

Program Review

As a department chair you have a central role in the program review process—but you are not expected to ‘do’ program review. This section walks you through what program review is, why it is important, and how the chair can approach it in a way that ensures it is useful—and valuable—to the department.

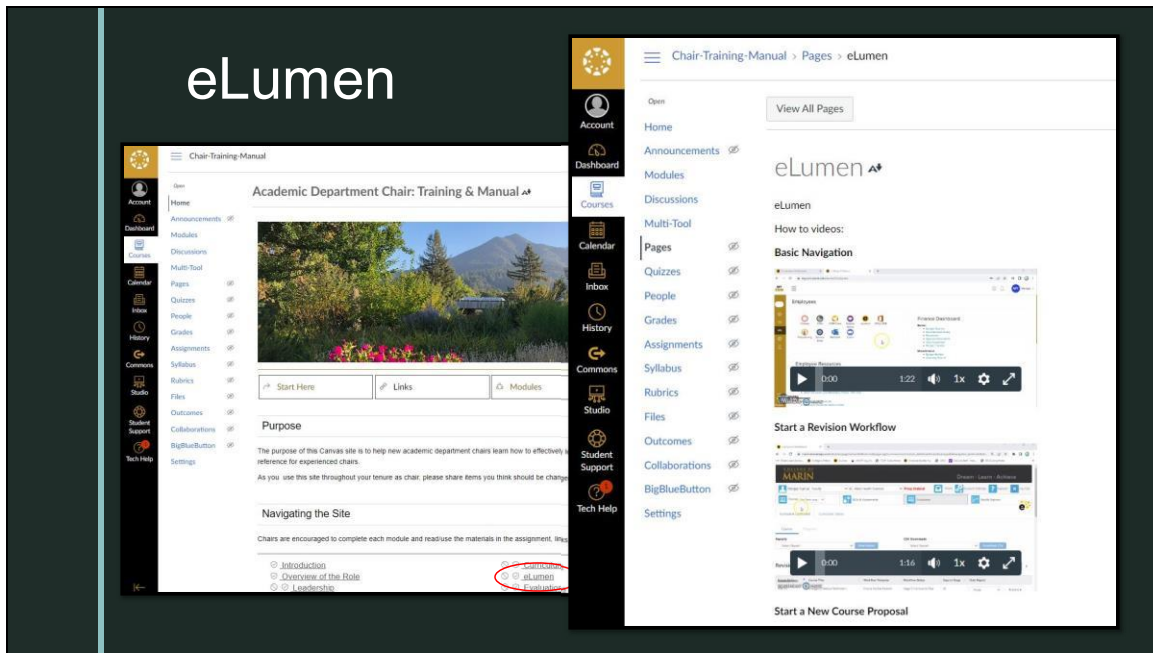
Purpose

To document discussions and plans for improving student success within a program.

To link these plans to decisions about resource allocations.

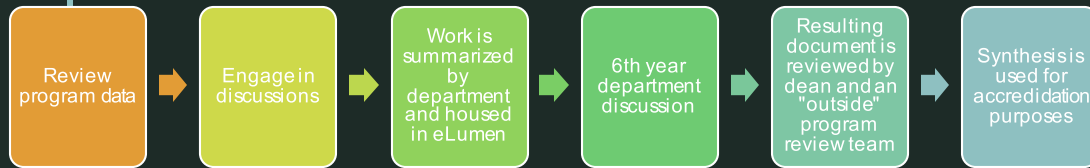
To share program information with the College community for the purposes of institutional improvement and accreditation.

At College of Marin the primary purposes of program review are to document discussions and plans for improving student success within a program; link these plans to decisions about resource allocations; and share program information with the College community for the purposes of institutional improvement and accreditation.



