

## **Standard Two Planning and Evaluation**

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### **Description**

#### **Planning**

The Board of Trustees for Goodwin College guides planning and operations. The Board's vision for the college, as reflected in its strategic plans, has provided the blueprint for ongoing improvements. Most notably, the recent move to a new campus reflects intensive and thorough planning activities across the college as well as extensive involvement of the local community.

The college is guided by dedicated board members who support the President. Their most recent self-assessment (March 2009) identified the diversity of its members and their commitment to the college mission as its greatest strengths. Board members are responsible for ensuring that the management team and faculty members conduct effective long- and short-term strategic planning on a regular basis. The Board approves the final plans; the management team monitors the progress against goals and reviews the results of outcomes achieved.

An Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) leads planning and assessment efforts at all levels of the college. In addition to instituting planning and assessment processes, OIE functions as the institutional research office, providing accurate and reliable information and analytical studies to support strategic and operational planning, policy formulation, decision making, assessment, and measurement of the effectiveness of programmatic activities. The office consists of the Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, directors of Institutional Research (2007) and Educational Assessment (2008) and a research assistant.

During their annual retreat, board members review the college's progress towards accomplishing the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Every five years the board revises and formally adopts a new strategic plan. A review of the five-year plan conducted in March 2009 revealed that all of the major objectives were met. Specifically, the college:

- Put an effective board of trustees in place,
- Designed an administrative structure that includes more layers of authority and opportunities for input,
- Created several new departments,
- Expanded academic programs and support services in response to community needs,
- Hired more faculty with advanced degrees and demonstrated teaching excellence, and
- Designed and built the new building and campus.

The 2009-2013 strategic plan reflects the college's goal of transforming into a baccalaureate degree granting institution. This plan is an integral part of ongoing campus discussions. For example, the President leads a college-wide conversation every semester during "Community Day" during which he discusses progress on the strategic plan with faculty and staff. Similarly, the President addresses students at orientation workshops and student council meetings. His dialogues serve as updates on the college's progress and keep everyone focused on the strategic plan.

Senior administrators, including the President and vice-presidents, are responsible for implementing the strategic plan. Planning discussions at this level are integrated across

departments, involve both internal and external perspectives, and occur regularly. Planning responsibilities have increasingly been shared with a greater number of personnel, reflective of the college's new governance structure (see Standard 3). Briefly, the structure includes the following groups, composed of senior administrators and department managers from all levels:

- President's Cabinet, including the vice-presidents of the college;
- President's Advisory Council, adding senior-level department managers;
- College Leadership Council, adding mid-level department managers; and
- Tier 1 and Tier 2 committees, the membership of which is drawn from all college staff.

The structure offered by these groups will provide rich forums for drafting the next Strategic Plan in 2013.

Operational planning is conducted as part of the annual budget process. Every May departments prepare and submit departmental goals tied to budget requests for the following fiscal year at the request of the college's Chief Financial Officer. The forms require departments to align all expenditures needed to conduct their business with departmental goals. Each goal is linked to a college "purpose" (i.e., an affirmation of institutional vision tied to the college's mission statement) and to a strategic goal. Budget priorities are also shaped by accreditation, advisory board and program evaluation activities.

Departmental goals reflect an expectation of continuous performance improvement and identify clearly defined assessment measures. For example, the Office of Institutional Advancement established a goal of increasing the college's positive media coverage as measured by the number of media impressions achieved.

After the Chief Financial Officer, in collaboration with the vice-presidents, President and the Board of Trustees, reviews all the planning and budget documents, the forms are returned with amendments and enacted as the official budget for the coming fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). The annual goals, once approved, are returned to the various departments for implementation.

Other planning activities that take place in addition to the strategic and operational planning and budgeting process, include but are not limited to:

**Operating Plans by Administrative Departments.** Some administrative departments have detailed written plans that guide day-to-day operations as well as longer term initiatives. Department managers draft the plans that generally are reviewed by the vice-presidents and President of the college. For example, the Office of Enrollment Services maintains an enrollment plan that includes targets for the number of students to be enrolled per fiscal year.

