

Implementing Self-Study Review Feedback

Introduction. Over the past four years, several departments in our school have undergone a self-study as a preliminary step to prepare for our next accreditation visit. Department Chairs and faculty prepared detailed reports and arranged site visits with external reviewers. During site visits, some chairs included tours of facilities such as art studio classrooms, an archeology dig site, and music classrooms. Others prepared short presentations or a list of talking points to highlight key points from the report. Following review of the reports and the site visits, reviewers provided feedback to the Department Chair and Dean.

Implementing Recommendations. The next step is implementing the recommendations, as appropriate and feasible. Not all suggestions align with university requirements. Some pose a financial challenge. Our presentation will feature implementation strategies utilizing review feedback for four department/programs: English; Communication Studies; Criminal Justice; and Sociology/Anthropology. The following list demonstrates a range of review comments: analysis of assessment and revised plans, a recruitment and retention plan, balancing online and campus course offerings, pursuing graduate program opportunities, hiring additional faculty, and expanding community outreach.

Utilizing Self-studies for Accreditation Report. Department Chairs should leverage this feedback to argue for new hires, additional resources for projects, and support for worthwhile initiatives. Self-studies are more than an analytical exercise or an academic chore. They are the foundation for forthcoming accreditation reviews. There are tangible benefits from a well-crafted self-study that highlights program strengths as well as recognizes limitations and challenges. Self-studies reviews, as noted above, are tools for enhancing degree offerings, faculty line requests, program assessment strategies, etc. The external reviews also serve, importantly, as preparatory analysis: what are we doing well, where we are deficient, and what strategies are recommended to improve our program. In this portion of our presentation, we will focus on how to build from the self-study for the accreditation review document. We recommend the following steps: 1) Analyze and note comments on each section; 2) Integrate department faculty into the analysis; 3) Create an Action Plan; 4) Don't rest on your laurels; 5) Fix those areas that are deficient; 6) Compile data and create visual aids; 7) Request what is needed; and 8) Integrate review comments into your accreditation report. We will engage attendees in an interactive conversation on implementing the feedback and building from the self-study for accreditation reviews.

Conclusion. Whether you are writing a preliminary self-study or an accreditation report, you are presenting your program to an external audience as well as your own campus internal audience. Being intentional and strategic in the framing of these reports can help your program meet goals and initiatives.