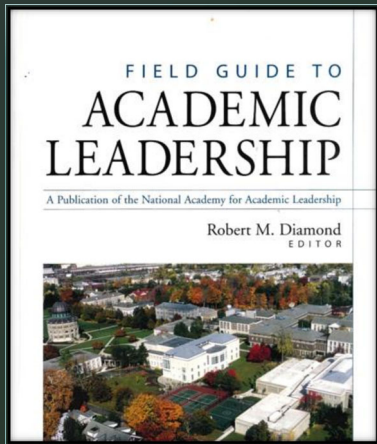
The College used the eLumen platform (access to which is covered in a different section of this Canvas site) to house data on student success and other metrics and chronicle the discussions about program improvement. Please familiarize yourself with the program review template and related information within eLumen, as you are responsible for ensuring the annual chronicle of discussions and information is completed.

eLumen



In a nutshell, each instructional program must review program data and engage in discussions based on the program review template prompts annually. This work is summarized by the department and housed in eLumen so each year of the six-year program review cycle can build upon the last. In the sixth year the department's discussions focus on synthesizing the last five years of work. The resulting document is then reviewed by the dean and an 'outside' program review team, composed of members of the College community. This synthesis is then used for accreditation purposes and serves as the basis for the next six years of program review.

Academic Program Review



Measurement

Faculty
Resistance

Before we further discuss the details of the program review process and cycle, it is helpful to consider conceptually the chair's role and approach to program review. Jon Wergin's chapter in *Field Guide to Academic Leadership*, "Academic Program Review," which can be found in the assignment and resource sections, is a good primer (Wergin, 2002). Chairs should understand there are typically two primary barriers to effective program review: measurement and faculty resistance. Measurement can be a barrier for many reasons, not the least of which is the data critique trap referenced in the leadership section of this site. Those resistant to change are prone to pick apart the minutiae of any data set as a means of slowing down or derailing discussions about what is working and what is not.

Academic Program Review

Are we succeeding at or above the institutional level?

Are we lagging behind and why?

As chair, you will want to think about how to avoid this. Fortunately, College of Marin has established a small set of metrics from which every department starts their discussions. Faculty can look at the program level in relation to the institutional-level data, which can help frame the conversation as, 'Are we succeeding at or above the institutional level, or are we lagging behind, and why?' Faculty resistance is also typically related to an aversion to change—often because there is fear of losing autonomy if change is determined to be needed. You can assuage these fears by using the resources found elsewhere in this site to design and facilitate mission- and vision-driven discussions and processes.

Academic Program Review

Avoid compliance mentality

Opportunity for critical reflection

Use the process to create the time and focus needed for meaningful discussions

Chairs should also avoid a compliance mentality when approaching program review. Yes, our accreditors expect to see evidence of regular program review, but program review is an opportunity for critical reflection, to ask whether the work we do is having the desired impacts and what we can do to engineer more equitable outcomes. 'Getting it done' should not be the primary focus. Instead, chairs should use the process to create the time and focus needed for meaningful discussions by faculty.

Meaningful Process

Leadership of Engagement

Culture of Evidence

Culture of Peer Collaboration Review

Program Review is Consequential

Wergin also outlines conditions necessary for effective evaluation and program review. Think about these conditions and how you as chair can foster them and use them to facilitate a meaningful process:

A Leadership of Engagement—As a chair, frame issues clearly, ask faculty to focus on key points of data, and regularly remind faculty of the purpose and value of the process.


Engage the Department—Don't let things get too esoteric, but instead ask very basic questions, such as, "What are we trying to do? Why are we trying to do it? Why are we doing it that way? How do we know it works?" Practicing reflections will lead to more meaningful outcomes.

A Culture of Evidence—The most effective departments don't focus on the *amount* of evidence, but rather on what they *do* with the evidence at hand.

A Culture of Peer Collaboration and Review—Spend time discussing with faculty how the process necessitates everyone's engagement and perspective. While the chair facilitates and some faculty may take a lead with certain parts of the process, everyone will be more effective individually and collectively if the process centers on

meaningful faculty interactions.

Program Review is Consequential—Your program’s review and the goals for improvement you identify within it are connected to the College’s resource allocation process. The Institution is thus focused on making decisions about resources that will help your department achieve your goals. For this to work, you need to ensure a robust process and good documentation of it.



What makes program review effective at some colleges and not others is the extent to which institutional policies are flexible and decentralized.

Wergin notes the evidence is clear: what makes program review effective at some colleges and not others is the extent to which institutional policies are flexible and decentralized. This is why at College of Marin we have focused the program review process and template on meaningful discussions within departments. While guiding questions are posed, those discussions will—and should—look different from program to program. They are also a base from which each department can build, leading to a unique series of ideas, goals, and efforts that respond to those faculty's critical assessment of where the department is and where they want it to go.

