

College of Micronesia-FSM Assessment Team Semesterly Report to the Cabinet and Executive Committee: May 30, 2018

General Business

The Assessment Team had difficulty meeting spring 2018 because the majority of members were teaching classes, serving on other committees, and serving on 25th Anniversary teams such that even the hour free period on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday was not an optional time to meet. As a consequence, and because the group needed face-to-face time to dialogue extensively, it was agreed that members would attend a meeting on Pohnpei during 28-30 May 2018.

The Assessment Team is now posted on the college website and can be accessed via www.comfsm.fm → Our College dropdown → Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Assurance → [Assessment Team](#)

The Assessment Team [minutes](#) and most recent Terms of Reference ([ToR](#)) are posted. During the meeting the Assessment Team reviewed and revised its ToR.

Timely Submission of Program Reviews

During the 28-30 May 2018, meeting the Assessment Team completed evaluations of the five Administrative Unit Program Reviews (AUPRs) that were to be submitted early spring 2018.

- Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Comptroller and Financial Services
- Campus Security and Safety
- Student Life
- Chuuk Campus, Office of the Dean

The due date for those reviews was the first two weeks of November 2017, however only one was completed and received on time, a second was received in December 2017, the third and fourth ones received in January 2018, and one was not received until May 2018.

Additionally, the Assessment Team has not yet received any of the 14 Instructional Program Reviews (IPRs) that were due in April 2018 (4 associate and 10 certificate programs). The team had targeted also completing the evaluation of those IPRs during this face-to-face meeting time in order to ensure the college was back on schedule and able to complete its assigned role in [AP 3202](#) for *Instructional Program Review* for academic year 2017-2018.

The Assessment Team has agreed to meet on August 9, 2018, after the summit, since all members will be on the island of Pohnpei for the summit. This will allow the opportunity for another face-to-face meeting to achieve much work on that day. In this case, the completion of the evaluations of the IPRs, provided those are received in advance of the summit.

Recommendations for improvements:

- 1. Submit program reviews by the due date.**

If *program reviews* are not received on time, the Assessment Team cannot do what it has been tasked to do. Additionally, travel funds are not as effectively utilized. And, pre-arranged meetings have to be cancelled and rescheduled. This can be especially problematic for the Assessment Team, as productive meetings often require more than just 50 consecutive minutes and scheduling difficulties were already noted. When received, the program reviews should be well done and contain minimal to no errors. The Assessment Team reminds us of our college Core Values of *Commitment* (Anticipate what is needed and do that work without being asked), *Excellence* (Hold yourself accountable to high performance standards), and *Professionalism* (Complete all duties and assignments).

Action: Supervisors ensure program reviews are well done, and sent to the Assessment Team on schedule.

2. Annual face-to-face meeting in association with the summit.

Since the members of the Assessment Team are typically in attendance for the annual summit on Pohnpei, the Assessment Team plans to meet either the day before, or the day after, the summit each year. Meeting face-to-face is more productive and the cost of travel is already covered with the summit budget, thus maximizing the use of that resource. It is recommended that all Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap members of the Assessment Team be on the National Campus summit participant list for this reason. Currently, the Assessment Team members in these states (Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap) are the campus Instructional Coordinators.

Action: Ensure Assessment Team members are present for the annual summit as participants to the larger summit at National Campus (president's budget, VPIEQQA participant list and summit organization). Ensure the Assessment Team members are scheduled to meet and firm up that day well in advance (VPIEQQA/Assessment Team chairperson).

3. Each instructional program should receive \$750 annually to allocate to program faculty in the form of a stipend.

After much deliberation, the Assessment Team members agreed that there should be faculty and program incentive to support program assessments and program reviews. Yes, one can say this is "your" job, but that does not mean there is going to be a sense of ownership, fairness, or commitment to quality assessment and program review related tasks.

Some programs have only one faculty who must always complete every annual program assessment and the scheduled program reviews. Those faculty may feel it is unfair that the faculty members of larger programs get to rotate this duty and have some points of relief from that work. A faculty member of a larger program, when assigned this task, may feel it is unfair that they were required to do this work, while their fellow program colleagues were not. No one receives compensation for the additional work, which may seem unfair to all faculty tasked with it.

The Assessment Team does not recommend the commonly offered release time that most institutions grant those faculty who are assigned this additional work. Though this can be an ideal approach, COM-FSM faculty are generally already teaching a full load, and often overload. Thus, this cannot possibly be release time. Additionally, Linda Suskie noted, in her time with the college at last year's summit, that flexible approaches are a better way to increase the likelihood that faculty will buy into the assessment and program review process.

