UT Dallas' SACSCOC Project

2007 Reaffirmation Teams

The reaffirmation process was an extensive one that required broad-based participation from across the campus community, including those people who worked or studied at UT Dallas as well as those who supported the University within the community, such as alumni and community partners. UT Dallas SACSCOC-Project teams began their work as early as July 2005. The work on compliance certification continued through at least August 2008, and QEP efforts continued through 2012 and beyond.

The Steering Committee
The Steering Committee worked in concert with the Leadership Team and the Executive Committee to lead the various teams in their efforts to prepare for the compliance certification. Comprised of members from across the campus community, the Steering Committee provided not only guidance but also resources and support for the work of all other committees. Meeting at least twice monthly, this committee reviewed the work of all teams and offered recommendations to the President regarding needed changes and improvements in UT Dallas policy and practice.

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The Committee for Federal Mandates
Led by Graduate Dean Austin Cunningham, the Federal Mandates team reviewed UT Dallas' compliance with all federal regulations that were related to the University, its mission, its operation, and its students. Specific areas of focus included student achievement, program length, curriculum design, student-related policies, recruitment materials, and Title IV (financial aid) compliance.

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Committee for Faculty & Credentialing
Led by Assistant Vice President Abby Kratz, the Faculty team reviewed a variety of issues related to the faculty at UT Dallas. The University had to demonstrate that it had an adequate faculty as well as a faculty that had members qualified to teach in the areas they were assigned. As a part of this review process, Dr. Kratz and her team reviewed the academic record (transcripts, vitae, research, and publications) of every faculty member who offered instruction to the students at UT Dallas. Additionally, the transcripts of every faculty member who received a graduate degree at an institution outside the United States was reviewed by an outside agency to ensure the credentials were equivalent to similar credentials earned at accredited universities in the U.S.

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The Committee for Institutional Effectiveness
It was entirely possible that the IE Committee had the most difficult job of any group within the SACSCOC team. This committee had to determine the degree to which UT Dallas was actually effective in its work and to which UT Dallas displayed institutional integrity. The difficulty in such a determination was in defining the standards, in identifying how our measures of effectiveness related to achievement and to performance. Led by Executive Director Lawrence Redlinger, this committee reviewed program assessment plans as well as program mission statements to determine the degree to which all campus
programs and departments have had aligned their missions with the University's mission statement. (See UT Dallas' Strategic Plan: http://www.utdallas.edu/strategicplan/)

The Committee for General Education

The General Education team reviewed all courses in the core curriculum and determined the degree to which the core curriculum at UT Dallas met the goals of general education. In The Principles of Accreditation, the Commission on Colleges asserted that UT Dallas must require "in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale." To measure UT Dallas' compliance, this committee reviewed the course assessment of the various courses offered as a part of the core curriculum as well as the rationale for the courses included in the "core." Led by Associate Provost and Undergraduate Dean Michael Coleman, this team worked with the Core Curriculum Committee closely in determining what, if any, changes were required to be in full compliance with this goal.

The Academic Assessment Committee

Led by Associate Provost and SACSCOC Liaison Robert Nelsen, the Academic Assessment team worked with every degree and certificate program at UT Dallas to determine the degree to which all programs and courses meshed with good educational practice and the mission and goals of the University. Simply, academic programs offered a slate of student learning outcomes (SLO's) that should have been the result of each student's participation in the academic major and course work. These SLO's required various measures (or assessments) to determine the degree to which students meet those outcomes or goals. While academic assessment focused on samples of students rather than all students, good research methodology required that sampled students were representative of the students within each program.

The Administrative Services Committee

The Committee for Administrative Services served an important function within the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Process at UT Dallas: This team served as the primary liaison between the Steering Committee and the members of all other committees across the University -- and the team also served as the primary communication link between the various SACSCOC committees and the various program and department leaders, including the school deans and the various vice presidents. The Administrative Services team remained constantly aware of the various reviews and processes in place so that they could provide assistance when needed to ensure the smooth operation of the SACSCOC reaffirmation process.

