sections at less-popular times and days, they also tend to fill up with students. This indicates that student demand for seats exists throughout the week. Does the fill-rate data show that your program is meeting student demand for seats, throughout the day and throughout the week? Fill rates of 100% look impressive, but they might be hiding the fact that there were dozens more students who wanted to take the class if there were more sections offered. Please make a similar analysis of your online offerings. We want to get each program to a place where students are not being delayed in their chosen pathway simply because we are offering an unbalanced schedule.

3.1.4 Some programs have requirements or prerequisites. Please describe what your program requires. Does the data show that these requirements help students succeed in your program? It's possible that having several requirements, or having requirements that students complete all courses here at FC even though they may have already completed them elsewhere, might end up discouraging students and causing them to drop out of the program, or even to drop out of FC altogether. Is there evidence this is happening in the program? If so, what can you and your colleagues do to help more students stay on the path to completing the program?

3.1.5 Some programs find large enrollment differences between fall and spring, or that certain courses fill up before others. If you see such differences in the data, then what explains them? Do students have

to take courses in a certain sequence? Or maybe they think they have to, even if they don't really have to?

3.2.1 This section of OIE data probably seems familiar -- the usual analysis of success and completion rates, which is vital for program faculty to examine and discuss. Most likely, trend lines for the data in this section will get all weird in Spring 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted most classes. Keep in mind that there is a section below (3.5) to go into greater detail about how your program responded to the pandemic. For this section (3.2.1), please simply indicate the effect Covid-19 seemed to have on student performance.

3.2.2 The pandemic should not distract us from one of the main reasons we analyze these performance metrics, which is to zero-in on reasons that students are experiencing inequitable outcomes based on characteristics that should not be barriers. Please be candid about what the data show about disproportionate impacts in your courses. This will help you develop an Equity Action Plan in section 3.2.4 below. Please keep in mind that the Program Review and Planning Committee is aware that the data under analysis here were not produced in a sterile lab where all variables were controlled. Some of the data might be messy, but messy data is still better than conjecture and anecdote. Before you reach for the old chestnuts "selection bias" or "small sample-size," please stop to consider: if the same groups of students underperform in the program year after year then it is possibly a sign that inequitable experiences are happening somewhere. Achievement gaps are probably not ALL due to flaws in the data. Please have an earnest (not dismissive) discussion about this with department colleagues.

3.2.3 In recent semesters, faculty members across FC have participated in professional learning activities that encourage instructors to examine the things under their direct control that might be -- possibly in hidden ways -- leading to inequitable treatment of students. These things can include: syllabus design, attendance rules, late-work policies, high-stakes assignments late in the semester, grading policies, extra credit assignments, and other classroom practices developed over the years. How often and how much do program colleagues discuss these areas where we as a College can make strides towards equity and inclusion? For example, Pasadena City College recently got national press coverage for making improvements that were relatively minor, but had big outcomes.

3.2.4 Use your data analysis in Section 3.2 to write a brief Equity Action Plan. This Plan can include everything from changes in the classroom, to a request for more professional learning, to a request for new full-time faculty members who can help your program become even more equitable and inclusive. Keep in mind that faculty play a major role in the hiring process, such as crafting the desired qualifications and writing interview questions. These should signal to applicants your department's commitment to equity and inclusion. You can document here your plans to make your next hiring process part of your improvement plan.

3.3.1 This section is new since the last self-study four years ago. The College has developed ways of tracking students that allow you to see how well they are staying on a pathway to program completion. Please pay special attention to the places where students seem to be getting caught in bottlenecks or are

unable to make progress, possibly due to prerequisites, corequisites or denial of substitute courses. Please explain how your program faculty plans to address any issues this data has uncovered.

3.3.2 If your program does not have a transfer degree then you can write "N/A" and skip this section. If your program has a transfer degree (an Associate Degree for Transfer, or "ADT") then please explain how you developed it. The statewide academic senate has provided Transfer Model Curricula (TMC) for hundreds of disciplines. If there is a TMC for your program, are you following it? If you have modified the TMC then please explain why. Does your ADT seem to be working? Is it helping students transfer efficiently? If not, why not? How do you plan to remedy this?

3.3.3 Has your program met with a Counselor to make a program map, which is a suggested sequence of courses for a student to take, semester by semester, to earn the degree or certificate? With the help of the Pathways initiative, many departments have begun mapping their programs. Please give a brief update of where you are in this process.

3.3.4 If your program does not have a transfer degree then you can write "N/A" and skip this section. If you have more than one degree or certificate, then please look at the OIE data for this section to see if there are differences in student achievement depending on which pathway students have chosen. If so, what plans can you make to improve this?

3.4 Analyze the OIE data to answer basic questions about program faculty. Are there enough full-time faculty members? When a student enrolls in a class, what are the chances their instructor will be a full-timer? If there has been a recent retirement, does the data show an impact on your ability to offer enough sections? Because this is where you might be making a case for a full-time hire, please consider all the data in Section 3.0. Every year there are way more departments who ask for a hire than there are actual hires, so you need to make a strong case. It's a competitive environment. Every department can always say, "Gee, it sure would be nice if we hired another colleague." It's much more compelling to say, "A new colleague will help us address the equity and inclusion issues we identified above and allow our program to meet the student demand identified above."