**Operating Plans by Academic Departments.** Some academic departments and programs also develop and utilize operating plans that are more detailed than their annual budget and planning form. These plans combine annual budget priorities and other performance objectives and strategies to meet the goals and mandates of accreditation bodies. For instance, in the nursing department the plan is based on input from faculty members obtained during retreats held three times a year. The plan also adheres to the National League of Nursing Accreditation Committee standards and criteria.

**College Committee Plans.** Intradepartmental ad hoc committees are formed to address specific organizational concerns. A committee will remain in existence until the planning,

implementation and evaluation of an issue is completed. For example, a website committee was formed in 2008 to plan an extensive revision of the college's website. The committee met monthly, and the result was a successful, new website. It was evaluated in January 2009 and a maintenance plan was implemented to ensure the site's continuous improvement.

In 2009, as part of the new governance structure, several standing committees were formed to address institution-wide issues. Examples of these committees include a student experience committee dedicated to enhancing the student life, and an employee wellness committee aimed at promoting health and wellness activities, as well as human resource issues. All full-time college employees serve on at least one standing committee.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation and assessment activities provide insight into progress being made and identify areas where improvements are still needed. At Goodwin College, these activities regularly include external perspectives, including Board of Trustee oversight, involvement of Academic Advisory Boards and relationships with professional accreditation organizations. Furthermore, the college's Office of Institutional Effectiveness gathers internal data and reports the findings to these and other college stakeholders.

**Board of Trustee Oversight: Annual Goals.** Every administrative department VP meets with a designated Board of Trustee subcommittee at least four times during the fiscal year to report on goal progress. An annual assessment, consisting of a formal department-wide report, is prepared for the March Board retreat to assist the Board in their comprehensive review of the prior fiscal year. That report is then reviewed by members of the President's Cabinet.

**Academic Advisory Boards: Curricular Goals and Assessment Activities.** Every academic program has an advisory board with which they share information and gain valuable feedback. The Advisory Boards are comprised of employers and volunteers with expertise in the particular academic or occupational areas related to the program and, in some cases, students majoring in the field.

**Evaluation through Programmatic Accreditation.** Some academic programs undergo programmatic re-accreditation that requires self-study and external review (e.g., Nursing, Medical Assisting, Histology, and Respiratory Care). For example, Medical Assisting reports annually to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) with statistical data on faculty members (active and non-active), retention, graduation, and passing of the CMA (Certified Medical Assisting) exam. These programs have provided assistance to other programs that are newer to assessment.

Several academic programs are in the process of applying for professional accreditation. For example, faculty in early childhood, designed rubrics and identified key course assignments that assess the achievement of learning outcomes identified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and that are aligned with Goodwin College program outcomes. The program is piloting e-portfolio assessment software that will facilitate data collection and analysis from all students. Regular meetings support the accreditation application process. The Human Services program adopted the standards of the Council for Standards in Human Service Education and incorporated each of the seventy-plus standards into the program's syllabi.

Every academic department participates in a comprehensive, formal, program review once every five years. Formal program review looks at the viability of the program, retention rates, graduation rates and licensure rates. Formal program review requires reflection on the extent to which the program achieves all its goals for student learning. Specifically, the department chair or program director discusses evidence of student learning with faculty and the program's advisory board. Gaps between expected outcomes and actual results lead to the implementation of action plans. To support this process, representatives from the departments undergoing formal program review meet every other month to discuss their progress or unique challenges.

Formal program review is followed by a smaller, more focused assessment project completed annually. In other words, every academic program assesses at least one student learning outcome every year. The reporting deadlines for both formal and annual program review are the same; plans are due in the fall and reports are due in the spring. The College Committee on Assessment reviews and summarizes this information for the college's administration. Because the reporting process is aligned with budget timelines; priority can be given to needs identified through program review.

