Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs - Master's

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beyond expectations

Outline of Presentation

Basic Concepts

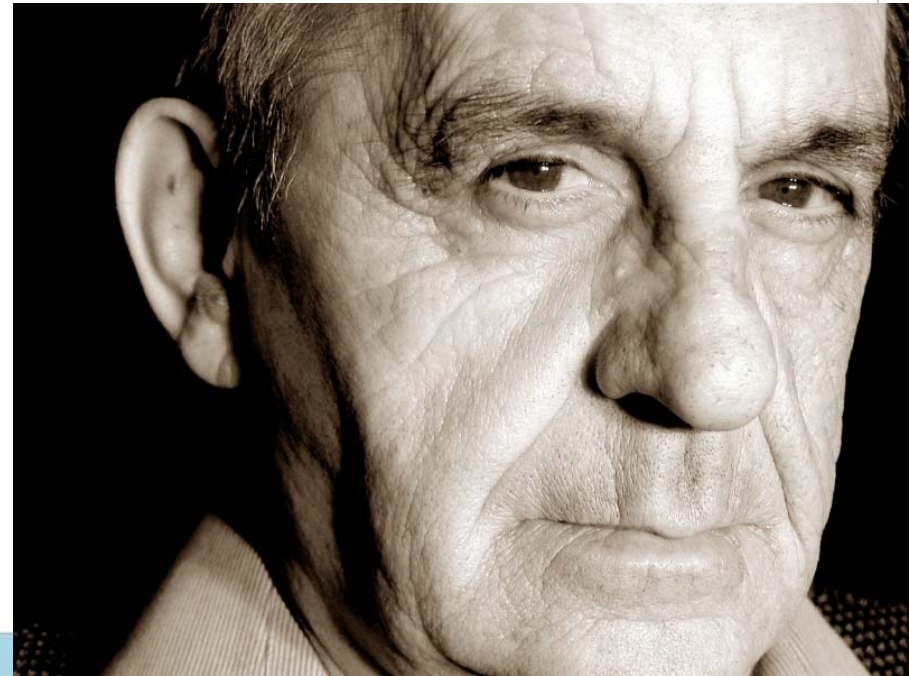Overview of Best Practices

Strategies For Making the Assessment Meaningful

Accreditation Versus Review

Tim's Thoughts

Basic Concepts

- You are dealing with people.
  - Vested in their program.
  - They care about it.
  - They can get grumpy.
- To compensate…
  - Communicate.
  - Communicate.
  - Communicate.

People and Programs

- Hard to disconnect a graduate program from the department.
  - Same faculty may be involved in undergraduate and graduate programming.
  - They may affect each other.
  - The department may emphasize one over the other.
  - The culture of the University may favor one over the other.

What is the Review For?

- Faculty views:
  - As a weapon, to eliminate programs?
  - To extract money from administration?
- Administration:
  - To determine which programs to cut?
  - For improvement? ← Only good reason
- For accreditation?

What is the Prevailing View?

- Are you caught between….
  - A Provost who is looking for programs to cut.
  - Distrustful faculty who won't grow without more resources?
- If so, *tread carefully*.

Basic Concepts

- Reviews should be….
  - Apolitical.
  - Evaluative.
  - A 360 degree view- up, down, and sideways.
  - Externally focused, rather than an internal retrospective.
  - Data driven.
  - Looking ahead.

The Garmin Approach

- Where are you going?
- What other places did you consider going to?
- Why did you eliminate them?
- Is everyone else going there, too?
- Are you taking the scenic route?
- Do you have enough gas to get there?

WHEN WILL YOU GET THERE?

Single Most Important Question

- When the program is revised, it must be able to successfully answer this question.

"What is the single compelling reasons why someone should choose your program over all of the other competing ones?"

Best Practices-Self Study

- The Self Study document can make or break a program review
  - Bad Self Study = Bad review.
- Contents
  - Vision and Mission statement.
  - Organizational chart.
  - Program description
    - FTE faculty & staff; graduate faculty FTE, staff support.
    - Enrollment and degrees awarded data.
    - Time to degree, Retention-Progression-Graduation.
    - Placement data.

Self Study Document, II

- Accomplishments.
  - of the faculty.
  - of the **students**.
- Surveys.
  - Alumni.
  - Current Students.
  - Prospective students who didn't attend.
  - Employers.
- Graduate student profile information.
  - GPA, test scores, gender, ethnicity trends over time.
- Department and faculty involvement in the program.

Self Study, III

- SWOT analysis of program.
- Analysis of competing programs.
- Proposed uniqueness of program after revisions.
- Facilities, equipment, and financial support for the program.

Problems Occur When….

- The Self Study…..
  - *Only looks inward* and asks just the faculty in the program for their opinions.
  - Doesn't look at competitors.
  - Doesn't survey alumni and employers.
  - Doesn't seek input from other departments on campus.

