

Community-Based Program Review
at
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
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Defining Approaches

Program review is defined quite differently on different campuses.

It may be an *internal* process that takes place annually or biennially. Units complete a report using a common template and the report is reviewed by one or more administrators, and perhaps a committee of faculty and/or staff.

It may be an *external* process that takes place every five to ten years and responds to a state agency or to an accrediting body. A lengthy self study is prepared that addresses the outside agency's stated standards, indicating whether or not the unit meets the standards. The outside agency names a committee of peer reviewers from other institutions who visit and prepare a report rendering judgment on the unit's success in meeting the external body's requirements.

Program review may be a *combination* of internal and external processes that takes place every five to ten years. Here the process is managed internally, but peers from outside the unit being reviewed are invited to read a self study, visit the unit, and produce a report focused and organized as the institution directs.

Purposes of Program Review

These reviews may be formative or summative, undertaken to provide guidance for improvement or to demonstrate accountability, or—more often—to accomplish both.

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is an urban research university for over 30,000 students, who are pursuing studies in some 290 degree programs offered in 17 academic units. At IUPUI our approach to program review is formative—undertaken to provide direction for the improvement of academic programs, student services, and administrative units. Nevertheless, we focus on the achievement of student learning outcomes, and thus offer program, or peer, review as our most comprehensive evidence for our regional accreditor that we are assessing student learning and using the findings to suggest warranted improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, and student services. Our peer review process also satisfies a directive of the Indiana University (IU) trustees that programs on all IU campuses implement program review.

Program review at IUPUI began in 1994 in response to a request for peer review by the deans of the Schools of Liberal Arts and Science. On a campus where, at that time, every other academic unit was subject to peer review by an accrediting body, these deans expressed concern about “leading an unexamined life”!

When we developed our guidelines for peer review, we made them apply to accredited as well as unaccreditable programs, and to administrative, as well as academic, units. Deans of accredited programs have the choice of connecting their peer review to their own accreditation review—using the IUPUI process as a dress rehearsal the year before the accreditor’s review, or following up on an issue raised during the accreditation visit, OR focusing their review on a program or service not likely to be fully studied during the accreditation review. Over the years, several units have used the review to gather expert outside advice about starting a new doctoral program. The Law School focused on their admissions process, and the Business School on its career planning office. The Dental School studied its information technology function.

Community Basis of Peer Review at IUPUI

IUPUI is an urban campus located within easy walking distance of the center of the city, as well as the state capitol, and state government offices. Serving an urban mission with close community connections has, since its founding in 1969, been fundamental in IUPUI’s strategic thinking and planning. So it was natural to link a community emphasis to program review from the outset. And we think of community as both internal to the campus and external, involving the city of Indianapolis.

So—our peer review teams engage two or three experts in the discipline being reviewed from institutions or organizations outside Indiana, two IUPUI colleagues from units outside the one being reviewed, and a community representative. For example, a team appointed to review our Department of Chemistry would include two faculty members from departments of chemistry at other universities, an IUPUI faculty member from a related department in the School of Science—say, Biology—and a faculty member from another school—for instance, Medicine. The community member might be a chemist from Eli Lilly or Roche Diagnostics, two local pharmaceutical companies.

Over the years, the Chief Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court has been the community reviewer for the IUPUI Department of History. The head of the Indiana State Police has reviewed our criminal justice program. The head of the Indiana Humanities Commission has served on the team evaluating IUPUI’s Department of English. And several engineers at Rolls Royce Allison have reviewed IUPUI’s Engineering and Technology programs.

We involve the IUPUI Chief Academic Officer in planning, conducting, and following up on academic program reviews. The Chief Student Affairs Officer launches and concludes reviews of student affairs units. And the Chief Financial Officer commissions and ensures the use of findings from reviews of her administrative units.

