Program Review Focus Group
Tuesday, May 8, 2012
SOTL Center

Participants: Richard Castillo, Foreign Languages; Kathy Diamond, Biology; Cheryl Gregory, Mathematics; Linda Hand, Earth Sciences; Daniel Keller, English; Michelle Schneider, Administration of Justice; Amy Sobel, ESL.

Others: James Carranza, Moderator; Teresa Morris, Notetaker; Monique Nakagawa, Notetaker.

I. Introduction and Background

Goal of the focus group: to talk about the forms and process.

III. Metaphor

If the comprehensive PR form were an automobile, what type?

- Square wheels, poorly designed, and uncomfortable. Breaks down frequently and requires lots of maintenance. Lots of gas. Lots of extras that none use. [P1]
- Not an actual functioning car. A manual that describes what the car looks like, followed by piles of scrap metal that don’t actually make a car. In fact, the manual doesn’t describe a real car... [P2]
- Shopping cart. Doesn’t move unless you push it; goes where you push it; holds whatever you put in no matter how eclectic, useless, or vital; useful when used as designed; not all need it; and some can use for other purposes. [P3]
- VW Thing. Pull the roof and the doors off and you get the annual. Most don’t move – in driveways, not on the road. Stable and functional. Ugly. Have to love it... [P4]
- Gas guzzler. Oversized and overweight road hog. Like most cars, it’s a necessary evil. [P5]
- Needs to be multi-tool – a fire truck. All stuff for overblown disaster, but need a little. Useful but overkill for what need?[P6]

Themes:

- Not useful
- Purposefulness
- Road hog: It takes space and energy to do the things it needs to do.
- Gas guzzler: Inefficiently uses time and resources. How much in it is used?
- Square wheels: Poorly designed. Several parts not valid. The recent thing to get others to read it is not going to happen.

A general discussion followed and touched upon the following themes:

Purpose

- What's being used? [P4]
- Does everything have a use? [P5]
- (W)hy have the description section?? [P7]
- That people do PR differently is stupid; how can you use it for comparison and analysis? Who is going to read it and what for? [P7]
- Aside from getting equipment and positions, what's it for me? [P4]
- I would like not to do it if I am not requesting positions or equipment. [P1]
- (My department) received accolades from Susan and Mike for its report submitted 3 years ago. Within a 3 year period, they got rid of (our) program. We’re gone. Now what has my hackles up is (having to do a) report for a department that no longer exists. What for? Ask for data for programs and requests for programs if it exists. Especially if they got all the data they needed for robust programs with excellent instruction, and yet we got cut because of no funds... [P3]
- We’ve designed a tool that had purpose and it’s not getting stuff done. It’s being used in an advisory way. Nothing says (there’s an) automatic step from here to accomplishment. (The administration) can ignore it. [PR] doesn’t do it very well. [P3]
- Some things are useful for (my department) in PR, such as which sections have been cut and when. It’s a useful communication tool with faculty to analyze what’s been happening. It’s good to look at history. I think that should be done, to track trends in cuts; it’s useful. [P7]
- It’s a reflective thought that justifies future direction. [P6]
- It serves its purpose in my department when we write. I like the description of programs. It’s important to me because once a year I sum up and see what’s changed. (It’s the) only part of PR I fully understand. It helps us say, “Look where we are.” (2 other participants noted that they put such analysis elsewhere.) The rest is b.s. [P5]
- We really use it.... It’s meaningful for faculty who actively participate. We’ve chosen to take the instrument and tweak it to be a tool we want.
We know it’s read and used as a basis for decisions. It needs to be well thought out. [P6]

- All PRs at other institutions that pass accreditation are 60 page reports. I do think PR is for the Accreditation Committee. We don’t want them to come back and say, “This is not a PR.” But Skyline PR is like ours but more friendly. There’s no grid stuff. They do something built in that gives feedback →performance thing. [P9]

