

Academic Program Review for Continuous Improvement

Matthew Groneman and Jennifer Holscher
Vincennes University
October 7, 2025



About Vincennes University (VU)

- Community college located in Vincennes, Indiana
- Public institution with open admission
- Primarily a 2-year institution that offers select 4-year programs
- In addition to our main campus in Vincennes:
 - Locations in Jasper and Indianapolis
 - Distant Education
 - Dual Credit
 - Military Education



Academic Program Review at VU

- Where we started
- Our Goals
- Our Approach
- Our New Review Process
- What We Have Learned
- What We Have Changed
- Going Forward



Before Academic Program Review

- Where we were before
 - Annual review of programs called “Annual Program Metrics”
 - Primarily quantitative
 - Financial, enrollment, graduation, and matriculation data
 - Lacked qualitative information
 - Lacked external feedback
 - Lacked connections between assessment, student outcomes, and finances
- Impetus
 - Recognition of the need for a comprehensive academic program review
 - Need to meet criteria set forth by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

Our Goals

- **Assess** the effectiveness, viability, quality, and progress of our programs
- **Identify future direction**, needs, and priorities of our programs
- **Align** programs with the university's strategic plan to guide decision-making
- **Satisfy HLC criteria**
 - HLC wants to make sure that colleges have a way of assessing a program's total value, not just looking at its financial value or basic educational outcomes – Academic Program Review provides that fuller picture.

Our Approach to Creating Program Review

- Collaboration
- Research
- Developing Shared Definitions – What is a “program”?
- Content – What should this include?
- Frequency
- Support

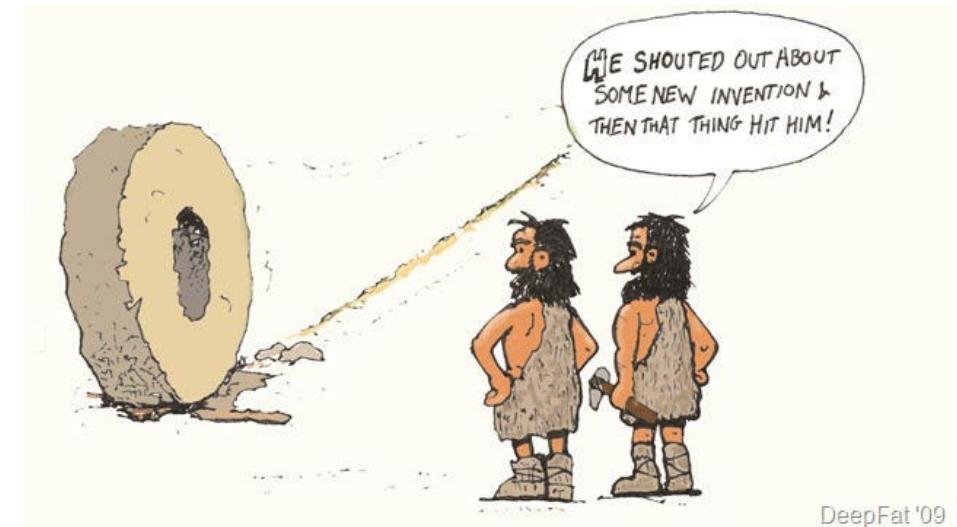
Our Approach: Collaboration

- Seek input from a diverse group of stakeholders
- Committee Representation
 - College Dean
 - Director of Assessment
 - Director of Institutional Research
 - Finance
 - Program Chair
 - Secondary Campus



Our Approach: Research

- Don't reinvent the wheel
- What are other universities doing?
- Professional webinars and papers
 - Lahaie, Ute S., Ph.D., Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment (2019, March). *Design and Implementation of a New Program Review Process: Lessons Learned* Walsh University.
 - Eggleston, T. (2020, July). *Program review and assessment for continuous improvement: Asking the right questions*. (Occasional Paper No. 48). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.



Our Approach: Developing Shared Definitions

- Include time to discuss definitions that might seem obvious
- What is a Program?
 - Is this a specific major or a group of majors?
 - Organization differed based on assessment, annual program metrics, and program chair assignments.
 - We decided to align with the major groups used for the annual program metrics.
- What is a Location?
 - Internally, we consider Distance Education and Dual Credit to be “locations” but they are really modalities.
 - Decided on a system-wide view of each program, rather than by campus.



Our Approach: Content

- Use existing resources
 - Assessment
 - Annual Program Metrics
 - Finance: Income, Expenses, Profit
 - Student Outcomes: Matriculation, Enrollment, Credit Hours, Completions
 - Advisory Committees
 - External feedback
 - Strategic Plan
 - Retention Metrics
 - Employment Outlook
 - Career Center Surveys
- Lowers the burden on all offices



Our Approach: Frequency and Support

- Frequency
 - Five-year cycle
 - Aligns with Annual Program Metrics (5-year view)
 - Includes two cycles of assessment (each program reviews all PLOs within 2 years)
 - Started in 2021-2022 academic year
- Support
 - OIER Office
 - Materials
 - Handbook, Templates, Rubrics, Scoring Sheets
 - Workshops
 - Software: Weave Education
 - Assists with organization



Result: A Comprehensive Review



- Increased Involvement
 - Program staff, Deans, IE/IR, Budget Office, Review Team, Leadership Team
- Qualitative Information
 - Assessment, External Feedback
- Additional Quantitative Metrics
 - Retention, On-time Completion, Employment Outlook
- Long Range Program Planning
- Satisfies HLC Requirement for Criterion 3f

What is in Academic Program Review?

