



**REVIEW OF THE PROGRAM
REVIEW PLANS OF THE PUBLIC
POSTSECONDARY SECTORS**

**Report and Recommendations by the
Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission**

August 2000

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As directed in State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.039, Florida Administrative Code, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission is to conduct an annual review of the program review plans of the public postsecondary sectors. The Rule directs the Division of Universities, the Division of Community Colleges and the Division of Applied Technology and Adult Education (Division of Workforce Development) to submit to the Commission “on July 1 of each year a five-year program review plan or an annual update of the current five-year plan. The plans are to provide a schedule of the programs or groups of programs to be reviewed and the criteria by which the programs are to be evaluated. In addition, the Commission is required to report annually to the State Board of Education on areas of conflict or issues of particular concern.

The interest of the Commission in academic program review focuses on efforts to ensure the optimal level of coordination in order to increase efficiency in the process through the interdependent functioning of all postsecondary sectors. Increased efficiency will result in greater productivity in the State’s educational system. Commission staff convened a half day conference to discuss any relevant issues and share plans among sector representatives. Staff of the Division of Universities, Community College Division and Division of Workforce Development provided valuable assistance to Commission staff in the preparation of this report.

Overall, the program review activities in the sectors are conducted on a regular and cooperative basis when needed. The Board of Regents cooperative model for program review continues its implementation. The process appears to have ample opportunities to provide useful feedback over the five-year cycle. In addition, the process is flexible enough to accommodate additional requests or requirements for information from stakeholders. The Division of Community Colleges and the Division for Workforce Development have continued their discussions and efforts to comparable data formats in reporting performance data. During the Commission’s Program Review Conference in 1999 and again this year, representatives of the Divisions of Community Colleges and Workforce Development discussed the progress in establishing common Level I data elements which could be used in the evaluation of their programs. Over the next year, additional progress is expected. Both operate similar workforce development programs such that a closer alignment of their activities is logical.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Division of Workforce Development should align its revised program review process closely with that used in the community college system.***
- 2. The Division of Community Colleges and the Division of Workforce Development should continue to***

establish common data elements and performance indicators for their data driven (Level I) workforce program review processes. Both Divisions should continue to work closely with the Workforce Education Outcomes Information Services Bureau to ensure consistency in the data elements used.

INTRODUCTION

As directed in State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.039, Florida Administrative Code, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission is to conduct an annual review of the program review plans of the public postsecondary sectors. The Rule directs the Division of Universities, the Division of Community Colleges and the Division of Applied Technology and Adult Education (Division of Workforce Development) to submit to the Commission “on July 1 of each year a five-year program review plan or an annual update of the current five-year plan. These plans shall provide a schedule of the programs or groups of programs to be reviewed and the criteria by which the programs are to be evaluated.” The Rule further provides that the Commission shall examine the program review plans to determine that:

- The scheduling of the program review is coordinated among sectors;
- The plans are in conformity with the program review criteria listed in the Master Plan for postsecondary education prepared pursuant to Section 240.14 7(2), Florida Statutes, and
- The criteria address the distinctive institutional roles as defined by the Master Plan for postsecondary education prepared pursuant to Section 240.147(2), Florida Statutes.

In addition, the Commission is required to report annually to the State Board of Education on areas of conflict or issues of particular concern.

The interest of the Commission in academic program review focuses on efforts to ensure the optimal level of coordination in order to increase efficiency in the process through the interdependent functioning of all postsecondary sectors. Increased efficiency will result in greater productivity in the State’s educational system.

The annual report of the postsecondary sector’s program review procedures is provided below. Commission staff convened a half-day conference to discuss any relevant issues and share plans among sector representatives. Staff of the Division of Universities, Community College Division and Division of Workforce Development provided valuable assistance to Commission staff in the preparation of this report.