Program Review Purpose



Document discussions and plans for improving student success within a program



Link plans to decisions about resource allocation



Share program information with the College community

The chair is the facilitator of this process. Review the equity-mindedness, communication, and change modules in the leadership section of this Canvas site, as they provide tools and tips for a thoughtful, useful, and powerful program review process.

As noted earlier, the primary purposes of program review are to:

- Document discussions and plans for improving student success within a program;
- Link these plans to decisions about resource allocation;
- Share program information with the College community.

Template in eLumen



Basic Program Information



Student Success Trends




Program Planning



Feedback & Assessment

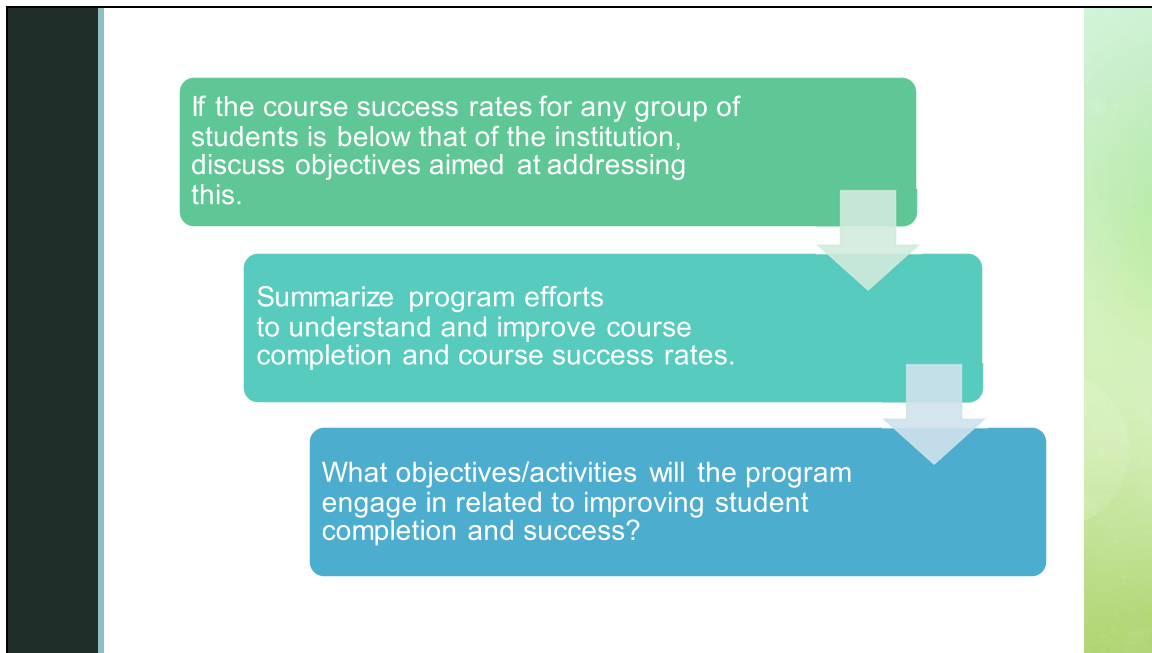
Within the program review template in eLumen there are four primary sections:

- Basic Program Information—which only needs to be updated when there are substantive changes
- Student Success Trends—which is based on data provided by PRIE
- Program Planning—which is where you chronicle faculty discussions about goals and changes based on the data
- Feedback & Assessment—which is where your dean and others provide feedback and ask questions for the department to consider moving forward.



The program review process is most useful and meaningful when faculty across the department engage in these discussions on a regular basis.

Sections have pre-populated data for both the program and the institution. The questions and prompts posed within each section are designed to spur discussion and aid in the development of plans for program improvement. *The program review process is most useful and meaningful when faculty across the department engage in these discussions on a regular basis.* These sections are designed as a base from which to work. Each program review cycle (now six years) departments will have an opportunity to identify and include additional data points, questions, and other relevant information. Each year departments will review updated data and document progress.



Here is an example of questions within the template that connect to provided data:

- If the course *success* rates for any group of students is below that of the institution, discuss objectives aimed at addressing this.
- Summarize program efforts to understand and, where necessary, improve course completion and course success rates.
- What objectives/activities will the program engage in related to improving student completion and success?

