Overview of the Program Review Process
Rev 3-31-16

The overall purpose of conducting a program review is to engage in a process of continual improvement to meet the needs of the learning community. Each academic unit systematically assesses its program quality, effectiveness, and rigor toward the improvement of student learning through the use of student learning outcomes (SLOs), best practices demonstrated in each discipline, data-informed decision-making, delivery of services, establishing benchmarks and measuring outcomes.

Prior to 1990, the review process was not uniformly implemented throughout the PLNU community. Departments operated with best intentions, however, there was no definitive review cycle or process requiring the use of data to inform practice, yet established. Under the direction of Dr. Ruth Heinrichs, PLNU's first Director for Institutional Effectiveness, the program review process found its inception. Still in its infancy, Dr. Heinrichs, developed a Department/Program Review Cycle 1 (Cycle 1) and Department/Program Review Cycle 2 (Cycle 2) in the 1995-1996 school year. It was established with the expectation that each academic unit would conduct a full program review during Cycle 1 with follow-up changes during Cycle 2 and repeat the full review process every 10 years thereafter.

In the fall of 2010, the PLNU faculty determined that a permanent faculty committee, the Program Review Committee, should be formed to support the Academic Units, to oversee the review process, and to provide recommendations of their finding to the Provost. The faculty selected the first members of the committee along with a general description of the charter. The Program Review Committee initially met in spring 2011 with the purpose of updating the Program Review process and guidelines. The Program Review Guidelines document and the Program Review Self-Study Template were the products of the Committee's actions with the proficient skill and insight of Dr. Maggie Bailey, Vice Provost for Program Development and Accreditation, who served as PLNU's WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

Following Dr. Bailey's retirement, Dr. Kerry Fulcher, Provost and Chief Academic Officer assumed the responsibility as the ALO and, as the Administrator with Committee oversight, worked to develop the *PLNU Program Review Self-Study Report Template* Version 1.0 in October 2015.

What the Program Review Is and Is Not

The program review is a means of measuring quality through the collection of evidence and benchmarking the best practices and comparable programs in the discipline. The analysis of the information presents an opportunity to reach conclusions about overall quality and recommendations for improvement. A systematic program review provides

opportunity to strengthen and provide meaningful information to programs and the university as they seek to ensure quality learning experiences for their students.

The extent to which a university can justify its programs and student outcomes may determine its continued accreditation status and standing among its comparable institutions. The federal government may require accrediting agencies, such as WSCUC, to place a greater emphasis on student outcomes including employability, thereby creating a link between the estimated quality of the degree offered by a college or university and the purported transferability of skills to the workplace by the graduating student. This has great implications for the future of liberal arts institutions. By completing program reviews for each academic unit within the university, Point Loma will be in a better position to demonstrate that it has conscientiously and extensively examined its programs through the program review process, reifying our vision to "be a nationally prominent Christian university… known for excellence in academic preparation, wholeness in personal development and faithfulness to mission."

As discussions about the need for the program review process have occurred, the committee has worked to address the concerns of faculty and address any misunderstandings. Understandably, an undertaking of this magnitude could appear onerous to a faculty new to these requirements and without the advantage of prior training in the facilitation of such a process. For that reason, the committee developed a *Most Common Misconceptions About Program Review* fact sheet.

MOST COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PROGRAM REVIEW

Misconception 1: Program Review is used to evaluate faculty performance.

> The Program Review is designed to assess, evaluate, redesign, and improve the academic program, not the faculty. Faculty awareness, participation, engagement, and ownership are essential for a successful Program Review which is not to be used to judge or evaluate individual faculty performance.

Misconception 2: Our program is excellent, our students are learning, and we do not need to bother with a Program Review.

> The primary purpose of a program review is to ensure continuous improvement, relevance of the program, and the quality of the educational program learning outcomes and student experience. Even if the faculty believes the quality is already excellent, there is always room for improvement and evaluation, as we do not live in a static society. Based on years of evidence, current trends and external review, the Program Review process is designed to inform the faculty about those areas that can be improved or strengthened.

Misconception 3: The Chair/Dean assigns one single faculty member to conduct the Program Review in order to expedite the process and avoid conflict.

Program Review is only effective when it is a collaborative effort based on the evidence, reflection, synthesis, and analysis of all of the Academic Unit faculty (full time, part time and adjunct) and staff. Each person brings a different perspective and skill set to the table that contributes to the improvement of the program(s). Without everyone's involvement it is difficult to receive "buy-in" and ownership of the action plan for improvement.

Misconception 4: Assessment is a waste of time and does not benefit the students.

Assessment is the process by which the Academic Unit (1) identifies the important learning outcomes that it values, (2) aligns the program to the Institutional mission and outcomes, (3) identifies best practices in the discipline, and (4) the university links future resource planning to program improvements. Anything that enhances and improves the student learning outcomes and experience is an immense value to the student, the Academic Unit, and University.

Misconception 5: Program Review sounds like a great idea but it is too time consuming, costly and complex.