POSTSECONDARY SECTOR UPDATES

Board of Regents - State University System

Prior to 1999, the program review process traditionally utilized in the State University System involved the scheduling of a system-wide review of an academic discipline once during a five to seven year period. For example, a review of nursing programs might entail the review of the nursing programs at each institution using external consultants and materials prepared specifically for the process by the departments and institution as a whole. Some reviews were coordinated with external accrediting or state agencies such that the institution would not have to undergo separate and redundant review processes. For instance, education reviews held in conjunction with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Florida DOE were spread out over five years to accommodate the other agencies review schedules. On the other hand, the American Association of Schools and Colleges of Business scheduled all of its reviews of SUS programs in the same year. Efforts have been made to allow the institutions to prepare self study materials that would satisfy all of the reviewing bodies at one time and the visiting team could be composed of representatives of each of the reviewing constituent groups. In most cases, this collaborative process has been used in recent years with considerable success. However, scheduling and coordination have been continuing challenges. The growth of the system and the complexity of the task have suggested the need for changes in the process used.

Therefore, in 1999, Board of Regents Program Evaluation Unit developed a new model for program review that provides for scheduling opportunities that build upon existing review structures, institutional materials, and data. The “Cooperative Model of Program Review” shares responsibility for the evaluation of instructional, research and service programs with the institutions themselves. Under this structure, the institutions have adopted more responsibility for the design of quality assurance policies and practices while the Board has assumed more of an oversight and facilitative role. The institutions have gained greater flexibility in the scheduling of the reviews; however the Board still maintains the final authority for approving an institution evaluation process. The process can be described as one of negotiation between the institution and the program evaluation unit to arrive at an evaluation plan that meets the needs of all concerned.

Specifically, under the cooperative process, each university submits to the Board a five-year plan (University Evaluation Plan) which indicates when each program or cluster of related programs will be reviewed. (A discussion of the new program review process and an example of the five-year plan reporting sheets are attached in Appendix A.) Subsequently, universities submit plans that describe the proposed program evaluation processes, list program goals and objectives, and provide a proposed schedule for activities. Universities can combine a variety of review strategies to collect the evaluative data needed for the review. Review activities and data sources available to the institution can include:

- Regional accreditation materials or visits
- Professional accreditation materials or visits
- Council of Academic Vice Presidents review of Type I Institutes and centers
- Institutional accountability plans
- Progress reports against institutional strategic plans
- Existing internal review activities (e.g., graduate programs)
- FETPIP review reports
- Needs assessments and feasibility studies for new degree programs
- Follow-up data on new degree programs
- Programs that have been flagged by the BOR or the institution as needing to be reviewed

The Board Program Evaluation Unit works with each institution in a cooperative way on issues of timing, the need for specific data and supporting materials and the involvement of outside consultants. Board staff members monitor annual quality and productivity data for individual degree programs so that any potential problems can be identified early and flagged for review on a more immediate schedule. The institutional program review plans are subject to modification to meet the needs of the Board or those of the Legislature or other external agencies. Programs of timely or particular interest to the Board of Regents, the Legislature, the Commission, or other stakeholders may be scheduled earlier than originally planned by the institutions. Once the institutional program review plans are approved, the Program Evaluation Unit begins working with each institution concerning the coordination of all of the program review activities for the coming year.

The new cooperative process places Board staff in a stronger facilitative role with final approval authority and responsibility for the integrity of the review process. Board staff have prepared a five-year Board Evaluation Plan that includes timetables for facilitating and monitoring the process. (A copy of the five-year program review schedule is included in Appendix B.) In addition, Board staff continue to be responsible for reviewing and approving University Evaluation Plans, negotiating needed changes to plans to accomplish special needs, providing technical assistance to the universities throughout the process, analyzing information available in program review reports and System databases, generating annual reports and discipline reports and conducting follow-ups to program reviews as needed.

The State University System continues to coordinate its scheduled program reviews with accrediting and state agencies whenever possible. The major focus over the last year was the implementation of the new program review process. The 1999-2000 year was viewed as a transitional year during which planning for the new processes could be done. Meetings were held with policymakers, institutional program review contacts and other stakeholders to explain the new process and advise

institutions of the expectations and methodology to be used. As a part of the pilot year, representatives from each institution were asked to designate a minimum of two program reviews they would complete. (A list of those reviews is attached in C). Those pilot year reviews provided Board staff with an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the new program review methodology and make further refinements.

