An Interim Monitoring Report to the Higher Learning Commission on Core Component 4.A

Institution: Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
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Action: An Interim Monitoring Report due 01/30/2023 on program review

Core Components: 4.a. The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings

Areas of Focus: The HLC Review Team recommended an interim monitoring report be submitted reflecting on the effectiveness of the revised program review process, to include:

1) The College's revised program review guide, and

2) The resulting program report documents for the Business and Early Childhood Education programs

Introduction

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC) submitted its mid-cycle Assurance Argument in July 2020, hosted a site visit on October 26, 2020, and received feedback from the HLC Review Team on December 14, 2020. While the findings from that review were satisfactory and indicate that KBOCC serves its mission and meets every criterion in which it was evaluated, the Review Team recommended an interim monitoring report to address concerns regarding KBOCC's academic program review process. The Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) met on January 25-26, 2021, to accept the Review Team's recommendations and officially require this interim monitoring report.

Focus Area – Academic Program Review

Upon reviewing the KBOCC Assurance Argument, conducting the site visit, and considering additional evidence submitted by the College, the HLC Review Team suggested that KBOCC reflect and report on the effectiveness of its revised program review process and recommended an interim monitoring report to include the revised Program Review Guide and the resulting program report documents for the Business and Early Childhood Education programs.

Described below are the changes made after reflection and in response to the HLC reviewer recommendation to improve the academic program review process, procedures, and their effectiveness.

Overview

KBOCC takes responsibility for ensuring the quality of its academic and support programs through a systematic academic program review process that includes academic departments, student supports, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the President's Office, and ultimately the Board of Regents on a five-year rotational basis. Since the 2020 mid-cycle comprehensive review, KBOCC has reinstated a regular cycle of program review, with the successful review of the Business and Early Childhood Education programs in 2022, as well as commencing the review process for the Anishinaabe Studies and Liberal Studies programs in fall of 2022.

Institutional Context and History of Program Review at KBOCC

Feedback from the HLC Review Team indicated concerns specifically with the success and effectiveness of the program review process, initially established and implemented by KBOCC in 2017-2018 in response to HLC review team concerns noted in 2016 and interim monitoring required in 2018. That same year, in 2018, the Environmental Science Department was the first

academic unit to successfully complete the program review process. Following this initial success, several changes to the master program review schedule due to programmatic accreditation plans and personnel changes resulted in no other academic units successfully completing the process as originally scheduled. The Liberal Studies Department was the next unit to attempt program review in 2019-2020, however the resulting review was ultimately deemed incomplete by KBOCC and rescheduled for revision. In October 2020, the HLC Review Team noted concerns regarding the apparent ineffectiveness of the program review process. The Assessment Committee began looking at the program review process to better understand the challenges and barriers to successful completion as well as ways to improve the process, guidelines, and support, although revisions were challenged without someone able to devote time exclusively to guiding this process.

Revisions to and Strengthening Supports for Academic Program Review Process

Following the October 2020 Site Visit, the Assessment Committee, including the Dean of Academic Affairs and Department Chairs, dedicated effort to reflecting upon and revising the academic program review process and procedures. The goal in mind was to ensure an effective and collaborative process to guide future development of academic programs and informed decision-making. Revisions were facilitated in collaboration with the Assessment Committee by the current Assessment & Accreditation Coordinator hired in January 2021 and given this task as a top priority. Notes from Assessment Committee meetings and work sessions reflecting the revision process are included in Appendix A.

Reflecting on the program review process, several challenges were identified in relation to the lack of a collective understanding of the purpose and process of academic program review, including specific roles and responsibilities, expected timeline of tasks and activities, external reviewer criteria, and program review documents. Additionally, needs for additional support for the process were identified regarding data and information collection and analysis, meeting scheduling and facilitation, document preparation, and external review. Revision and refinement of the program review process has been an iterative and on-going process, guided by internal reflection and recommended best practices and examples from other institutions. A round of substantial revisions were completed and approved in 2021 and subsequent minor updates have followed each review cycle in response to reflection and insights shared by Department Chairs completing the process.