The Process of Program Review at IUPUI

Program review involves faculty, students, administrators, community representatives and external specialists in the area being reviewed in (1) gathering information about the unit, (2) reviewing and analyzing this information during a site visit, (3) synthesizing all available information and rendering judgments about overall program quality and recommendations for improvement, and (4) following up to ensure that the unit is fully supported in its efforts to address the outcomes of the review. Members of visiting teams, who usually spend 2 ½ days on campus following their review of a self-study prepared by the unit, include two or three

disciplinary specialists from outside Indiana, a community stakeholder with interests in the area being reviewed, and two IUPUI colleagues from related units. The entire team can be helpful in recommending improvements in teaching and learning, scholarship and research, and civic engagement. In addition, the community representative provides an invaluable perspective on the unit's civic engagement, while the internal colleagues can assist particularly in assessing the unit's current collaborative efforts and in suggesting future opportunities for cross-disciplinary work.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is at the heart of program review at IUPUI. Each team is charged specifically with the responsibility of considering and commenting on the impact of the unit's programs on student learning. Nevertheless, the review process is comprehensive. Thus student learning is viewed in the context of faculty credentials and areas of expertise, curriculum structures, instructional strategies, scholarship and research activities, and evidence of civic engagement. Both undergraduate and graduate programs, where they exist, are considered in a single review; and students, faculty, staff, and administration are all under scrutiny.

Review Guidelines

A set of *Guidelines for Academic Program Review at IUPUI* was developed in 1994 and revised in 2004 and 2011. The document *Guidelines for Program Review for Service Units at IUPUI* was developed in 2000 and revised in 2002 and 2010. Both sets of guidelines may be viewed at www.planning.iupui.edu. These documents explain the purpose of program review at IUPUI, delineate responsibilities of the various entities involved, outline criteria for the unit's self-study, and describe the process for following up to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the review and the review team's recommendations.

Responsibilities for Program Review

Responsibilities for program review reside at several levels. The academic department or service unit prepares the self-study and helps determine who the reviewers will be and who will meet with the review team during its visit. The dean or vice chancellor whose academic department or service unit is being reviewed is a review sponsor, helping to select the reviewers, participating in the team visit, and ensuring that the unit implements appropriate recommendations from the reviewers' report. The chief academic officer takes part in each review of an academic unit and helps to ensure that recommendations involving campus resources are implemented to the extent possible. The associate vice chancellor for research and graduate studies plays a role in each review that involves a unit with a graduate program. Finally, staff in the office of planning and institutional improvement oversee the review process, from negotiating with units to develop a seven-year review schedule, to calling meetings of the responsible parties to engage them in planning for a review at least a year in advance of the scheduled date of the event, to developing the review schedule in collaboration with the unit head and making travel and accommodations arrangements to ensure the comfort and convenience of visiting reviewers, to disseminating reviewers' reports widely, and to ensuring that follow-up meetings are scheduled soon after units file their written responses to review team recommendations. Costs for the review, which generally average \$5,000 to \$7,000, are shared equally by the dean or vice chancellor in charge and the office of planning and institutional improvement (PAII).

The entire process of program review at IUPUI is overseen by a faculty-led standing committee, the Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC). Since 1994 PRAC members have been involved in drafting, revising, and approving the guidelines for program review. This large and important university committee includes two representatives from each academic unit, as well as representatives of the library, student affairs, and PAII. PRAC meets monthly during the academic year and conducts studies that bear on the assessment of quality and continuous improvement of program review. At several meetings of PRAC each year, a department chair or director of a service unit whose programs were reviewed at least three years earlier will be present to discuss (1) the responses to reviewers' recommendations undertaken over the years since the review, (2) the long-term impact of the review on the unit, and (3) reflections on the effectiveness of the review process itself.

Criteria for Self-Study

The guidelines for self-study, which were drafted and ultimately approved and implemented by PRAC, are intended to be illustrative rather than prescriptive. Each unit is encouraged during the planning session held in the year prior to the review to develop a set of issues the review team should address in order to give the unit the advice and counsel most needed at the stage in its history when the review will take place. The data gathered and information presented in the self-study should provide the review team with the evidence needed to draw conclusions and make recommendations concerning the key issues identified by the unit.

