

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo Civil Engineering, B.S. Program

The 2014-2015 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the B.S. Program in Civil Engineering concluded with a culmination meeting on November 6, 2015.

The program submitted ABET reaccreditation materials in lieu of the PPR documents. At the meeting, the program was congratulated for completing the reaccreditation process. The program was commended for the significant progress made in the past several years, which includes:

1. The program has used data to make changes to admission and advisement policies leading to better retention rates, specifically for first-generation college students.
2. The program has very close ties to local civil engineering firms that have led to the involvement of practicing engineers as adjunct faculty members an active, engaged, and supportive Industrial Advisory Board, consulting opportunities for the faculty, and active participation by industrial constituents in the program's assessment and evaluation processes.
3. Students have numerous opportunities to interact with practicing engineers, thus enhancing their learning experiences and providing them with unique and important insights into the engineering profession.

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

1. The department chair highlighted the faculty's effort of strengthening industry ties, an area of weakness in the last ABET visit, but a strength in the current one. It is exciting to see such a dramatic change over the last few years.
2. Space issue:
 - The Associated Dean pointed out that a serious concern for ECS is to find sufficient research space to support new faculty, who come with strong research portfolios.
 - The department chair echoed that newly hired faculty are not provided with appropriate office space.
 - Student club activities have been slowed down due to lack of space.
 - The faculty pointed out that lab space is much needed, as labs could not be accomplished online. Lab equipment needs to be replaced as well.
 - The college has organized a space committee to explore creative ideas to find new space (e.g. enclose the ECS buildings and create new space in-between; build a 2nd floor of the machine shop located at the N-W wing of the Engineering building).
3. Enrollment management:
 - The department chair shared data on undergraduate/graduate student enrollment trend. The increasing number of students places more demand on the program to hire more adjunct faculty, which makes it challenging to maintain high quality education.

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- The college recognizes that the large class size is a concern – class size of 75 students and more is non-sustainable.
- The Dean asked to have a separate meeting with the Provost, Deputy Provost, and AVPAP to meet with the department chairs, and discuss possible solutions to this problem. He emphasized that a solution needs to be in place quickly to avoid negative impact to the program/department.
- The Deputy Provost recommended a faculty discussion on how big the program wants to be, in terms of student enrollment. The Dean commented that a variety of mechanisms are being put in place to control enrollment, and recognized that CEE-BS is close to “hitting the ceiling”. The college intends to have a serious conversation about undergraduate program enrollment within the internal college framework (i.e. max. 5000 grad and undergraduate enrollment, 3500 FTES, and 7500 headcounts).

4. Faculty support:

- The department chair shared faculty and student research activity data from last year, which were very impressive. However, to sustain this level of activity, he asked for more resources and release time to support the faculty.
- The Dean commended the program for “excelling beyond anyone’s imagination”. One example is that ABET requires 4 sub-areas in CEE. The department has 6 sub-areas, more than many institutions in the region. The Dean acknowledged that key policies need to be put in place to promote critical elements of research.
- Faculty in the program are actively involved in assessment. However, the faculty voiced the concern that this may not be sustainable over time.
- The program faculty also asked for resources to release faculty from the 4-4 teaching load, particularly due to the fact that the department does not offer many GE courses, which generates FTES. The need for additional revenue is recognized by the AVP-AP and the Deputy Provost, who recommended the department to explore creative ways (e.g. UEE programs) to bring in additional revenue to help reduce teaching load.