

External Program Review Optional Response
Columbia College, 2010

In the spirit of self-reflection and improvement, the communication program faculty at Columbia College has reviewed the exit report and discussed the results and recommendations with the Provost. The reviewer was exceptionally competent and thorough and gave us excellent feedback and suggestions. She had many positive comments on the quality of our program and the collaborative spirit of our faculty. In response to the reviewer's recommendations we offer the following:

1.3 The program's mission and goals should reflect how the program defines academic excellence in communication.

Response: One of our goals for the upcoming year is to do some calibration of our assessment instruments to be sure we have agreement on what defines excellence in our program. We plan to add to our assessment plan a measure of how well our students are excelling on program goals rather than just documenting the extent to which they are satisfying the goals at a minimal level.

1.5 The program should have student learning outcomes that reflect the competencies, skills and knowledge its graduates are expected to attain. **Suggestion:** The external reviewer suggests the program take steps to ensure common understanding of excellence for each learning outcome that supports the program's mission.

Response: As the reviewer notes, we actually have a strong and effective assessment plan, but the data was put in an appendix rather than the narrative of the report. However, faculty need to further review how we define excellence and measure the degree to which our students achieve it as noted in 1.3.

1.8 The program should have a clear, strong mechanism for the assessment and development of teaching. **Suggestion:** The external reviewer suggests that the program develop a clear, strong mechanism for the assessment and development of teaching.

Response: The program has a voluntary peer review process, but it is mostly used when the faculty member is going up for promotion. The peer review process should be reviewed for how it might serve as an ongoing teaching assessment mechanism. This may be something that can be developed as a divisional policy under the College's new structure.

2.6 The program should have a process for assessing the leadership that draws input from faculty, staff, and students. **Suggestion:** The external reviewer recommends staff and student input be incorporated into the division head evaluations and that a process for evaluating program coordinator performance be implemented that draws input from faculty, staff and students.

Response: In part due to this review, the College, beginning with this year, now includes staff in the bi-annual review of division heads. The senior survey already collects data on

the effectiveness of the administration, but the communication faculty members were not aware of this. We have requested such data be shared with programs in the future. We do not yet have a mechanism for reviewing the program coordinator, but have shared this concern with the Provost.

4.1 A program should have sufficient full-time continuing faculty and staff to meet its mission and assure high quality undergraduate education.

5.8 A communication program should have, proportionately, the same number of continuing program faculty members of various ranks as other comparable programs in the institution and communication programs in similar institutions across the country. Appropriate measures of proportionality include but are not limited to: majors/FTE faculty; student credit hour FTE/Faculty FTE; and full-time/part-time faculty ratios. **Suggestion:** the external reviewer recommends Columbia College make building sufficient full-time continuing faculty and staff to meet its mission and assure high quality undergraduate education as budgets increase. In the interim, the college and program should explore creative ways to prioritize and achieve the most pressing goals and expectations.

Response: The reviewer was very helpful in helping us think about possible options for maintaining a quality program while short-staffed. We discussed ideas such as reducing faculty commitments across campus in order to focus more on the program, developing a strong core adjunct pool, and curricular innovations that might grow the program and justify increased staffing. After discussion with the Provost, the avenues we plan to pursue are to develop some innovative articulation agreements with the local community college that would focus more on career development with the goal of growing the program. This fits well with the College's mission to grow the school by 100 undergraduate students. The division head has met with administrators and faculty at the community college and we are working on emphases in organizational communication and health communication. The reviewer's insights on possible curricular development options were very helpful. We will also continue to develop a strong adjunct pool, something that has proved difficult in the past.

7.7 The availability and effectiveness of student advising should be evaluated as a part of the program's assessment program. **Suggestion:** The availability and effectiveness of student advising should be evaluated as a part of the program's assessment program.

Response: We learned in our post-review meeting with the Provost that advising is actually assessed as part of the senior survey, but the results have not been regularly shared with programs. We will request this data be shared and made part of our regular assessment plan.

Finally, the College and the faculty and staff of the communication program wish to thank the reviewer for her thorough, knowledgeable, and helpful review. She provided insight on issues beyond the guidelines and proved an exceptionally able reviewer. We also wish to thank the NCA Blue Ribbon Task Force for allowing us to pilot the new program guidelines and for their input into our review. The process was handled professionally, and the feedback helped us to reflect on and improve what we do as communication educators.