Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo
Business Communication Program

The 2013-2014 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Business Communication Program concluded with a culmination meeting on September 11, 2015.

During the meeting, the program was commended for the following excellent practices:

1. While teaching large classes, faculty offer additional study sessions for students, implement pedagogical innovations, work with technology, and strive to remain abreast of changes within the discipline.

2. There is considerable energy dedicated to exploring and developing pedagogical strategies that support student learning and pedagogical approaches such as flipped classrooms, service learning, and other innovations that exemplify the program's dynamism. These High Impact Practices provide tremendous benefits to the students.

3. The courses challenge and educate students at each level of writing proficiency, providing them with much needed discipline-specific skills that often benefit students immediately in their job searches and careers. The university also recognizes the importance of writing skill development, and is in the process of hiring a writing director to support the campus-wide effort.

4. Outreach and internships appear to be especially vital and dynamic.

5. The assessment plan in place is of long standing, is thoughtfully implemented, and curriculum changes are implemented as a result of assessment results. AACSB highlighted this program as the best practice in terms of assessment, which is very impressive.

The major recommendations and concerns raised through the PPR process were discussed. Suggestions on how to address them are provided:

1. The possibility of developing a Business Communication concentration or a Business Communication Studies program:
    a. The department/program commented that this is a recommendation of the external reviewers, and not necessarily that of the program's. There does not seem to be a strong desire from the program faculty.
    b. Concentrations in the college are set up to reflect different sub-areas of business, which makes business communication unsuitable for a concentration.
    c. The program faculty suggested that students would be motivated to take business communication courses if they can showcase their skills to the employers. The dean concurred and suggested creating a certificate program for the students. The chair will talk to the faculty about this possibility.

2. Increase the number of full-time instructors to at least 70%:

a. The program currently has 80% of courses taught by part-time lecturers; The program would like to have more full-time lecturers with PhD credentials.
b. The college has encouraged the department/program to hire more full-time faculty, but recruitment has been unsuccessful. The difficulty may have to do with the non-tenure-track nature of the positions associated with the program, and the lack of quality applicants (i.e. no PhDs).
c. The department/program is encouraged to take a more rigorous approach to recruitment, adjust job ad, reconsider the PhD requirement, and advertise more widely. The permission and support from the college is clear.
d. The department/program has also had issues with HR and/or union regarding the number of full-time PhD level faculty. The Dean and Deputy Provost have agreed to intervene if similar questions arise in the future.

3. Evaluation criteria and review process for full- and part-time instructors that suit the discipline in which they work:
    a. Currently, the business communication program is housed in the department of marketing. Hence the faculty are evaluated by the DPC in marketing, which does not have a good grasp of these faculty's work. The UPS does not allow non-tenure track faculty on DPC, which prevents anyone from the business communication program to provide feedback to the DPC.
    b. The program asked if a non-tenure-track faculty member could attend the DPC as a non-voting member. The Dean and Deputy Provost agreed that the DPC needs to understand the faculty's scope of practice, and recommended the program to contact the FDC to see if there could be any accommodations or alternative options.

4. More formalized mentoring program for part-time faculty:
    a. The program is in the process of preparing a manual for new faculty, and has tried to provide training and socialization as much as an informal structure would allow. There is not a formal mentoring structure, which is challenging given that there are 4-5 new hires every year.
    b. The Deputy Provost commented that the university is putting a lot of emphasis on lecturers this year through the FDC. The program is suggested to take advantage of the FDC services on this regard.

5. Reduce class sizes to align with the University class size of 25 for writing courses:
    a. The college acknowledged this issue, but also has a lot of students to serve. The college has already reduced class size from 37 to 33, and added 6 sections this semester to accommodate the large number of students.
    b. Another difficulty for adding more sections is to find quality faculty who could teach them.

6. Tutor support for ESL learners:
    a. The program would very much like more tutors that help students with grammar, structure, and similar problems. It is preparing a proposal to the college to hire 2-3 people in the existing tutoring center to address this issue.
    b. The college is supportive of this proposal, and will provide funding for it.
    c. A program faculty member has received a grant from the MCBE for a project generated through the MCBE Student Success Task Force. Three program faculty are creating online self-learning videos on grammar, structure, etc. In addition, several grammar workshops are being offered in the Mihaylo Tutoring Center.
    d. The Deputy Provost and AVPAP will reach out to Student Affairs to see how the university learning center can be leveraged to help with these students.

7. Add indirect assessment data that references student learning and that might involve surveying students regarding their own learning outcomes:
    a. The program has already implemented or planned indirect assessment for written and oral communication.

The Dean commended the program for being a very valuable program to the students, and thanked the faculty for their dedication and great contribution to the college.