1) **Updates to the program review process**, as evidenced through approved revisions and updates to the Academic Program Review Guide, included in Appendix B, provide several clarifications and procedural enhancements:

- Clarification and additional emphasis on the purpose of academic program review for engaging in continuous improvement and identification of Action Plans for all academic programs, including certificate programs
- Clarification and expanded roles and responsibilities
- A detailed timeline and checklist were developed (APR Guide Appendix B) breaking down the program review process into specific actions with target dates, working backwards from the key milestones program review meeting and Board action/approval:
    o Kick-off meeting to further clarify roles, responsibilities, support needs, and deadlines

- o Data and information gathering
- o External reviewer confirmation procedure
- o First, second, and final drafts of self-study
- o Program review meeting
- o Collection and incorporation of external reviewer feedback
- o Final Program Review Report
- o Board of Regents action
- o 12-month follow-up meeting
- Additional guidelines for self-study, final report, and review foci (APR Guide Appendix C)
- Additional confirmation process by the Assessment Committee of selected external reviewers
- Guidelines for the selection and confirmation of external reviewers (APR Guide Appendix D)
- Adjusted Master Schedule to explicitly include certificate programs under respective academic departments
- Emphasis and refocus on action planning to identify and prioritize recommended improvement actions to strengthen the academic unit/program.
- Inclusion of a 12-month progress meeting following review completion to follow-up on Action Plan progress

Subsequent updates in 2022 resulting from process reflection following completed reviews:

- Semester of teaching load reduction for Department Chair undergoing program review was changed from Spring semester to Fall semester to reflect the amount of work preparing the self-study earlier in the academic year.
- Discussed allowing the option to conduct program review and prepare self-study outside of the normal academic year in summer months, allowing faculty chairs to focus on the self-study when there are no administrative or teaching expectations
- Responsibility and authority for the evaluation of the completed program review and recommended program action plan was transferred from the Assessment Committee to Faculty Council, as a formal decision-making body responsible for overseeing and approving changes to academic programs and curriculum. Minor revisions in the APR Guide to update procedure were made and approved by Faculty Council in October 2022.
- Minor revisions and updates to the program review evaluation criteria and rating levels. Program quality ratings of "Maintain Program; Enhance Program; Reconfigure Program; Reduce or Phase-out Program" were updated to "Exemplary/Excellent; Adequate; Needs Improvement; Reduce or Phase-out Program" to better reflect the true purpose and intent of program review.

2) **Standardization and strengthening of the program review process** as well as the format for program review documents, accomplished through the transition to an online institutional effectiveness management platform, Weave, for academic program review. The program review module provides a template and collaborative workspace for the preparation of the self-study and final report documents following the program review criteria or standards identified in the APR Guide. It also provides the ability to hyperlink evidence files and documentation, greatly streamlining the self-study and evidence gathering. The current Assessment & Accreditation

Coordinator received training in spring 2021 and serves as the platform administrator. Onboarding sessions with Department Chairs of the program review module was conducted in spring-summer 2021. Both of the completed program reviews discussed further below were prepared utilizing the Weave platform.

3) **Additional supports for the program review process** were identified and clarified. This includes additional support from the Assessment & Accreditation Coordinator through facilitation of the entire program review process from start-to-finish, including data, information, and evidence gathering, meeting scheduling and facilitation, notetaking, and document preparation/finalization. One of the most effective practices, although not formally included in the APR Guide or associated timeline, has been the scheduling of regular and frequent (weekly and/or bi-weekly) check-in meetings between the respective Department Chair undergoing program review and the Assessment & Accreditation Coordinator for the duration of the review. These meetings have been critical in keeping the process on-track following the timeline set out by the APR Guide and in the ability to discuss and address potential challenges. Additional support include support for data, information, and evidence gathering provided through collaboration and information requests from the Registrar & Accounting Director, as well as additional supports for committing and participation of external reviewers through the offering of a stipend/honorarium for reviewers.