The Assessment Team therefore recommends that each program receive \$750 annually, to allocate in the form of stipends and/or to drive necessary work for program assessment and program review. Each program is allowed the flexibility to take different approaches, as approved by their instructional coordinator (IC). One program might have one lead person who earns the entire stipend. Other programs may divide tasks so that several faculty are receiving a portion of that \$750 allocation. Some of those funds may be set aside for refreshments and a venue for an advisory board meeting, a meeting with program graduates/alumni, or for a meeting with employers and external stakeholders to obtain information. Some faculty may have writing roles, others data collection and management roles. Those are merely a few examples of how the funds may be allocated within a program. The contractual agreements for the stipends would be negotiated through the respective program IC.

Evolving Accreditation Standard II.A.2 now states that:

Faculty, including full time, part time, and adjunct faculty, regularly engage in ensuring that the content and methods of instruction meet generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations. In exercising collective ownership over the design and improvement of the learning experience, faculty conduct systematic and inclusive program review, using student achievement data, in order to continuously improve instructional courses and programs, thereby ensuring program currency, improving teaching and learning strategies, and promoting student success.

The \$750 allocation per program annually is a simple means towards possibly increasing positive faculty involvement. With 32 programs, that amounts to only \$24,000 annually. Fundamentally, accreditation standards state that this must be collective, systematic, and inclusive.

Action: Cabinet and EC should provide an additional \$24,000 in the annual budget to Instructional Affairs (IA) to fund instructional program assessment and program review work, which ideally improves the quality of the work and inclusiveness of faculty in that work. To clarify, the request is not for IA to rework its already stretched budget to find this money, but to allocate an additional \$24,000 dedicated to this initiative.

Notable Information and Trends

As part of the Assessment Team responsibilities, they are to submit a semesterly report to the Cabinet and Executive Committee. In the fall semester, the Assessment Team is scheduled to evaluate the Administrative Unit Program Reviews. In the spring, the team is scheduled to evaluate the Instructional Program Reviews. The team then provides to the Cabinet and Executive Committee recommendations and brings attention to important information, data, and/or trends derived from those evaluations. Curriculum relevant matters will also be provided to the Curriculum Committee.

After evaluating the Administrative Unit Program Reviews, the Assessment Team wishes to draw attention to and briefly discuss the following notable items:

- Adequate staffing, overtime, and work-life balance
- Restructuring for efficiencies
- Increasing technology demands

Adequate Staffing, Overtime, and Work-life Balance

Campus security and safety showed a consistent and college-wide reliance upon overtime in order to ensure adequate coverage. And, this does not appear to be a recent or infrequent, but rather a chronic and consistent trend. Ideally, a long-term solution is achieved to ensure sufficient staff and coverage without dependence upon the willingness of employees to accept overtime. The need for utilizing overtime should be infrequent, rather than a matter of weekly practice. And this raises the concerns of impaired judgement and decreased performance that are well documented as reasons why people need time off to relax, recharge, and get plenty of rest.

Similarly, while the positions of instructional coordinator (IC) and student services coordinator (SSC) were vacant at Chuuk Campus, the campus dean had to fill those rolls. Serving in three positions is likely to impact the overall performance ability of the dean, unless the dean works excessively after normal working hours. And, in fact, the dean indicated frequent evening and weekend work as a matter of practice.

Though there are times when we all need to put in some additional efforts, this should not be for extended periods of time, as that does not promote a healthy work-life balance for college employees. When these and similar situations arise at the campuses, the Cabinet should execute plans that will minimize such burdens until open positions are filled. Assisting with a short-term contract, having an existing member of that area (such as an SSC in this case) travel to the campus to offer some assistance, and/or providing some additional support from a distance are just a few examples of some strategies that might be used to ensure human resources are allocated effectively.

Several individuals providing some degrees of assistance puts less burden on everyone, and ensures one individual (position) is not overburdened to the point they might no longer have the time to be as effective as they would like to be. That adds pressure and stress, and drives those individuals to work after hours to maintain a sense of effectiveness towards their responsibilities. Overworking and stress can lead to poor wellness, and that can then adversely affect that individual. And, for positions such as a dean, there is no compensation for working all those additional hours. Though employees should have a sense of commitment, that should not extend to long-term sacrifices to personal wellness, personal time, and time with one's family.