State Board of Community Colleges

The State Community College System uses a three component program review process. The first component, Level I, is the annual generation of descriptive and follow-up information about each program for study and evaluation. The data run contains information on student enrollments, retention, completions, and student demographic data. The second component is an additional review by the community college personnel independently or in conjunction with appropriate independent, outside groups. For the associate in arts program, discipline groupings within the degree program are reviewed. A major element of this process concerns the meeting of discipline faculties at community colleges and universities where most of the community college's students transfer. The Level I data plays a critical role in the selection of programs and discipline groupings for a Level II review. The Division receives annual reports from the institutions concerning which programs and discipline groupings will receive additional Level II reviews. The third component, Level III review involves a system-wide review of selected programs or groups of programs by the State Board of Community Colleges. The programs and issues for such reviews are determined by the Division based upon the data gained through Level I and II reviews, State Board of Community Colleges interests, legislative interests, State Board of Education interests or other factors which may arise. The State Board of Community Colleges approves the 5-year program review schedule for the community colleges. (A copy of the five-year review plans is attached in Appendix D.)

The Division continues to use the Level I review as its primary means for identification of potential problem areas. The three Level I reviews completed by January 2000 include College Preparatory Program Agreements between State Universities and Community Colleges; Distance Learning in Community Colleges: A Look at the Online and Tele-class Experience; and International Education Study Abroad Programs. In addition Curriculum Framework Reviews are nearing completion in 17 sector areas of Continuing Workforce Education (CWE). Two Level III reviews - the ChildCare Program Review and the Review of Social and Behavioral Sciences - are currently in draft form.

Division of Workforce Development

The Division of Workforce Development has been involved in a transition period to a new system of program review methodologies for sev-

eral years. During the 1997-2000 period, the Division of Workforce Development did not conduct any vocational program reviews. This decision was made in recognition of the tremendous change and the workload required of each local education authority (LEA) in the implementation of new state legislation. Also, new federal legislation with new/different performance requirements needed to be addressed in the program review system. During this “off period,” the Division’s Workforce Education Council conducted a complete analysis of the current review process and has considered changes to the system. Over the last two years, the Division of Workforce Development has been working with the U.S. Department of Education to clarify the types and levels of the performance measures specified in both the Workforce Investment Act (Title II, H.R. 1385-129, Section 212) and the Carl Perkins Vocational Technical Education Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-332). As a result of the performance measures, at both the state and federal level, being in the final stages of negotiation, it is the intent of the Division of Workforce Development (DWD) to develop the “next generation” of the annual vocational profiles that the Division used for several years as a program improvement tool for local education authorities (LEAs). Local program managers, as well as, division staff to determine programs that are in need of improvement will then use these profiles. Under this revised process, division staff will review the program profiles and through a “triggering process” will determine programs that are in need of more intensive review and assistance. This more in-depth review (Level 2) may involve onsite reviews to examine the processes that could be affecting program performances. When needed, Division staff will assist LEAs in the development of a local program improvement plan. The Division of Workforce Development also intends to work closely with the Division of Community Colleges regarding the Level 3 reviews of selected programs in order to determine a “statewide snapshot” of the status of selected programs.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For several years, the Commission has noted that the five-year cycle for program reviews has been difficult for the sectors to meet. Both, the number of institutions and “academic programs” have increased significantly since the requirements were placed in statute. Program review information is particularly valuable for informing the budgetary process and for assisting legislative staff, the sector boards, the Commission and other external agencies in planning. Information provided through the program review process is particularly valuable at the state level in the analysis of requests for additional capital investments, the addition or deletion of degree programs, and the need for contracts in certain areas with the private sector. As a result, timely and accurate information is crucial in such decisions. Having a statewide review of all sector programs in a five-year period provides a general snapshot of the sectors within a reasonable amount of time for planning purposes.