The outline suggested in the guidelines focuses first on program purposes, reputation, and aspirations, then on resources and program processes, and finally, on outcomes. Subtopics under purposes, reputation, and aspirations include a brief history of the unit and its mission and goals. Within the outline on resources are student characteristics; faculty/staff strengths and accomplishments; an assessment of library holdings (provided for academic units by the library liaison for the unit); and an overview of physical facilities, including technologies and other equipment and relevant supplies. In the section on outcomes, academic units are encouraged to report findings from direct and indirect measures of student learning and the student experience. Service units are asked to comment on demand over time, customer satisfaction, evidence that best practices are being implemented, and measures of process effectiveness and efficiency. Finally, each unit is encouraged to identify its greatest strengths and its principal concerns as it raises the issues on which the review team should focus during its visit and in its written report.

The Program Review Follow-up Process

When invited to serve, reviewers are told that every member of the review team will be expected to contribute at least one section to the final written report expected within a month of the conclusion of the campus visit. Once the report is received, PAII staff send it to the campus chancellor, chief academic officer, dean or director of the unit reviewed, and department chair. The chair or service unit head is asked to work with colleagues to draft a considered response to each recommendation in the report and to send that to PAII within six months. A few conclusions and/or recommendations may be deemed inappropriate, or impossible to implement, but every one should be addressed in some way in the written response to the review compiled by the unit.

As soon as possible following receipt of the unit response, the responsible dean or vice chancellor is asked to schedule a discussion session that involves the chief academic officer, if appropriate; PAII leaders; and the associate vice chancellor for graduate studies and research, if appropriate; the unit head; and faculty representatives, if desired. During this meeting, everyone concerned will endeavor to find ways to support the unit in making improvements that seem warranted.

During the third or fourth year following the unit review—approximately half-way between scheduled reviews—the unit head is invited to address the Program Review and Assessment Committee to report on progress in the unit since the review as well as on the quality of the review process itself.

Support for Program Review

PAII staff serve as the principal providers of support for program review at IUPUI. First they put each unit on a seven-year review schedule. Then they convene a meeting of the responsible vice chancellor(s), dean, and unit head to discuss the issues that should be addressed in the unit self-study, during the campus visit by the reviewers, and the reviewers' written report.

A decade ago PAII staff created a step-by-step *Program Review Timeline* that begins 12-18 months prior to the reviewers' visit and extends 2 months beyond the date of the visit. The timeline contains 44 steps, along with the number of months or weeks before or after the reviewers' visit each should take place, and names the person(s) responsible. Copies of this document are given to each party responsible for a review so that each can see what needs to be done and when. More recently, one-page summaries of responsibilities for deans/vice chancellors and unit heads have been developed to go along with the more detailed timeline, which combines everyone's responsibilities in a single listing.

Following soon after the planning session, PAII staff visit the unit to be reviewed to discuss the types of information to be provided from central sources to augment the unit's self-study. Unit reports are prepared based on campus-wide surveys of enrolled students and alumni. Unit data can be compared with school-wide and campus averages. Since 2000, the National Survey of Student Engagement has been given to IUPUI students every other year, and now every third year. So students' responses are available for selected units. Numerous campus performance indicators like persistence rates and numbers of graduates in various racial and ethnic groups over time can be provided. Since IUPUI uses responsibility-center management wherein each responsibility center must balance its own income and expenditures each year, activity-based costing data showing the differential costs of various initiatives have become an increasingly valued resource provided by PAII staff.

PAII staff work with each unit to the extent requested—providing unique data sets, furnishing examples of data displays and self-studies created by other IUPUI units, and commenting on early drafts of the self-study. Travel and accommodations for reviewers are arranged. Up to two months before the review team visits, PAII staff work with all concerned to create and disseminate a schedule that will bring the reviewers in contact with virtually every office on campus that can provide an informed perspective on the unit under review. PAII staff furnish and/or monitor all logistics during the campus visit to ensure that the schedule proceeds smoothly.