Take time to think about how you will facilitate these discussions, using the tools from the leadership section of this site. Talk with your dean about your facilitation ideas to get an outside perspective. You may choose to have every department meeting focus on one or more items related to these questions. This way you are not having a separate program review process, but rather making it integral to what the department does and ensuring the department's activities align with the mission, values, and vision you are working toward.

Feedback & Assessment Process

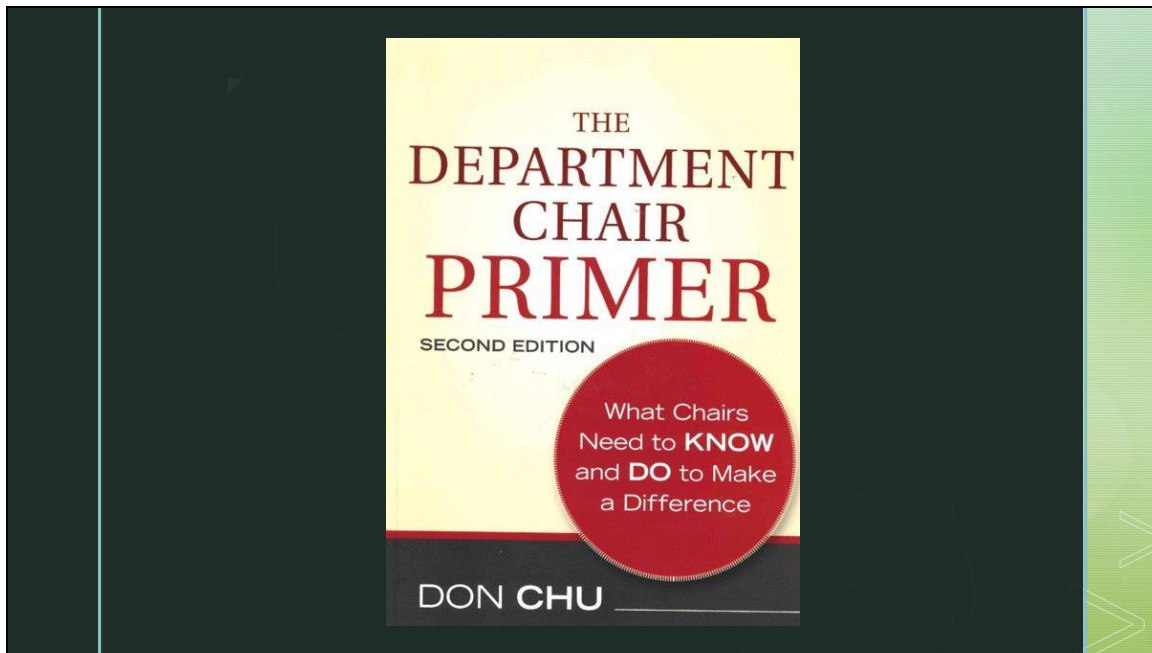


The Feedback & Assessment process includes the following steps:

- Chair coordinates the annual review of data and compilation of departmental discussions/planning in the template (departmental discussions occur at meetings throughout each year)
- Chair coordinates completion of program review at year six and sign-off on the program review submission (the program review submission is a synthesis of the content from the template)
- The program review routes to the dean/supervising administrator. Feedback may include identification of strengths/successes of the program, any areas of concern, and possible recommendations for edits/changes.
- Any feedback is provided for further discussion and consideration by the department.
- At the conclusion of this feedback loop the program review is submitted to a Program Review Team (composition likely to include faculty, administrator, and staff from outside the department) for review and further feedback.
- Once all feedback is complete, the Program Review routes to the Planning & Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC).
- PRAC uses program review content in planning and resource allocation

recommendations.

On an annual basis, academic-division presentations to PRAC which incorporate objectives/activities from the on-going program review process are prepared and presented by the dean/supervising administrator and discipline faculty.



While not solely about program review, *The Department Chair Primer's* (Chu, 2012) chapter on Planning is an excellent additional resource. It speaks to creating a vision for the future, assessing what your ideal department might look like, writing a vision statement to guide your efforts, and how to carry out planning and goal attainment in an organized fashion. This chapter is in the assignment and resource sections. Just as you should think of equity as a way of approaching your work, think of program review as an ongoing, constant method of chronicling that work, meeting after meeting, semester after semester. In this way, program review is never the focus—it's the means by which you achieve your goals.