Demonstration of Process Effectiveness: Completed Program Reviews

Business Department Programs

In 2021-22, the Business Department successfully completed the academic program review process and was the first program to complete the revised process. The Business Department Chair finalized the self-study in February 2022 and the program review meeting with stakeholders and external reviewers was held on March 4, 2022. The Department Chair incorporated reviewer feedback and the self-study into the final report, with an identified Action Plan, which was presented to the Assessment Committee for evaluation in May 2022. The Assessment Committee completed evaluation and recommendations, approved by Faculty Council on May 23, 2022. The resulting final report, signature page, and resulting documents were presented to and approved by the Board of Regents on June 6, 2022, and included in Appendix C.

Early Childhood Education Department Programs

In 2021-22, the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Department began the academic program review process but was not completed until early Fall 2022 due to the unexpected turnover and vacancy in both the ECE Department Chair and Dean of Academic Affairs (formerly the Dean of Instruction) positions. In May 2022, the program review process was resumed through contractual arrangements with an ECE adjunct faculty. The self-study was finalized in August 2022 and the program review meeting was conducted on September 14, 2022. External reviewer feedback was incorporated into an Action Plan and the resulting final report was evaluated by Faculty Council on October 31, 2022. The resulting documents were presented to and approved by the Board of Regents on December 12, 2022, and are included in Appendix D.

Timeline

Term	Timeframe	Major Action
Fall 2020	October – November 2020	HLC Site Visit debrief and program review process considerations by Interim Assessment/Accreditation Coordinator
		Reflective review of program review process and discussion between Dean of Instruction and Department Chairs
Spring 2021	January 2021	HLC KBOCC Reaffirmation Letter received; Interim Monitoring action confirmed
		Hiring of full-time Assessment & Accreditation Coordinator; first focus on revision of academic program review process and guidelines
	February – June 2021	Assessment & Accreditation Coordinator and Assessment Committee work on revisions to Program Review Guide
		Revised Academic Program Review Guide – presented and approved by Board of Regents on June 14, 2021
		Onboarding of Weave for assessment and program review processes
Fall 2021	September – October 2021	Kick-off meetings held with the Department Chairs of both the Business and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Departments
		Program review process initiated for Business and ECE programs using Weave
	November - December 2021	ECE program review paused due to resignation of former ECE Department Chair and former Dean of Instruction
Spring 2022	January – April 2022	Business Department self-study completed
		External review meeting held on March 4, 2022
		Interim Dean of Academic Affairs hired (formerly the Dean of Instruction position)
	May 2022	Assessment Committee evaluation and recommendation of Business program review approved by Faculty Council on May 4, 2022
		Board of Regents (BOR) approval of Business Academic Program Review Final Report on May, 2022
		ECE program review process resumed, led by ECE faculty in absence of Department Chair
Summer 2022	June 2022	Minor updates to APR Guide
	August 2022	Interim Dean of Academic Affairs (formerly Dean of Instruction) becomes permanent
		Current ECE Department Chair hired
		ECE Department self-study completed
Fall 2022	September – December 2022	ECE external review meeting held on September 14, 2022
		Faculty Council evaluation and recommendation on October 31, 2022
		BOR approval of ECE Academic Program Review Final Report on December 12, 2022

Supporting Documentation:

Appendix A: Assessment Committee meeting/work session minutes
Appendix B: Revised Academic Program Review (APR) Guide
Appendix C: Business Department Program Review Final Report
Appendix D: Early Childhood Education Program Review Final Report

Appendix A:

Assessment Committee work session meeting minutes

Appendix B:

Revised Academic Program Review (APR) Guide

Appendix C:

Business Department Program Review Final Report

Appendix D:

Early Childhood Education Program Review Final Report