Best Practices-**Membership**

- Membership of the Review Team.
  - At least one external reviewer can really help inject objectivity into the review.
  - At least one administrator on the team can provide a 'how to run a successful program' view.
    - Often a very influential member of the review team.
  - Avoid dogmatic people (!).

Best Practices-**Report**

- A **Good** Report from the Review Team.
  - "Balanced".
  - "Fair".
  - "Objective".
  - "Options".
- A **Bad** Report.
  - "Directive".
  - No options.

Best Practices-**Feedback**

- Report is living and progress on agreed upon steps is verified (one year, 3-years, etc.).

- Resources follow agreed upon steps as needed.

- "Close the loop".

- "***Trust but verify***".

Report

Actions

Making Assessment Meaningful

- **The Self Study** should be the most meaningful part of the review.
  - Cannot be viewed as a bureaucratic activity.
- Outcomes assessment should be integral to the review.
  - What are the faculty's expectations that a successful graduate can do?
    - Hard to get from some programs.

Accreditation Vs. Program Review

- Might not be the same.
  - An accredited program might be prohibitively expensive to maintain.
- Accrediting body standards do not guarantee that the program is attractive to prospective students.
- 'Fit' in culture of University.

Tim's Thoughts- Actual Example

- I was an external reviewer for a department at "Private University".

- Department's Self Study.
  - Good review of competing programs.
  - Thorough analysis of why they should offer certain conentrations.
  - Proposed more concentrations than they had faculty.
  - No survey ofstudentsor alumni.
  - No outcomes assessment, time-to-degree, or RPG data.
  - 50%+ decline in enrollment.
  - 95% foreign students in graduate program.
  - Revised curriculum was updated, but not up-to-date.

Issues Uncovered

- No graduate student orientation or Handbook.
- Factions in the department (explains concentrations).
- Inadequate communication internally and externally.
- Resource poor, problems with maintaining labs.
- No **college** strategic plan.

Our Recommendations

- Communication
  - – Faculty Retreat.
  - – Football team analogy.
  - – Handbook.
  - – Engage other departments.
  - – Craft a strategic plan for the department.
  - – Two workshops recommended for the chair.
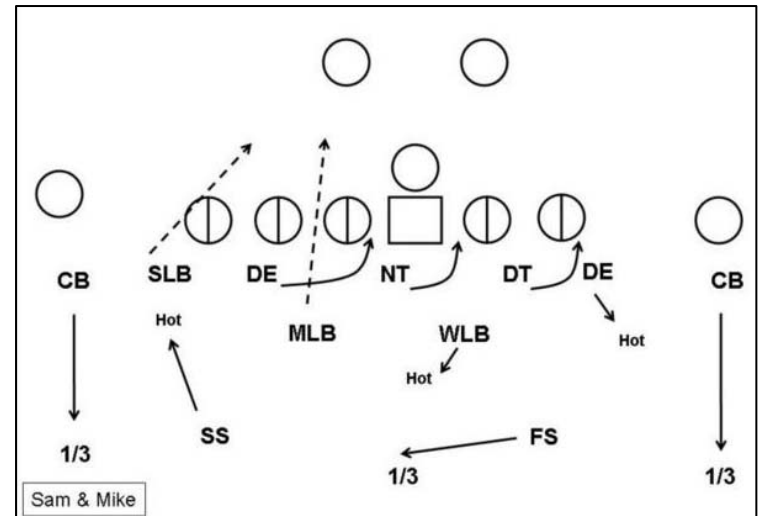
Recommendations, II

- We did NOT comment on…
  - Performance of individual faculty: Chair's job.
  - Resource allocations to the department: Dean's Job.
- We DID say….
  - Dean and chair should develop equipment maintenance and replacement plan.
  - Recommended a **college** strategic plan.

No. of Concentrations

- Did not tell them which ones to delete.
- DID suggest an enrollment minimum(15 students) for viability of a concentration.

University-Level Issues

- Development not functioning well.
- IT support inadequate, and actually dangerous.

Faculty Response

- Faculty: Initially defensive.
  - No surprise.
- Got better.

Administration's Response

- Administration: Okay with it.
  - Concern about funding the equipment replacement plan.
  - Concern about IT vulnerabilities.
  - Supportive of the department.

Chair's Response

- Middle management.
- Sees both views.
- Did concur with 95%+ of the report.

Up to Them Now

- Graduate Dean, Academic Dean, and Provost must help the chair to be successful.

- Next steps are critical:
  - Will the University and college….
    - Improve development?
    - Fix the IT problem?
    - Fund an equipment plan?
  - Will the department?
    - Stop disliking each other?
    - Craft a shared future?
    - Develop metrics to assure that they get there?

My thanks to…..

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