Allocation of resources

- It’s a shopping list. If you put together data and a decent argument, you get money. [P4]
- One clear relationship: If you don’t put it down, you can’t ask for it. [P5]
- PR is justification of a shopping list. [P3]
- I would like not to do it if I am not requesting positions or equipment. [P1]

Usefulness

- We really use it…. It’s meaningful for faculty who actively participate. We’ve chosen to take the instrument and tweak it to be a tool we want. [P6]
- When monster cuts happened 2 years back, when the administration asked for justifications, I copied the PRs. The work was already done. It was important to have covered the bases. [P6]
- PR is valuable to the extent we talk to each other about it. I have found the colleague section enormously validating, helpful, and fascinating. Conversations are important. [P9]

Section V

General comments

- Section V is weirdest. (Everyone groans)[P2]
- We generate so much data and repeat it in so many places. I’d just like to insert links. Section V doesn’t relate to accreditation, as I know. [P2]
- (Section V) sounds to me like the Administration is saying, “Please tell me what I should think about. What are the factors that justify this?” [P3]
- (My department has) put stuff in there that makes no sense on purpose in order to see if anyone notices. None do. [P2]
- Section V is the main exercise that faculty spend time on. It allows us to develop arguments for things we want. It’s where we figure out what we
should clamor for. Where (c??) impacts cut. Where the administration hears what we think. [P5]
- In the past, we copied pieces all over the place. All came together in Section V. It’s meaningful for faculty who actively participate. [P6]

What’s not so good

- What’s the purpose? If that’s the purpose, then it should be called that (sorry, didn’t catch what “that” is –MN). We haven’t requested a position, so for us, it’s a rant. We say all this stuff... it depends on what each department is going through. What good does it to write down our worries? [P7]
- Rather than rant, we try to assign blame in a way that could be acted upon. [P5]
- I disagree that faculty don’t think it’s important. Faculty involved in writing think that it is way more important that it is. They don’t look at our reasons. [P7]
- What if the Academic Senate had to read all the Section Vs and prioritize the threats and needs and send to the administration as a group what we think the priorities should be? [P5]
- I’d rather have the administration say, “We’re looking at these departments, so fill these issues.” I feel that it is a ridiculous amount of work when they know they’ll cut my programs. [P7]
- I steeled myself to do this last PR to provide a document that can be used in the future, to show what we had and what we thought we could do if the money was there. We have data to show the quality of the programs. “Despite the fact that the same information was there and you chose to cut us, here’s the status and I hope you restore us.” [P3]
- We say what we want to say and then figure out how to put it into a meaningless grid. [P6]
- I hate Section V. It serves a purpose if you’re seeking for something. This should be part VII. [P1]
- This is for Business Management. I’m biased because I hate the SWOT matrix. For CTE, so we’re different, a square peg, we look at external factors, such as the job market. I have students thinking they’ll get a job, when they’re not. To me, if this is where I’m making justifications, but it’s where I’m asking for things. [P4]
- I always feel vulnerable with SWOT. I told you the worst things happening to us. I’ve told you my weakness, and I’m afraid you’ll just take it away.
Where they ask you for strengths, you lie. It’s a lot of spin instead of honest reflection. Spin doesn’t feel authentic. [P8]

- Two participants thought that SWOT seemed punitive. [P3, P8]
- Section V.b grew out of a warning, in an era of crazy requests. Accreditation wanted... dinged us for not linking spending with student success. I think part of b was to deter folks from asking... [P9]
- How many times do I have to explain that (Section V.b). [P4]
- We can do a better job to help people see ways...what goes in the form. If things are not accreditation-related, we should be able to say N/A. Otherwise, it’s a waste of our time. [P9]
- The grid is meaningless. Reflective assessment shows up elsewhere. [P6]

Section VI

- Faculty go, “I’m going to start this or that or complain.” Annoying. [P5]

How is PR used for faculty?

