ASSESSMENT *in* ACTION

THE PROVIDENCE COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS NEWSLETTER
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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM WRAPS UP FIRST CYCLE

It's been nearly a decade since the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) was established within the Office of Academic Affairs. Since the program's outset, the CIP has intended to accentuate academic and service excellence and align academic departments, programs, and offices with the College's mission statement, strategic plan, and accreditation standards outlined by Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Established in the 2008-09 academic year, the CIP has served as a mechanism by which academic departments, programs, and offices engage in purposeful self-study and invite external, independent evaluation on a rotating, recurring basis. The first cycle of the CIP spanned 10 academic years (2008-09 — 2017-18), included 45 total reviews (15 administrative units and 30 academic departments/programs), and involved 62 external reviewers.

In this first cycle, the College expended in excess of $1 million on related initiatives, indirectly and directly. As context, each CIP Implementation Agreement follows the self-study, visit, and evaluator report and brings together units with Academic Affairs leadership to develop a long-term plan for continuous improvement. While these plans do not always require additional resources, the College allocated funds most frequently in the following areas:

- faculty/staff resources,
- curricular changes,
- facilities/equipment, and
- planning/assessment.

These allocations involved one-time and ongoing costs. For example, a number of capital improvements (the Ruane Center for the Humanities, the Science Complex renovation, etc.) were identified as necessary in various implementation agreements. Some expenditures were previously identified outside of the CIP, thus the program helped to reinforce their need. Separately, there are units within Academic Affairs that do not participate in the CIP due to their specialized accreditations — which come with substantial costs. ■

> **CIHE-NEASC Standard Four: The Academic Program - 4.6**
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> The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters.

CIP CHANGES SLATED FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

While the first cycle of the CIP administration has created meaningful change throughout the College's academic program, there will be several changes to how the next CIP cycle is administered. These changes are aimed at, among other things, increased efficiency, inclusiveness, and communication throughout the process.

Most of these program modifications are procedural. For instance, going forward, once a particular recommendation or action is approved as part of a unit's implementation agreement, there will be more and better communication between individuals participating in the process with others outside the division — if the action item pertains to their work.

Several other changes deal directly with how Institutional Effectiveness staff are attempting to make the process more tenable for participating units. This includes distributing, when possible, reviews more effectively throughout the cycle and each academic year. Also, an interim report that used to be distributed via email, will now be delivered in a face-to-face meeting between IE staff and participating units — with the hope of expediting the process and increasing communication.

> *In Cycle 2, self-studies will need to cover diversity/inclusiveness as a distinct topic. Guidance on this change will be provided throughout the process (e.g., structural diversity, diversity initiatives, diversity interactions).*

As for increased efficiency and inclusivity efforts, academic departments/programs will be provided with updated profile data during the self-study preparation process. Assessment staff also will be adding "diversity/inclusiveness" as a category to the self-study guide. In Cycle 2, self-studies will need to cover diversity/inclusiveness as a distinct topic. Guidance on this change will be provided throughout the process (e.g., structural diversity, diversity initiatives, diversity interactions).

Finally, the Office of Academic Affairs intends to authorize resources to support implementation agreement items, as necessary and appropriate, on a more frequent basis during the next cycle. ■

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS LOOK BACK ON CIP, HIGHLIGHT BENEFITS

One was a CIP veteran, while the other was new to the process. Although Dr. Raymond Sickinger, professor of history and department chair, and Dr. Laurie Grupp, associate professor of education and director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), had different perspectives regarding the comprehensive review, they had a similar takeaway — it provided a clear roadmap for the future.

"I was familiar with the CIP because I had gone through the process in the Feinstein Institute for Public Service and the Department of Public and Community Service Studies," Sickinger explained. "Nothing really surprised us about the process. If we were surprised, it was how smooth the process was. That was a pleasant surprise."

Grupp was in her third year as CTE director when she began the CIP review. She admitted to being reluctant about the process "probably because it felt overwhelming at first."

"I knew very little about the process, so I entered into it reluctantly," Grupp said. "It took some work to conceptualize our approach to the process and identify the questions we wanted answered. Once I had guidance and examples, I was better able to understand the work at hand."

While Grupp was initially hesitant, she said the end results "shaped our work in the years that followed in ways that I had not foreseen when I was first invited to participate."

She listed changes to the CTE that found their roots in the CIP. These include the establishment of the CTE advisory group and the addition of the CTE associate director position.

DR. LAURIE GRUPP

Sickinger also cited the benefits of the report's findings — specifically noting the suggestion to search for an African American historian, which happened during the fall 2017 semester. "The visit provided us with a variety of suggestions that are guiding us forward," he said.

Sickinger added that the most valuable part of the process, in his opinion, is the self-study because it forces you "to look honestly at your strengths and weaknesses."

DR. RAYMOND SICKINGER

Grupp said that the value of the CTE's CIP review can be found in all aspects of the center's operations.

"We are much more mission-focused and strategic than we were before the CIP," she said. "Now that I have participated in the CIP and have seen its long-lasting benefits, I would encourage all to consider engaging the process openly. I found it most beneficial to approach the work thoughtfully and collaboratively." ■

ASSESSMENT BRIEFS

CIP 2.0

CIP "cycle two" will begin next (2018-19) academic year. The review schedule will follow roughly the same order as the first cycle's timeline. Unit leaders will receive a notification including their unit's proposed review year.

Comprehensive Portal Web Page Outlines CIP Process

There is an internal portal (My PC) Web page for members of the campus community to learn more about the CIP process. The page includes a program description, as well as all the necessary documents that are used throughout the process. Please visit the page at: https://friarsprovidence.sharepoint.com/institutional-effectiveness/Pages/cip.aspx ■

RESOURCES

REGIONAL DATA/INFORMATION

New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC):
https://cihe.neasc.org

New England Board of Higher Education:
www.nebhe.org

Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education:
www.ribghe.org

NATIONAL DATA/INFORMATION

Association of American Colleges and Universities:
www.aacu.org/resources/assessment

American Association of Higher Education Accreditation:
www.aahea.org

Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education:
http://www.aalhe.org/

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education:
http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/caeh20/current#.VRQkxpWBGJA

College Board:
http://professionals.collegeboard.com/educator/higher-ed

Council for Higher Education Accreditation:
www.chea.org/

Digest of Educational Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education):
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education):
http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/

Projection of Education Statistics to 2026 (National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education):
https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018019

Quality Approaches in Higher Education:
http://asq.org/edu/quality-information/journals/

The Condition of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education):
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/

The Education Trust (Interactive Web tool for comparing graduation rates among colleges/universities):
www.collegeresults.org

INTERNAL INFORMATION

PC Internal Institutional Effectiveness Portal:
https://friarsprovidence.sharepoint.com/institutional-effectiveness/Pages/default.aspx