Following the reviewers' visit, PAII staff follow up to ensure that the reviewers' report comes in on time. They disseminate the report to all who need to see it. They monitor the unit response to the review and arrange the follow-up meeting with all who are responsible for the review to give everyone an opportunity to support the unit in taking appropriate responsive action. After three years, PAII staff schedule the unit head to make a presentation to PRAC members concerning the long-term impact of the review and suggestions for improving the review process.

Evaluation of the Review Process

In addition to the continuous evaluation offered by participating unit heads and members of PRAC, even more systematic assessments of IUPUI's approach to program review have been undertaken over the years. Review team members complete a 1-page evaluation form while they are on campus that provides an evaluation of each of the sessions on their schedule. In a letter of appreciation that is sent within a week of the campus visit, the reviewers receive a second questionnaire that invites their ratings and comments on each aspect of the review, from the self-study they received prior to the visit to the general instructions they were given for developing their written report.

During the first decade of this approach to peer review, IUPUI won a competitive grant to lead an Indiana University-wide assessment of program review on each of the eight system campuses. The grant provided support for the following activities:

- a review of literature designed to identify best practices in peer review,
- a review of the purposes of program review on each of the participating campuses,
- an internal audit of the program review processes employed on each campus,
- a systematic study of the uses made of reviewers' conclusions and recommendations, and
- an external peer review of Indiana University's program review processes.

In 2002 and 2012, PAII staff were responsible for developing the self-study and review process for the decennial reaccreditation review of IUPUI by teams representing the Higher Learning Commission. During the campus visits, IUPUI approaches to outcomes assessment and program review received close scrutiny.

Outcomes for Program Review and its Evaluation at IUPUI

While most evaluations of program review at IUPUI over the years have shown it to be a sound and productive process, contributing as intended to the assessment of progress toward mission-related goals and serving as a guide for needed improvements, continuous evaluation of program review itself has contributed direction for important improvements. For example, a few somewhat underdeveloped self-studies have encouraged more extensive early peer reviews of self-study materials. A suggestion from an internal reviewer led to the inclusion in the administrative follow-up session of both IUPUI review team members; this addition has furnished a clear and present link to the minds of reviewers during this session and richer explanations of the meaning of particular recommendations has led to new insights on the part of the unit under review. The 3-year mid-cycle reports to PRAC by unit administrators

representing reviewed departments is another valuable innovation suggested by observers of the IUPUI approach to program review.

Invariably unit administrators looking back on the process of program review at IUPUI cite the experience of developing the self-study as the most valuable element of the review. Nevertheless, faculty and staff in most units have been enthusiastic about bringing to the campus some of the most respected experts in their fields and having these individuals take away with them in-depth knowledge about program quality at IUPUI. While many insights come from interactions of colleagues during the self-study process, reviewers often bring a fresh perspective that enables them to leave valuable recommendations. The following list of recommendations for improvement that have been implemented in multiple units over a decade of program review at IUPUI should be regarded as merely a starting point for a more comprehensive listing:

- strategic planning, particularly for purposes of identifying program strengths, specific student outcomes, and future hiring priorities
- new, stronger cross-disciplinary initiatives in teaching, research, and civic engagement
- departmental advisory committees of community stakeholders
- new, stronger alliances with business, industry, government, and philanthropic organizations
- mentoring programs for junior faculty
- revision of faculty workload standards and teaching assignments
- updated curriculum plans
- new methods for teaching large introductory classes
- improved learning assessment techniques
- reevaluation of course prerequisites
- changes in courses recommended to fulfill general education requirements

Guidelines for Academic Program Review at IUPUI and *Guidelines for Program Review for Service Units at IUPUI* are available at <http://www.planning.iupui.edu/evalassess/iupui-pr-page.php>.