The Assessment Team notes that there were no complaints about the necessity to work overtime articulated by employees. And with Chuuk Campus, there was a source of pride for that level of commitment to the college by its employees. However, the college should be cognizant of the level of burden and expectations placed on individuals and ensure a healthy balance is maintained. Working overtime should not be a chronic means to offset poor salaries, understaffing, employee retention, employee recruitment issues, or the performance issues of others. This practice of chronic overtime is one of diminishing returns for the college and the students it serves.

Restructuring Offices for Efficiencies

In keeping with the strategic directive to *Strengthen resources to meet current and future needs* and the measure of success to reduce operating costs by 5%, the department for institutional effectiveness has both restructured physical offices and streamlined personnel. The positions of *director of the office of institutional effectiveness (OIE)* and *dean of assessment* were eliminated. Duties were rolled up into the vice president for institutional effectiveness and quality assurance (VPIEQA) position, with the dean of academic programs (DAP) also taking over instructional assessment duties formerly allocated to

the dean of assessment. Additionally, this timed well with the restructuring of division chairs and creation of additional instructional coordinators with elevated duties.

The VPIEQA position readily absorbed this additional work and was already having to assume responsibility for higher level OIE reporting. And, the DAP already played an integral role in instructional program assessment and program review with the added support from ICs.

The VPIEQA and DAP positions were reclassified with greater responsibility and higher pay as compensation. Streamlining where possible saves on college operating costs over the long term by returning salary and benefit funds to the operating budget. And, allows for the opportunity to pay more reasonable salaries that can contribute to employee satisfaction, retention, and recruitment from a more ideal candidate pool when necessary.

Additionally, VPIEQA moved from an independent office to a shared office with OIE staff. That freed college office space and allowed for closer proximity creating better communications and a sense of team.

Increasing Technology Demands

Most of the programs indicated usage of, and a need for, more information technology (IT) support. That support came in varied forms such as licensed software for conducting business effectively, increased presence of cameras across the college campuses and buildings, additional computers, etc.

All of these requests have implications for the annual IT office budget and IT staffing. Some requests and needs, such as security cameras, have a large recurring price tag. Video images have an impact on the college servers and network. New hardware has to be purchased and there are greater bandwidth demands. That equipment will also need to be regularly repaired and maintained. This is a very large cost.

New software purchases have recurring licensing fees and updates that are required. Maintaining a growing dependence on highly varied information technologies requires competent staff to ensure minimal interruptions 24/7 (nights, weekends, holidays, etc.). The college is going to need to continue to work closely with the IT office to ensure realities of costs associated with emerging and adopted technologies and software are fully considered and budgeted accordingly.

Additionally, the college needs to reassess what it pays its IT personnel, as the college is not competitive, nor even close. There may be only one college in the FSM, thus limiting some personnel with regard to choice of employer, but there are many agencies whose pay and benefits are far more attractive and lucrative for IT personnel. The college's best IT employees are regularly solicited by those agencies, and frequently loses out to them. The college recently lost its director of IT to just such a solicitation.

Process Modifications

Form Modifications

After using the *Administrative Unit Program Review Template* (formerly Appendix G, currently [Appendix D](#)) in the [Program Assessment and Program Review Manual](#), it was clear the form could be streamlined, especially as the form was created prior to the implementation of TracDat. Hyperlinks and/or

appendices to TracDat reports can be added, saving the author time. And, sections were able to be combined to avoid repeating information already provided earlier in the template. The [Program Assessment and Program Review Manual](#) may not be updated as quickly, and for quick reference, the most current forms for *Administrative Unit Program Review* and *Instructional Program Review* will be provided on the [Assessment Team](#) webpage under *forms*.

Submit Program Reviews in Word Format

The Assessment Team requires that all program reviews are submitted in Word format. That facilitates *Track changes* and the ability to add comments for feedback to the original authors. The Assessment Team will return the Word version to the authors, with comments for improvement as needed. Once those changes are made, they are returned to the Assessment Team reader team, who will confirm if required changes were satisfied. To ensure the assigned Assessment Team reader team is not burdened with many notes and comments for typos and grammatical changes, it is expected that program reviews should be carefully proof read prior to submission. One should also consider that these are public documents.

Finally, the Assessment Team reminds the Cabinet and Executive Committee that the public, and in fact much of the college, does not have direct access to TracDat, or only limited access. Therefore, it is essential that all administrative units place both their assessments and reviews on the college wiki, on the [Administrative Unit Assessments & Reviews](#) page. With the implementation of TracDat, that means one can upload their TracDat administrative unit program assessment reports to the wiki.

Instructional program assessments and reviews are provided to the public through the [Assessment of Student Learning](#) link that is accessed from the college homepage. Each program and respective VP should ensure that these areas are updated accordingly and regularly.