

Continuous Improvement in Academic Program Assessment

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Presentation Objectives

- Present design/implementation of MU's academic program assessment (APA) process
- Discuss quality improvement's role in APA process
- Share lessons learned about:
 - The APA process
 - Changing culture
- Share ways MU has engaged with faculty around improvement



Collected Rules and Regulations of the University

- *20.035 Program Assessment: Each department, center, and institute will undergo a cyclic process of assessment for the purpose of improving the quality of the educational opportunities provided by the academic unit...The department faculty should assess the processes developed through its planning efforts to improve student learning, to enhance the impact of its research and scholarship on the discipline, and to link its service activities with the needs of the campus, discipline, and the community....*



Previous Program Review Process

- Lengthy self-study
- External review
- Focus on research



Previous Program Review Process

- Problems
 - Summaries of past achievements
 - Limited attention to student learning, service, and economic development
 - Requests for additional resources
 - Not a useful document for leadership
 - Tossed on a shelf
 - Did not lead to real improvements



Opportunity

- Higher Learning Commission Pathways Project
 - In 2010, MU invited to pilot new model of accreditation
 - Grounded in a shift away from satisfaction with basic requirements to a culture of “aspiration and continual improvement”



Requirements of Accreditation

- Part I: Assurance System
 - Demonstrate how the institution meets five criteria:
 - One: Mission
 - Two: Integrity: Ethnical and Responsible Conduct
 - Three: Teaching & Learning – Quality , Resources, and Support
 - Four: Teaching & Learning – Evaluation and Improvement
 - Five: Resources, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness



Requirements of Accreditation

- Part II: Improvement Initiative
 - Undertake a major improvement initiative designed to address present concerns or aspirations
 - Broad impact
 - Strategically significant and sustainable
 - Challenging initiative encouraged
 - Proposal must be approved by HLC
 - MU's Project: Program Assessment



MU's Pathways Project

- “Program Review” to “Program *Assessment*”
- Part I: Assessment of current state
 - Must assess all four University of Missouri missions
 - Comparative data sources (Academic Analytics, Delaware Data)
 - Supplemental data encouraged
- Part II: Plans for the next 3-5 years
 - Must look forward, present plans for the future, identify strategies of achieving plans



Making the Transition

- Create a team that would work with academic units ~ not simply announce the change
 - Academic Program Assessment (APA) Team
 - Faculty Fellow, Office of the Provost
 - Manage overall process
 - Communicate with programs
 - Director of Institutional Research and Quality Improvement
 - Provide comparative data
 - Help with interpretation/use
 - Director of Assessment
 - Student learning component



Making the Transition

- Incremental implementation
 - 20% of academic programs annually
 - Began Fall 2011
- Bringing in quality improvement



Quality Improvement

- Institutional Research and Quality Improvement
 - Office and position established May 2012
 - Report to the Office of the Provost
- Administrative – improving processes within administrative areas
- Academic – improving processes that impact teaching, learning, research and service – Program Assessments