- Program Review is divided into seven main parts:
 - Section 1: Program Overview
 - Section 2: Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes
 - Section 3: Enrollment, Retention and Completion
 - Section 4: Financial Metrics
 - Section 5: Strategic Plan, Recruitment, Employment Outcomes, and Facilities
 - Section 6: SWOT Analysis
 - Section 7: Action Items

Program Overview (Section 1)

- Program Mission and Vision Statements
- Program Values
- Degree Plans
- Where the program is offered
- Community and University service performed by program faculty
 - This provides support for Criteria 4a (Effective Administrative Structures) and 1b (Mission and Public Good). 4a because the University service records how each department contributes to shared governance through committee work, and 1b because the community service serves the public good.
- This section begins to provide support for Criteria 1, Mission.

Assessment (Section 2)

- Program Learning Outcomes
 - This supports Criterion 3a (Educational Programs)
- Curriculum Map
- 4 years of Assessment Reports
 - This supports Criterion 3e (Assessment of Student Learning)
- A review of the last four years of assessment.

Enrollment, Retention and Completion (Section 3)

- Data on enrollment, and an explanation of why enrollment may be increasing or decreasing.
- An explanation of how the program ensures quality of dual credit instruction.
- Data on student body demographics, and an explanation of what the program is doing to increase the diversity of students in their program.
- What the program's retention rates are, and how they are working to improve them.
- Factors that have led to an increase or decrease in degrees or certificates awarded.
- All of these data points support Criterion 4c, Planning for Quality Improvement

Financial Metrics (Section 4)

- Data on the program's revenue, and a discussion of why it has increased or decreased.
- Data on the program's instructional costs, and a discussion of why they have increased or decreased.
- Data on the program's instructional productivity, and what is driving factors such as class size.
- Data supports Criterion 4b, Resource Base and Sustainability.



Strategic Plan, Recruitment, Employment Outlook, and Facilities (Section 5)

- Discussions of how the program is contributing to each part of the University's Strategic Plan (Enrollment and Recruitment; Partnerships with Industry, K-12, and Higher Ed; Student Retention and Success; Cultivating Internal and External Resources; New and Enhanced Programs; Communication Strategy)
 - Supports Criterion 1
- A look at applications, acceptance and enrollment of new students.
- A look at state and nationwide employment trends in the field.
- Feedback from Advisory Committees
- A review of the program's facilities' strengths and weaknesses.
 - Supports Criterion 3d, Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching

SWOT Analysis (Section 6)

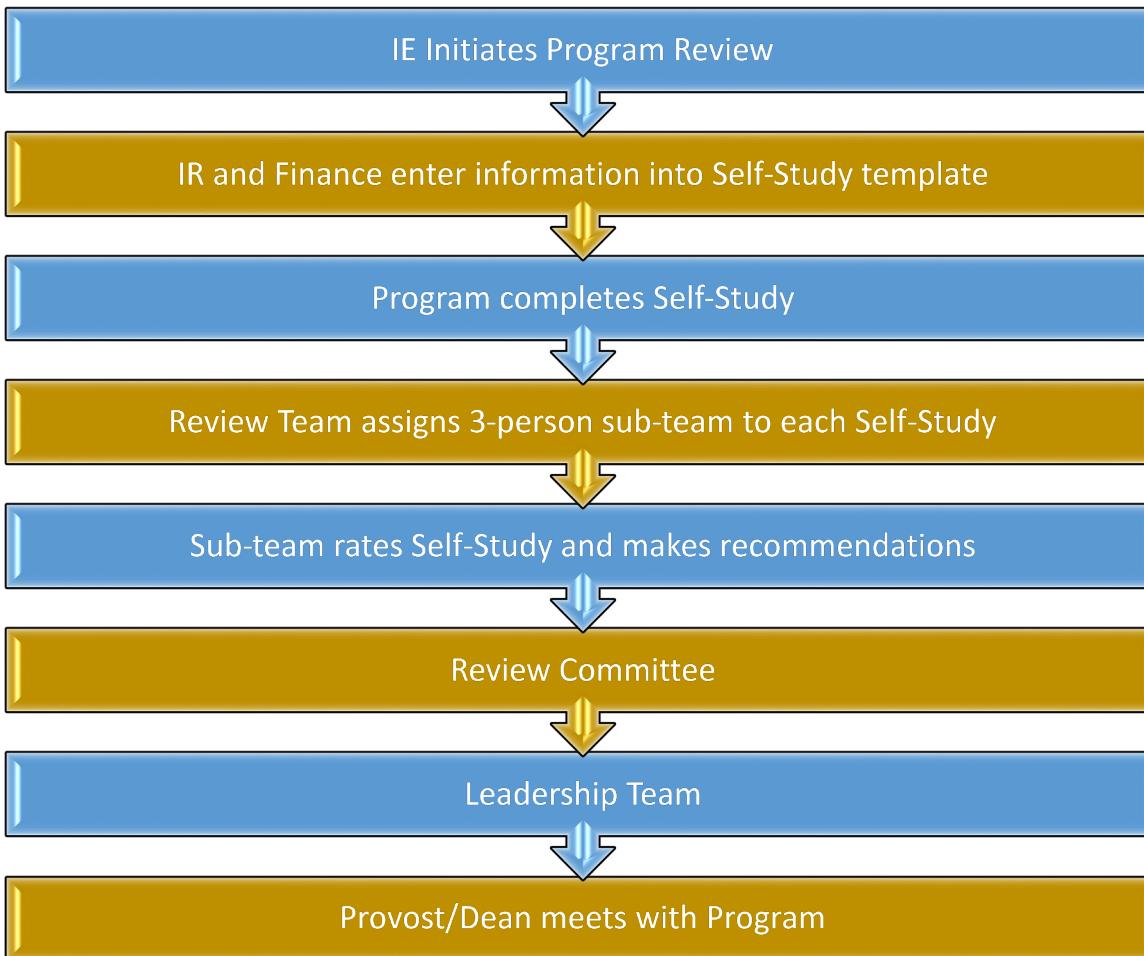
- The internal strengths and weaknesses of the program, based on information in the Program Review.
- External threats and opportunities impacting the program, based on information in the Program Review.
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities are considered for the areas of Assessment, Student Outcomes (post-graduation, i.e. employment or academic success after transferring), Finances, and Program Planning. The internal strengths and weaknesses of the program, based on information in the Program Review.
- External threats and opportunities impacting the program, based on information in the Program Review.
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities are considered for the areas of Assessment, Student Outcomes (post-graduation, i.e. employment or academic success after transferring), Finances, and Program Planning.