Program Review is designed to build on the Academic Unit's annual assessment plans. The Program Review is a shared responsibility of all the Academic Unit personnel aided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the area dean and the Program Review Committee. A successful Program Review engages the faculty, staff, students and alumni, and while it does take time and require work, it is well worth the individual contributions made by each member of the team.

The program review is a joint venture of all members of the academic unit under the guidance of the area Dean. The program review is intended to be a one-year process to be reviewed every six years. Toward that end, a *Step-by-Step* agenda below has been added to guide participants.

Program Review Step-by-Step Overview

Step 1: Preparation for Program Review
   A. The Dean notifies the Chair* that a program review cycle has begun
   B. Program members review the program's assessment planning and activities documentation, ensuring that it is up-to-date and complete
   C. The Dean reviews the program's assessment planning and activities documentation and submits a report on its' findings and recommendations to the Chair, the Program Assessment and Review Committee (PARC), and the Provost
   D. Dean, chair and director of IR meet to determine if there are any majors that should be combined and treated as a single program or any program level analyses elements (F1-8 in PR template) that should be treated as one for multiple majors.
   E. The Chair meets with the Dean to plan the upcoming program review, including:
      1. Setting a timeline for completing the program review in a timely manner
      2. Drafting a budget for the various expenses of the program review
      3. Compiling a list of names that may serve as external reviewers
      4. Providing guidance to the Chair on how best to successfully complete the program review process
   F. The Dean contacts and engages the willing external reviewer(s)
   G. Program members review the previous program review action plan and recommendations to assess where the program is in relation to what it intended to accomplish
   H. The Chair meets with the VPAIE to review prior years of assessment
   I. The Office of Institutional Research provides the Chair with a template containing relevant data to be used in the program's self-study

Step 2: Program Review Self-Study
   A. Program members design and implement a self-study plan based on the self-study template
   B. Program members draft an action plan based on the findings from the self-study
   C. The Dean provides advice and guidance to the program members that will enable them to complete the self-study and draft action plan in a timely manner
   D. The Chair submits the completed self-study and draft action plan to the Dean

Step 3: External Review
   A. The Dean provides the external reviewer(s) with the program self-study, draft action plan, and an external reviewer report template and facilitates any needed communications between the external reviewer and the program stakeholders
   B. The Dean assists the external reviewer(s) in such a way to ensure that the external reviewer report is completed and submitted to the Dean in a timely fashion

C. The Dean provides the Chair all external reviewer reports
D. The program members review the external reviewer report(s) and, if they deem necessary, revise the self-study and/or draft action plan
E. The program members, if they so desire, may draft a response to the external reviewer report(s) that comments on any recommendations not incorporated in the revised action plan and/or on any factual errors made in the external reviewer report(s)
F. The Chair submits to the Dean any revisions of the self-study and/or the draft action plan and, if applicable, the response to the external reviewer report(s)
G. The Dean compiles all of the relevant documents and submits them to the PARC

Step 4: Program Assessment and Review Committee Findings and Recommendation
A. The PARC reviews the program review documentation and writes a Findings and Recommendations Report
B. The Dean provides the Chair with the Findings and Recommendations Report
C. The program members, if they so desire, may draft a response to the Findings and Recommendations Report, which the Chair submits to the Dean
D. The Dean submits the program's response, if any, to the PARC
E. The PARC reviews the program's response and, if it deems necessary, revises the Findings and Recommendations Report
F. The PARC submits the final Findings and Recommendations Report, along with all of the program review documentation, to the Provost

Step 5: Memorandum of Understanding
A. The Provost and the Dean meet with the program members:
   1. to review the Findings and Recommendation Report;
   2. to discuss key elements of what should be included in the Memorandum of Understanding;
   3. to discuss the program review process
B. Based on this discussion, the Chair drafts a Memorandum of Understanding
C. The Dean assists the Chair in drafting a Memorandum of Understanding that addresses the needs of both the program and the University
D. When the Chair, Dean, and Provost each agree that the Memorandum of Understanding is complete, the Provost submits it to the Administrative Cabinet for discussion. The Administrative Cabinet may ask the Chair, Dean, and Provost to further revise the Memorandum of Understanding and resubmit
E. Following approval by the Administrative Cabinet, the Provost and the Chair sign the Memorandum of Understanding

Step 6: Program Review Implementation and Follow-Up

A. The VPAIE seeks feedback on the program review process, the results of which will be provided to the Chair, Dean, and PARC
B. The program members develop APC/GSC proposals for academic and program revisions based on the findings of the program review
C. The Chair notifies the Chair of the APC or GSC to set a timeline for submitting the proposals to the Committees and the Faculty
D. The Dean periodically follows up with the Chair and the Provost to ensure that the Memorandum of Understanding is being implemented
E. The Chair submits an annual report on progress made to implement the Memorandum of Understanding to the Dean, the PARC, and the Provost. The annual report is no longer necessary once the Provost determines the main elements of the Memorandum of Understanding have been implemented

*Note: The language in this document of "Chair" and "Dean" reflects the department/college academic structure. For schools, the School Dean occupies the "Dean" role in this document. The "Chair" role in this document would be occupied by the Program Coordinator or Associate Dean, depending on the program and school.