Because every student support service and administrative unit also has a mission statement and goals that relate to student success, these units participate in formal program review every five years, followed by annual program review. The College Committee on Assessment oversees this process and keeps the Executive VP/Provost and the College Leadership Council informed of their progress.

As of June 2009, 28 of the college's 35 departments (13 academic programs and 15 administrative units) completed program review. Each report includes an action plan that describes curriculum and/or institutional improvements (e.g., new texts, revised graduation requirements, additional review sessions, software purchases, additional staff, etc.). Departments not scheduled for a comprehensive formal review conducted a smaller assessment project as part of annual program review. The reports were summarized in a four column matrix and presented to the College Leadership Council. Copies of these documents, along with all the committee records are stored in a password protected Blackboard website accessed from the OIE website.

Departmental statistics, student survey data and research on best practices are essential to successful and effective program review; therefore, in addition to classroom embedded assessment and assessment in the major (e.g., capstone projects, senior seminars, licensure examinations), the Office of Institutional Effectiveness collects indirect evidence (e.g., Community College Survey of Student Engagement, Survey of Entering Student Engagement, Senior Survey, Graduate Survey, Employer Surveys, Alumni Surveys) and regularly communicates the results to key stakeholders in support of program review, departmental planning and budgeting, and evaluation activities. Reports are presented to the President's Cabinet, the President's Advisory Council and the College Leadership Council.

Across administrative units, staff meetings are the most common forum for discussing assessment information. For example, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment meets with the admissions staff at least six times a year. The meetings provide an opportunity to discuss enrollment reports and progress on departmental goals. Academic department chairs and program directors are often included in these meetings to relay information concerning their respective programs. Likewise, admissions representatives attend other administrative departments' staff meetings to share enrollment-related information.

Across academic departments, assessment activities and discussions vary with the department's size. For example, larger departments, such as Health Sciences, hold regular department meetings. At these meetings, the program director leads a discussion on such topics as curriculum maps and classroom assessment activities. Smaller departments, such as Early Childhood Education, discuss assessment information with their advisory boards. In another example, the staff of the Human Services Department meets before the start of each semester to review and discuss a report on student achievement of learning objectives. This information is used to modify and/or expand course content for the coming semester.

## **Institutional Effectiveness**

As described in this chapter, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness leads the evaluation and analysis of the effectiveness of the college's planning and evaluation activities. Planning and evaluation takes place at all levels of the institution. Standing committees of the Board review individual Plans (e.g. Master Plan, Academic Plan) appropriate to their area of oversight during committee meetings. The results of these reviews are reported to the full Board at its annual retreat each March. Results assist the Board in making any needed adjustments to the Plans. The Strategic Plan is reviewed at the annual retreat. We view this plan as a living document that needs continuous adjustments and revisions as we continue to grow and expand. Service and academic departments use these reviews and assessments in planning their goals and budget requests for the following fiscal year.

Academic departments and support services complete a formal review process every five years, followed by ongoing, annual program review. Through the assessment process, the college identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analyses of those results through its systematic and broad-based approach to assessment.

The College Committee on Assessment (CCA) was established in 2005 in response to our first NEASC visit and the need for a formal program review process. With the new governance structure, this committee has taken on a more global role and oversees not only the academic program review but also the review of all service departments. It is also responsible for assessing the effectiveness of each of the committees established as part of our governance structure. For example, each committee is required to complete a form at the beginning of each academic year listing its goals and measurable outcomes. Results are due to the CCA each May. The effectiveness of committee outcomes are assessed through surveys and/or focus groups. Each year the CCA will present a summary report to the College Leadership Council and the Cabinet along with recommendations for improvement.