Quality Improvement and Program Assessment

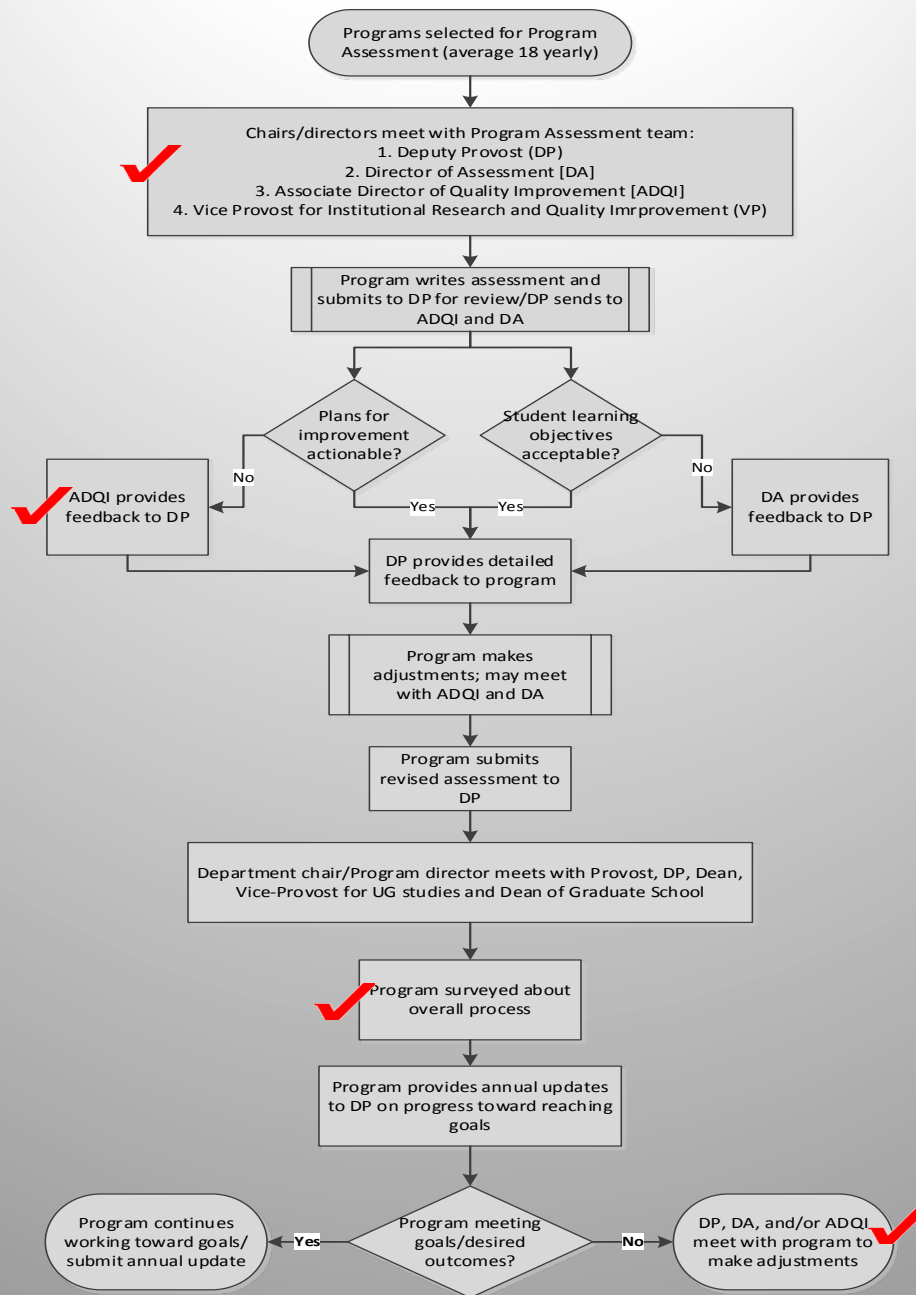
- Initial goal
 - Assist departments with defining and achieving goals for improvement
- As process matured
 - Identify patterns impacting many departments/units
 - Assessment of the Program Assessment process – did it work as designed?



Current Process

- Programs are chosen
- APA team meets with programs
- Draft prepared by program
- Feedback provided by APA team
- Program submits final copy
- Meeting with Provost et al
- Program provides annual updates (ongoing struggles)





Early Lessons Learned

- Structured template
- Presentation of Academic Analytics data
- Adding Associate Director of Quality Improvement to team
 - Defining and solidifying role
 - When to be engaged



Resistance

- Initial talks about improvement
 - “What do you mean, improve our quality?”
 - “What’s your methodology?”
 - “What do you mean by sharing?”
- Providing feedback – yet, the phone doesn’t ring much
 - Approximately 50 program assessments read



Improvement Involvement

- How many of them call?
 - 17% (4/23) year one
 - 24% (4/17) year two
 - 3 separate groups within one department
 - 21% (3/14) year three, thus far
- When do they call?
 - Prior to or while writing the initial draft (n=1)
 - After receiving feedback on draft (n=8)
 - End of assessment process (n=2)



Improvement Involvement

- Why do they call?
 - Survey development/analysis – focus on students
 - Strategic planning – after the fact
 - General feedback – “We’re okay, right?”
 - Process improvement – focus on the staff
 - Training – focus on the staff



Improvement Involvement

- Who calls?
 - College of Arts and Sciences (4 programs)
 - School of Health Professions (3 programs)
 - Health and Environmental Sciences (2 programs)
 - Engineering and College of Ag, Forestry and Natural Resources (each with 1)



Improvement Involvement

- Assessment of APA Process
 - 57% were department chairs
 - Appreciated specificity of feedback
 - Frustration with overlap between MU assessment and disciplinary accreditation
 - Meeting with Provost was productive/important
 - Timing of APA survey



Changing Behavior, Changing Culture

- Academic Analytics data
 - Program responses
 - Not always a good match
- Strategic planning
 - Structured strategic planning happens rarely
 - Lacks specificity
 - Goals and strategies are not often aligned
 - Putting it on paper



Changing Behavior, Changing Culture

- Other missions
- Asking for help
 - Not in the nature of faculty
- Managing turnover
- “Punitive” to “improvement”



“Successes”

- Innovative practices
- Encourage to look for best practices/expertise
- Chair’s Retreat
- Experiences provides examples
 - Quality *and* process improvement
- Repeat customers
- Leadership reads the assessments



Engaging Faculty

- Academic Program Assessment
 - Currently have academic leadership support
 - More specificity in feedback to departments
 - Letting faculty speak to faculty
- Broadly
 - Quality Improvement Advisory Committee
 - 16 members; 4 faculty
 - Planning sharing event Chair's Retreat
 - Faculty on improvement teams



Discussion

- After hearing about MU's APA process, do you feel there are missing players within or components of the process?



Discussion

- Thinking about the “changing behavior, changing culture” slides, do you have recommendations for how to move and/or manage the issues identified?



Discussion

- Program assessment is one way to engage faculty. What are some other structured ways you have engaged faculty in continuous improvement?



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