Faculty not involved

- (Colleagues) ask for things and I tell them to look at PR. They say, “What?” [P3]
- As it stands and is used, it is not important for faculty. Most don’t know which is PR and what it’s for. We’ve created something but the process is not carried through. Faculty is unaware of it unless they are writing it or provide data. A lot of folks don’t recognize how important it is. [P3]
- (Within the context of CTE and 2 programs worth of part-timers) PR was never shared with them. I need to ask them for what they want next year. They don’t know it exists. Key people ask for equipment needs. Others are oblivious. To some level, it’s something we do for upper levels. Aside from getting equipment and positions, what’s it for me? [P4]

Faculty involved

- I have a cooperative faculty. I send out the old PR to full-timers and ask for suggestions. Since I direct it that way, I find it allows faculty to be aware of where we are and what we are up to. Sections I, V, and VII serve faculty. Section VI is when you get some bull: Faculty go, “I’m going to start this or that or complain.” Section V communication with administration. [P5]
Six out of eleven (faculty) contribute key pieces. We meet a lot so we mull things and when PR comes around we’re ready to put in formulated ideas. We really use it…. It’s meaningful for faculty who actively participate. [P6]

In the same way that evaluation for faculty and assessment of SLOs are important and helpful, the same is true for PR. Participation is helpful in (D???): to understand the needs of one group and to prioritize. [P3]

As a process, it can bring faculty together. [P5]

When you have a prioritization meeting, faculty can see how important PR is. [P3]

**What purpose does PR serve for administrators?**

**Transparency**

- It is hard to separate “is” from “should be”. PR is important in theory, but the way it is done now, (one department) has lots of power, (while another) does a lot of work but has no power. It is hard to say PR is important if you can do lots of work and have no power. [P2]
- It should (serve a purpose), but does it? It’s hard to say. [P2]
- No idea. Wish I knew. My perception is that it has no purpose. [P7]
- We know it’s read and used as a basis for decisions. It needs to be well thought out. [P6]
- I’d rather have the administration say, “We’re looking at these departments, so fill these issues.” I feel that it is a ridiculous amount of work when they know they’ll cut my programs. [P3]
- I have told the administration that we need to know it has been received and read. [P9]
- (The administration) already made their decision before they asked us to write the report (PR). To me, I feel the PR report-writing (is a) process so somebody can check a box that faculty were consulted. [P3]

**Process**

- What if the Academic Senate had to read all the Section Vs and prioritize the threats and needs and send to the administration as a group what we think the priorities should be? [P5]

**Do you believe PR integrates with college planning?**

- No. [P2]
**What about PR is useful?**

**Interdepartmental discussion**
- Provides interdepartmental discussion. [P6]
- A way to communicate with faculty. [P7]
- We get to see and discuss success #s as a department. [P2]

**Departmental trends**
- A way to reflect on trends (e.g. which classes put out every year, what’s cancelled), think about changes. [P7] [Mod]
- I put (trends) in program description. Useful to see every year. [P5]
- Looking at trends in student success, looking at FTEF #s, looking back at previous years to see what has changed. [P9]
- Provides a record of changes (courses cut, new courses, personnel). [P1]
- Recognition of trends. [P1]
- Historical document to look back on. [P6]

**Departmental review/report card**
- How we’re doing. [P4]
- Writing takes it from the hypothetical and subjective to the tangible and objective. Validates success and reveals missteps. [P3]

**Equipment and position requests**
- Can be used to justify equipment and position requests. [P7]
- We often get what we ask for. [P2]
- Useful for requesting equipment. [P4]

**Other reference**
- Source data when requested for documentation at odd times. [P6]

**What about the PR form would you change?**

**SWOT**
- Get rid of SWOT (or at least change it so it’s not a grid). [P7]
- Get rid of SWOT. [P9]
- Throw out SWOT matrix. [P4]
- No grids. [P6]
• Make SWOT a paragraph within VII. [P1]

