Guidelines for an Academic Department’s Self-Study

The department should prepare a self-study report for the visiting committee that will give the committee information to help it assess the effectiveness of the department in fulfilling its mission and to allow it to provide suggestions for departmental development. The department should feel free to include material that will highlight issues the department believes will be useful to discuss with the visiting committee.

Sample Outline of Departmental Self-Study

Table of Contents

Executive Summary
  Provide a 1-2 page overview of the briefing report.

Overview
  Provide an introduction to the department summarizing the recent history of the program and any significant changes that occurred in staffing or curriculum. Outline the department’s mission, goals, and learning outcomes and how they relate to the mission of the College and to national standards in the discipline (documents outlining national standards could be put in a separate document box).

Curriculum
  Describe the curriculum and give a brief history and rationale for recent revisions. Include syllabi in a separate document box.

Faculty
  Provide information about each faculty member (education, specialization, what they teach, what research they do, their recent college service). A current vita for each faculty member should go in the document box.

Advising
  Outline how major/minor advising is managed in the department. You might want to include information on the number of majors/minors for the past 5 years and the average advising load per faculty member in the department.

Department’s contribution to College initiatives and Interdisciplinary programs
  Provide evidence of how the department contributes to:
    General education requirements
    FY Seminars
    Writing courses
    Service learning initiative
    Honors programs (Dana, RH, Muhlenberg Scholars)
Interdisciplinary majors/minors
June Advising
FY Advising
Other

Resources/Facilities
Describe department resources (budget, classrooms, lab space, equipment, computer labs, library resources) and evaluate their quality in light of the department’s mission, current work, and the College’s overall resources.

Student-Faculty Work and Interaction
Provide information about the type and number of independent studies/research, Honors projects, and internships (Individualized Instruction). Describe department clubs and other events that foster student-faculty interaction.

Common Data Set
Number of majors and minors for the past 6 years compared to % declared majors/minors
Course enrollments for the past 6 years
Total enrollment for the past 6 years compared to % day college enrollment

Program Assessment
Summarize the department’s assessment plan.
Provide results of assessment measures (if available) and interpret these findings in light of the department’s mission and goals. Copies of surveys, rubrics, student work, etc., can be put in an Appendix. Sample measures include:
Student and alumni surveys
Portfolio assessments
Embedded course assessments (final papers etc)
National exams and/or local exams to assess discipline knowledge
Alumni post-graduate information

Department Goals
Outline the department’s goals for the next 6 years

Strengths/Weakness
Summarize the department’s strengths and weakness and note any specific concerns the department has in regard to its ability to fulfill its current mission and goals.

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