3.5 This section is about your program's response to the Covid-19 emergency. Last year, it might have set your teeth on edge every time you heard someone cheerfully declare, "Well at least we're all in this together!" This was true in some ways, but certain programs were hit much harder than others. Some programs were able to switch to fully remote formats more easily than others, so please briefly describe your program's experience here. Please don't rewrite *War and Peace*, a tome of pain and suffering. Be frank about the difficulties but please don't wallow in them. Please also be frank in documenting positive things your program learned because of the campus shut-down. For example, your faculty might have learned more about using Canvas, adopting Open Educational Resources (OERs, i.e., free online textbooks and such), and using online grade books. The pandemic was an epochal change. There is never going to be a "return to normal,"[6] so please explain your program's new normal.

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[6] Trust me on this. I'm a historian.

3.6 This question is self-explanatory.

Section 4: Outcomes

4.1 Program-level student learning outcomes (PSLOs) are a special point of emphasis right now for colleges going through accreditation. (FC's next accreditation visit will take place in Fall 2023, so this is our last round of program review comprehensive self-studies before then.) PSLOs have also been an area of focus for FC's Guided Pathways initiative, which has led the College to write a new set of institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs). Many programs have attended workshops on PSLO redesign, but some departments have not begun this process yet.

4.2 Assessing PSLOs is not the same as assessing course-level student learning outcomes (CSLOs). For one thing, there are a lot fewer of them. Every year your program teaches hundreds of students at the course-level, but at most only a few dozen students complete your program. That smaller group is where you will assess PSLOs. These are the students who have taken more than just one class in your program. They have completed a whole sequence and now you assess them to see how well they attained the PSLOs you wrote. There are a variety of ways to do this: capstone courses or projects, self-reflective student assignments, portfolios of student work, signature assignments that teach the discipline's fundamental principles. Each program can choose methods that make the most sense to them. Fall 2021 program review is interrupting the PSLO redesign in its early stages, so for now please just give a snapshot of how much planning you have done so far to create a meaningful PSLO assessment process. If you have developed a PSLO assessment process, then *mazel tov*! Take a bow and crow about it.

4.3 All FC programs have been assessing course-level student learning outcomes (CSLOs) for the past several program review cycles, so this should now be routine. Give a brief synopsis of how your program regularly assesses CSLOs, discusses the results, and makes modifications to the program accordingly. If, for some reason, your program has gotten off-schedule in CSLO assessment then please write a solid plan for getting back on the regular cycle of assessment. At the very least, every CSLO in all your courses should be assessed at least once every three years.

4.4 Like the OIE data provided in Section 3, SLO results can reveal issues with student equity and inclusion. Does there seem to be a correlation between students' demographic characteristics and their levels of SLO attainment? If so, what steps can you take to address this? As question #2 suggests, you might find a difference between the SLO data and the Section 3 data. Students might be attaining SLOs, which suggests they are learning the material, but then some of them fail a course because of absences, tardies, missing work, etc. If you find this to be the case then what can you do to help those students get back on a path to program completion? Once they fail a class, they are more likely to drop out of the program, or the College, altogether.

Section 5: Other Areas of Program Effectiveness

5.1 Most of our students are attempting to fulfill General Education requirements. Most of our programs offer classes that satisfy GE requirements. And yet there is no Department of General Education at Fullerton College to keep track of how well students are doing on this critical pathway. Students might pass through your program with flying colors, but if they do not take care of their GE then they are not going to get the degree or transfer they want. The OIE data in this section will help you assess how well your program is supporting the College's GE program. Meeting with a Counselor to build a program map is an excellent way to show your students options for how to get their degree AND fulfill GE requirements.

5.2 Every program is subject to outside influences that have effects on how well they operate: the local transfer environment, the local job market, the local business environment, state and federal mandates. AB 705 leaps to mind, for example. Every program will likely have different things to say in this section. For example, AB 705 affects Math, English, and ESL more than other programs, so we'll stop here with the specifics. Give the Committee a brief sketch of the things out there you are keeping your eye on.

5.3 This question is self-explanatory.

Section 6: Planning

6.1 Four years ago you wrote a comprehensive self-study like this one. Well, it was not exactly like this one. The questions were different. But one thing was the same: your program made some plans. Please go back and look at those plans and give a brief update of the progress you have made on them. If you received funding for your plans, then please explain exactly how the funding has helped you reach a goal. If you did NOT receive funding, then please comment on that, too. Was the funding denial devastating, or did you cope? Please explain.

6.2 When you are writing new strategic action plans (SAPs), please follow the instructions on the form. The Committee members will pay special attention to these and they are especially looking for plans that address issues raised in Sections 3, 4, and 5, where you were examining data. Again, SAPs are where you are asking for money and for new hires, so please be as specific as possible. If you are asking for a new faculty hire, then please make the best data-based argument you can. "We'd do a much better job with a new colleague" is a weak argument. We all would. Instead, please be as specific as possible and refer to Section 3.4 above.

6.3 In addition to your immediate plans -- the SAPs you just wrote above -- please tell the Committee about your program's long-term plans. This section is optional, but we believe that if every program's faculty had a serious discussion about their visions for the future then they would probably find that they do in fact have long-term plans that are worth recording.

Section 7: Executive Summary

See Section 1 above. Write the summary last, but put it first in the final draft of the self-study.

Section 8: Publication Review

Program review is a good opportunity for each program to do a thorough review of its website, its pamphlets and promotional materials, and its social media accounts. Please make sure the material therein is not hopelessly dated. Please follow the numbered steps on the self-study form.