The new “Cooperative Program Review” model under implementation in the State University System has a number of valuable strengths. The new process provides increased flexibility to the institutions in scheduling reviews such that they can be more easily combined with state licensing, national, and regional accreditation reviews. The institutions can utilize existing data and materials in the process and faculty in the discipline areas will have a strong role in establishing the measures, performance levels and processes to be used in the evaluative process. The Commission, under Section 240.147(5a) Florida Statutes is charged with recommending to the State Board of Education, rules concerning the planning and coordination of postsecondary educational programs that provide for the sector boards to assure that program reviews are conducted statewide. The new process, with all of its strengths in terms of flexibility and institutional involvement, changes the nature of the statewide program review in some useful ways. Because of the economies gained in scheduling and the utilization of existing data and self-study materials, all programs in a given discipline are to be reviewed in a five-year period per the Florida statutory requirement. Further Board staff, as monitors and facilitators of the process, will make determinations as to whether certain program reviews need to be scheduled at a particular time or whether certain data need to be incorporated into a given review. This approach should ensure that legislative staff, the Board of Regents, the Commission, and other external agencies receive timely and accurate State-level information.

In terms of a statewide program review, Board staff intend to generate a system-wide analysis for a given discipline or cluster of disciplines at least once in every five years. Such summary reports will include an analysis of Statewide data available through the SUS management information system, other routine reports to the Board, such as limited access reports, eminent scholars reports, FETPIP reports, as well as information gained from the institutional cooperative review process. (A sched-

ule of SUS program reviews and system-level summary reports is attached in Appendix E.) Commission staff have expressed concerns over the ability of the new model to provide the timely, system-wide information often needed for policy and budgetary decisions. Board staff continues to be open to suggestions and revision in the model. The summary reports can include such information as enrollment and graduation trends in the discipline, FTE production, program costs, employment information and any additional information deemed necessary. Board staff plan to monitor a variety of factors and data to ensure that this approach will provide timely and accurate State-level information necessary to analyze requests for additional capital investment, the addition or deletion of degree programs, and the need for contracts with the private sector in certain disciplines. The new “Cooperative Review Process” is still in its design and pilot-testing phase. Commission staff will continue to provide feedback to Board and monitor the implementation of the new system to ensure that it meets the needs of all concerned.

As noted in the sector summaries, the Division of Workforce Development has been involved in discussions with the U.S. Department of Education to establish a more comprehensive series of performance indicators that will meet both federal and state needs in the program review process. Further, the funding and governance of workforce development programs in the state has been through considerable revision over the last two years. The influence and implementation of a performance based funding model can bring about financial consequences to poorly performing programs. While a major focus of program review is a determination of a program’s effectiveness, other process-oriented measures should be kept in focus as well. Despite the self-correcting influence of the performance funding formula, a need continues to exist for state level oversight. A program review process using an annual system-wide data driven analysis of key program indicators could be used. Further site-based follow-up review activities could be determined by low performance thresholds in the system-wide data driven annual review and done by exception. Such a system would closely align the Division with the process underway in the community college system.

As early as 1989, in its study, *The Delivery and Governance of Postsecondary Vocational Education*, the Commission recommended that the State Board of Community Colleges and the Division of Vocational, Adult and Community Education should use comparable data formats in reporting performance data. Some progress has been made in the use of common data elements across the sectors. During the Commission’s Program Review Conference in 1999 and again this year, representatives of the Divisions of Community Colleges and Workforce Development discussed establishing common Level I data elements which could be used in the evaluation of their programs. Since both sectors have similar programs in the vocational/technical areas and they must meet similar federal and state requirements, such an effort should allow for a

more effective and efficient program review process. Significant changes in the funding and governance of workforce programs have interfered with the progress of such efforts despite willingness on the part of the staff. Over the next year, there appears to be both opportunity and interest in further accomplishing this task.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Division of Workforce Development should align its revised program review process closely with that used in the community college system.***

- 2. The Division of Community Colleges and the Division of Workforce Development should continue to establish common data elements and performance indicators for their data driven (Level I) workforce program review processes. Both Divisions should continue to work closely with the Workforce Education Outcomes Information Services Bureau to ensure consistency in the data elements used.***

Appendices

Appendices to this document are not in downloadable format. A complete hard copy of this report may be requested from PEPC.