## **Appraisal**

### **Planning**

Planning at Goodwin College is a campus-wide effort. The college's Board of Trustees not only leads but is also involved in the planning process. Academic programs and student support service units have active advisory boards. Finally, many academic programs have ongoing re-accreditation site visits that provide an external perspective. Goodwin College attracts and involves forward-thinking, innovative and creative leaders who remain invested and involved in the planning process.

Because these groups meet frequently, effective planning and evaluation result. The annual goal-setting and budget-formulation processes have proven effective. While institutional

goals and expenditures are formally tracked throughout the year, the process by which departmental and program goals are tracked could be more formal and consistent. Furthermore, intra-departmental collaboration with respect to planning should occur on a more regular basis and be more formalized.

The college's governance structure (see Standard 3) provides a natural forum for including every voice in the development of the strategic plan resulting in ownership of its objectives at all levels of the organization. With the increased involvement of faculty, staff and students in the new shared governance structure, the college will be able to anticipate problems and challenges even better than it does now. New committees, staffed by every full-time member of the organization, provide open forums for envisioning the future and increasing intra-departmental collaboration, as well as for anticipating future challenges.

As a relatively new and still evolving institution, Goodwin recognizes that there is much to do, and it has consistently proven that it can react quickly to changes in the marketplace and to community needs (e.g., developed new academic degree programs such as environmental sciences). The anticipated challenge will be to maintain these strengths as more departments, programs and people become involved in the planning and evaluation processes.

### **Evaluation**

The College has invested significant resources to support evaluation and assessment initiatives (e.g., the hiring of a full-time Director of Educational Assessment in 2008, consultants, professional development opportunities, and resource materials) and has focused programmatic improvement efforts on student learning. As a result, the College has made progress towards creating a culture of assessment. Goodwin College is a learner-centered institution that strives to improve based on the data obtained by assessment activities. Student success, not simply assessment, is the over-arching goal of our efforts.

As stated earlier, the college piloted a formal program review template in 2007 with its largest program, nursing. The data revealed a lower-than-desired first-time state licensure pass rate (73%) for the initial graduating cohort, with improvement to 81% in the following year. After the nursing faculty discussed the results at a retreat, they implemented changes to admission standards, course completion requirements and graduation requirements. Several programmatic changes were also implemented through a grant including the acquisition of a new computer lab to help enhance students' proficiency in computerized testing. This year's program review evaluated the impact of these changes and revealed an increase in the passing rate to 90%, an improvement of 17%.

The nursing program's success underscored the value of a college-wide program review process. In 2008, the College Committee on Assessment issued new guidelines, drafted a five-year formal review cycle, and mandated program review for all departments. Faculty and the program's advisory board, discuss the results of assessment activities and plan program improvements

With the success of academic and administrative program review, a larger audience is becoming involved in curriculum planning. The data captured in Form E illustrates curricular improvements in support of student learning (e.g., revised degree requirements, changes in class focus, text books and assignments). Furthermore, administrative departments use the results of program review to support their planning and budgeting efforts. Examples are summarized in the 2008-2009 Executive Summary that was presented to the College Leadership Council.

There is a genuine spirit of collaboration, trust and experimentation among faculty and staff as assessment results are used for educational and institutional improvement. Goodwin College faculty members do not resist assessment, but participate fully. As faculty gain experience, they support their colleagues. For example, the fall series of faculty development workshops on rubrics was facilitated by a program director. Faculty in her program use standard rubrics and she participates in assessment workshops at national conferences. And the enthusiasm has expanded to professional development activities. Three years ago, only the then director (now Vice President) of Institutional Effectiveness attended the New England Education Assessment Network (NEEAN) Fall Conference. The next year two car loads of faculty attended the Fall Conference; this year a team of faculty from different departments submitted a conference proposal. Current campus discussion centers around how to better integrate adjunct faculty into the college's assessment activities.