Action Items (Section 7)

- A list of the program's goals it needs to accomplish within the next five years in order to be more successful.
- Each goal is given a priority, and a timeline is established for when it will be completed by.



The Review Process



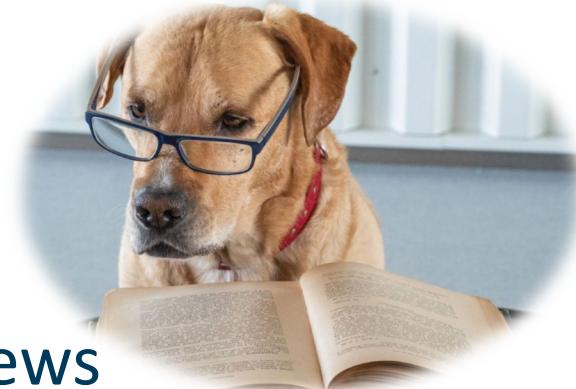
The Review Teams

- **Peer Review Committee:** Nine (9) members with representation as follows:
 - One (1) from each College (6)
 - Institutional Effectiveness (1)
 - Faculty Senate (1)
 - Jasper Campus (1)
- **Review Sub-Team:** Three (3) members from the Review Team assigned to evaluate Self-Study
- **Executive Team:** President, Provost, and other Leadership

Outcomes – What Happened as a Result?

- Kinesiology and Sport is a program that underwent major changes.
 - Previously, a broad range of courses representing many physical activities were offered.
 - Too many options led to low enrollment and left faculty spread too thin while trying to cover several sections with just a handful of students.
 - The program met with transfer institutions as it worked to hone the program's goals.
 - Eventually, the Wellness and Exercise concentration was cut, while the main program and Sport Management concentration were refined.
 - Changes were made to course offerings, course scheduling, and learning environment.
 - Students were more engaged, leading to increased academic progress and improved retention.
- During HLC's most recent visit, Program Review took a significant role in the discussion

What We Have Learned



- Faculty turnover is a major concern, as program reviews completed by new faculty members lack significant context and history.
- Some programs have not considered various aspects of planning beyond the bare minimum.
- Programs are sometimes confused by the data in their financial metrics.
- The program review has some areas that are redundant. For instance, enrollment, retention, and recruitment efforts are all discussed multiple times in different parts of the document.

What Has Changed?

- Employment Outlook: Originally, information was only provided to programs from the Census Bureau. Programs are now provided with information from multiple sources, some of which are nationwide and some of which are statewide.
- The data for revenue and instructional costs are in separate files to make this less confusing for faculty completing program review.
- Increasingly, programs have been clustered together. There is a varying amount of collaboration among programs that are clustered.
- Program chairs are now asked to lead a presentation on the completed self-study to the Executive Team.

Going Forward

- Continued integration of internal feedback to improve the process
 - Collected annually from all involved in the review process
 - Deans, Program Chairs, Faculty
 - Leadership Team, including the University President and Provost
- External forces may drive changes
 - Indiana Commission for Higher Education
 - Higher Learning Commission
- Account for the growing impact of
- Distance Education and Dual Credit



Questions?

- Matt Groneman: mgroneman@vinu.edu
- Jen Holscher: jholscher@vinu.edu