The Committee for Financial and Physical Resources

"With an eye sharply focused on the bottom line," Associate Vice President Jody Nelsen worked with her team to ensure that the University met the stringent guidelines for fiscal soundness and stability, financial aid administration and regulation, sponsored research programs, and physical facilities. As a part of the team's work, this group also focused on environmental health and safety issues as well as campus security. While such a description suggested a simple review might meet the requirement, even a casual observer must realize
that the auditing of financial records involving millions of dollars of federal, state, local, and student monies was a gargantuan task. Add to that the monitoring of every facility on the campus, and you had a team with a remarkably large task.

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The Committee for Graduate Education

Dr. Kimberly Kempf-Leonard and the Graduate Education team ensured that the graduate program at UT Dallas met the stringent guidelines of the SACSCOC Principles. As a result, the Graduate Education team reviewed every graduate program (both degree and certificate) to ensure that the programs offered a progressively more advanced sequence of courses and that these programs fostered independent learning as well as a general knowledge of the academic field in which each student was engaged. This team had already developed a matrix of data to examine the completion and attrition rates for graduate students in each of the major academic programs across the last few years. With this information, the team hoped to lead each school in an in-depth review of the academic programs, the course sequencing, and the general goals of each program.

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The Committee for Undergraduate Education

Associate Dean Duane Buhrmester led the Undergraduate Education team in its efforts to ascertain the University's compliance with the SACSCOC goals associated with undergraduate education. This compliance required an examination of the general education component as a part of the undergraduate program but also focused on the role of on- and off-campus programming as a contributor to student success. This team also focused on the evaluation of transfer course work and the academic policies that contributed to "good educational practice." The team, along with the Graduate Education team, also examined the role of academic support services in student success and the degree to which the University secured students' confidential and private information.

Link to The Committee for Undergraduate Education page

Committee for Library and Other Learning Resources

Associate Library Director Ellen Safley led the Learning Resources team in its efforts to determine the adequacy of UT Dallas' support systems for student achievement. Simply, this team examined McDermott Libraries and the libraries' holdings, budget, staff, and program mission and goals to determine whether or not the libraries met the needs of the UT Dallas student population and faculty. Beyond the library services, however, this team also reviewed the entire Information Resources (IR) program, including the computer labs, the wireless network, email systems, and even the UT Dallas web to identify the degree to which UT Dallas IR service not only met the needs of students but also provided adequate safeguards against internet-driven viruses and scams.

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The Committee for Mission, Governance, and Administration

Dean Dennis Kratz spearheaded the team effort to review not only UT Dallas' compliance with the SACSCOC Principles but also the UT System's and Coordinating Board's compliance. Both the System and the Board played an integral role in UT Dallas' operation, and to the extent that they provided the framework for UT Dallas' performance, their performance was also a factor. Additionally, this team reviewed UT Dallas' mission statement, how that mission statement translated into action, and the role of the faculty and the administrative staff in
leading the institution. Academic governance (the role the faculty played in determining the direction of the University) was a critical element in UT Dallas' reaffirmation. That UT Dallas had an active Academic Senate and an active Staff Council suggested that the policies and procedures did have a rigorous review process, and such a review process was an important element in a successful university. That the Student Government had also taken an active role in recent discussions about tuition policy and seats official representatives on virtually every major university committee also suggested that the role of students in the university's governance was not only important but also vital.

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The Committee for Operational Assessment

The Committee for Operational Assessment mirrored, to some degree, the work of the Academic Assessment team. The difference, however, was that this team focused on non-academic units; this team focused on departments and programs not directly associated with the offering of degree credit. For example, this team reviewed the effectiveness of operations within such areas as Learning Resources, Purchasing, International Student Services, the Women's Center, the Career Center, the Bursar's Office, Intercollegiate and Intramural Athletics, and Payroll and Tax Compliance.

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The Committee for Student Affairs and Student Services

Dean of Students and Assistant Vice President Donna Rogers led this team in its review of some overlapping areas from other areas and in its review of areas specifically focused on Student Services. The team focused on student rights and responsibilities, the integrity and confidentiality of student records, and the effectiveness and quality of student affairs programming. This team also reviewed the credentials of staff dedicated to the Student Affairs and Student Life programs to ensure that only qualified personnel are engaged with student programming.

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