Organization

• Collapse Sections II, III, and IV. All tied to SLOs. [P4]
• Collapse II, III, and IV. [P2]
• Make IV optional since small classes don’t necessarily produce valid statistics. [P1]
• Analysis in one place. [P6]
• Discussion without redundancy. [P6]

Types of forms

• Only one type of form (not annual and comprehensive). [P4]

Data

• Find a way to automate analysis of the student success. [P3]
• Link to data source; not regurgitate what is already available. [P6]
• No data evaluation. ADMJ skewed by Police Academy numbers, make head hurt. [P4]
• No data evaluation. [P5]

What about the PR data would you change?

Interpretation

• Data evaluation drives me nuts. Administration should tell me what the data says. Stupid things like projections of load. Ridiculous. If they want actual data, let’s use data that is actually being used to cut classes. I feel like that should be out there and clear. The relationship between what’s in the data and what it means is not my job. [P7]
• I don’t know how my success numbers compare. I can’t interpret it. [P7]
• The data should be given with context from administration. [P7]
• We’re not statisticians. [P5]

Reliability

• Data are not reliable. [P5]
• Data often wrong. Data from prior years shouldn’t change. [P1]
• Some programs are too small, so data are statistically invalid. [P1]
• Load projection is crappy and weird. [P4]
Relevance

- In my department, each discipline is a program. Data from individual classes are misleading. Series data (e.g. SPAN I-IV) makes sense. Need to understand series = a program. [P3]

Access

- It seems there is other data we don’t have access to that (the administration) uses. Something they call Hyperion... e.g. Fill rate. Anything they use should be something we can see. [P9]

What about the PR process would you change?

Administration Feedback

- We should get feedback on it from someone in administration; want it to be 2-way communication. [P7]
- Feedback on how we are doing and who we are reaching. [P4]
- Consultation with those who are reading it. Why are 6 page PRs and 36 page PRs both nice jobs? [P2]
- Make administration answer in writing why and how PR was used to grant/deny in a timely manner. [P3]
- Need to know what administration does with it. [P9]
- Suggestions for how we could write our PR more effectively (e.g. We thought you should have focused on this). [P7]
- Get feedback on the finished report. [P9]

Accountability

- If we get feedback, would like accountability: if answers are insufficient, then an amended PR needs to be submitted. [P6]
- Have faculty held to standards for doing the PR. [P9]
- All auxiliary services, bookstore, student services, and administration do PRs. [P9]

Position Requests

- Stop the fiction that PR drives position requests. [P9]
- Maybe we need a new mechanism than PR for things to order. [P9]
- Make it what it really appears to be: a justification for positions/ equipment, not an annual report. [P1]
Frequency/PR Cycle

- Do not change it every year. [P1]
- Minimum of once every 5 years? [P1]
- Not do it every year. Think every 3 years is enough. [P9]
- Can’t we project that we’ll need positions every 3 years? Why do we need to say it every year? [P9]
- Easier to write every year than every 3 years. Annual update is enough. [P5]
- Maybe a program description every year? [P1]
- Maybe we don’t all have to do the same PR. Maybe once every 6 years, with position and material requests annually. [P9]

Purpose

- If PR is used or required for Accreditation, then I am happy to do it. If it is to blow my own horn, then I don’t need it. Unless I have a sense that administration reads it, I don’t want to blow my horn for the heck of it. [P7]
- Not mandatory for everyone. [P1]
- Demoralizing when it feels purposeless. [P9]

Other

- Milestone notifications, e.g. email out to all that data are available. Reminder notifications of timelines. [P4]
- Better navigation in PRIE site. [P6]
- Maybe the concept that one size fits all is the problem. [P3]
- What if the Academic Senate had to read all the Section Vs and prioritize the threats and needs and send to the administration as a group what we think the priorities should be? [P5]