Consistent with recommendations for integrating assessment into an institution's daily operations, the college formed a multidisciplinary committee to oversee assessment initiatives, adopted standardized institutional outcomes along with program level outcomes consistent with the college's mission, and uses a common program review assessment template across all academic and administrative departments. The results after our first year of the new five-year cycle are encouraging. The college successfully documented data-driven educational and organizational improvements, yet more needs to be done, especially in the area of assessing student learning outcomes. The college continues to devote considerable resources to this effort. For instance, representatives from the General Education Committee attended the NEEAN Summer Institute. With their help, a five-year plan for assessing the general education outcomes is under discussion. The other department-level outcomes published in the catalog are assessed by the respective department as part of the formal and annual program review process.

Office of Institutional Effectiveness staff facilitates and supports the College Committee on Assessment. This multi-disciplinary committee meets regularly to oversee program review processes, to ensure the quality of academic programs and college services, and to assist the college in planning. This past year, the committee increased its membership to include faculty. All the committee's records are available online. This year's goals include developing a plan for assessing the college's institutional-level outcomes. The committee also designed and is implementing a process to assist the leaders of the new governance committees to gauge their effectiveness. This year, the full committee meets every other month, rather than monthly and breaks into subcommittees to accomplish much of its work.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is committed to finding new ways to increase awareness and improve communication throughout the college. For instance, a survey was administered in the spring of 2009 to assess departmental effectiveness. Results indicated that the departments and administrators were highly satisfied with OIE services, but also indicated that some departments were unfamiliar with the services provided. To address this, we added additional pages for the OIE website (e.g., IR data reports).

### ***Areas of Achievement***

- The new governance structure provides even more input to, and ownership of, our planning processes; especially our strategic plan.
- Institutional and departmental budgeting processes tied to the college mission, goals and strategic plan.
- Creation of a senior-level Office of Institutional Effectiveness to support the college's planning and evaluation processes.

- Commitment of significant institutional resources to assessment. Hired directors of Institutional Research and Educational Assessment.
- Created a College Committee on Assessment with representatives from academic and service departments.
- Established a five-year formal program review process, as well as annual program review for academic and service departments.
- Faculty and staff who are enthusiastic about assessment.
- Evidence of data-driven educational and institutional improvement.

### **Areas of Concern**

- Uncoordinated survey efforts and results not reaching all the interested parties.
- Limited direct evidence of what students are learning. While most departments review indirect measures of student learning, only some departments collect and analyze student work at the program level.
- Lack of experience among individual faculty, especially adjuncts, in assessment methods.

### **Projections**

As the college grows, we will continue to fine-tune our planning efforts. We recognize the need to require short-term, operational planning at the department level and to formalize the process for tracking progress on departmental goals and expenditures.

We will enhance our research and assessment skills. By identifying best practices and making those practices consistent across our departments and programs, our goal is to create a culture of assessment. To this end, the college will continue to support faculty and staff as they collect, analyze and use data to improve. Our immediate priorities are to:

- Add new and/or more effective ways to communicate Institutional Research data to the college community in support of continuous improvement efforts (e.g., more reports on the college website, regular college publication such "News You Can Use" or annual report on student learning outcomes).
- Complete an inventory of assessment activities in each department and achieve a minimum standard of skills and activities assessment across all departments over the next three years (e.g., use of curriculum maps, classroom embedded assessment - standardized rubrics, direct and indirect evidence).
- Strengthen the assessment of student learning in the major by implementing exit activities for every bachelor degree program (e.g., design capstone course).
- Implement and monitor the effectiveness of an Institutional Review Board in support of campus research activities.
- Monitor progress on departmental action plans that result from the program review process.
- Use technology to automate the assessment and reporting processes where appropriate (e.g., support departments interested in piloting e-portfolio programs such as Task Stream – AS Early Childhood Education/BS Child Study).
- Create and provide online planning and assessment resources for full- and part-time instructors (e.g., offer a series of online workshops on assessment topics for new faculty, make online resource materials available to all faculty).
- Develop a 5-year assessment plan for general education by September 2010.