

18-Month Report

Integration of 2007 PQAPA Visit Recommendations

St. Lawrence College found the 2007 PQAPA examination to be a helpful exercise, corroborating the college's assessments of our quality assurance processes as outlined in our Self Study, and guiding the college toward priority improvements in the system.

The investment through which the college developed and implemented its quality assurance process, particularly Formal Program Reviews and Annual Self-Audits, was a new budgetary resource in 2005. Similarly, the investment through which these quality assurance processes have been maintained, essentially project management of the eight annual formal reviews, was an additional new resource in 2006, funded externally in the first year from Ontario's Change Fund. St. Lawrence was appreciative of the PQAPA External Team's recognition of the college's "obvious commitment...in the face of financial exigency". Since the External Team's report, the college commenced following in 2008 a disciplined, two-year, Deficit Management Plan. The first year of the DMP is complete and another year is under way. The process will help the college manage its deficit, constraining the deficit's growth; the process will not eliminate the college deficit. In following through on the recommendations supplied by both the Self Study and external PQAPA review, the college has thus had to carefully select those activities which it can pursue, for improvements' sake, without additional human resources.

Self Study Follow-Up

The college's Self Study pointed to 16 recommendations and in the 20 intervening months, six have secured a full response, five have seen important progress, and five have not yet been addressed.

Full responses include:

- Criterion #1, 1) All programs have active Program Advisory Committees.
- Criterion #1, 2) A Tri-Campus team of faculty and administrators reviewed best practices and through Academic Council established a standard course outline for the college to adopt.
- Criterion #2, 3) Program Review Team Leaders and respective Deans are identifying priority concerns or areas of interest at commencement of the formal program review.
- Criterion #3, 2) The college has launched follow-through projects both for Self Audits and for Formal Program reviews. This is thought to be superior to simple KPI follow-through owing to its more integral regard for a broader quantity and quality of performance feedback, which includes KPI.
- Criterion #4, 2) Associate Deans (new in their role in October 2007) and Campus Deans are ensuring full and timely faculty evaluations.
- Criterion #5, 2) A list is completed each spring for all programs needing Self-Audits and Campus and Associate Deans are securing the listed Self-Audits. This process has also seen some helpful streamlining so that deans deliver to a central repository their respective Self Audits with dean's responses completed.

Partial responses include:

- Criterion #1, 2) With the creation of a standardized course outline for all courses, as above, the college's 2009-2010 Business Plan requires that 10% of course outlines be modified to fit this standard in the coming year. Formal Program Reviews will continue to double-check to ensure all outlines always respect all MTCU standards.
- Criterion #4, 1) A part-time faculty orientation process has been piloted and will see expansion in September 2009.
- Criterion #4, 3) Strong efforts have been exerted to devise an appropriate retention-tracking tool. A draft tool is now being tested for accuracy.
- Criterion #5, 1) Quality of Formal Program Reviews has been enhanced two years in succession with improved presentation of relevant data, and improved attention from Campus and Assoc. Deans looking for relevant and incisive reporting and recommendations.
- Criterion #5, 3) The Self-Audit form has been adjusted to look for yearly follow-through on recommendations from the previous Formal Program Review. A The QA system will need a checklist and appropriate management to ensure all recommendations are either followed through, or are not acted upon for good reason, and above all to efficiently capture what quality improvements have been implemented on account of the quality assurance process.

Non-responses to date include:

- Criterion #2, 1) No especially improved communication to students of Framework for Programs of Instruction.
- Criterion #3, 1) Since summer 2007, Continuing Education has seen two reorganizations and the extended absence of a senior administrator in 2008-9. There has been no noteworthy progress on quality assurance improvements in that area and it remains a priority.
- Criterion #3, 3) No special guidance concerning KPI interpretations has been given. It remains a priority in terms of a workshop generally aimed at understanding and using program management tools.
- Criterion #3, 4) No noteworthy effort has been made to raise KPI response rates. The response rate to Graduate surveys seems to be improving. (Program Reviews are surveying graduates also and are obtaining good response rates.
- Criterion #5, 4) The KPI Response Policy has not been expanded to include Formal Program review and Self-Audit follow-through. Implementation of a manageable system remains a priority. Meanwhile, St. Lawrence is seeing that responses to the more encompassing formal reviews and self-audits, which include consideration of KPI's are more relevant and meaningful. The college expects to have a complete follow-through tracking system in place, with more accurate and relevant policy, by the time of our next Self Study.

PQAPA External Review Findings Follow-Up

The PQAPA External Review Team produced three commendations and the college has maintained the conditions to which they refer: an assistive facilitator, regular incorporation of KPI's as a resource in quality assurance processes, and strong, ongoing commitment to quality assurance by college management. At this time, with twenty-four completed Formal Program Reviews, it must be noted that

three in particular cited serious problems in their respective programs calling for immediate corrections. The reviews' Executive Summaries were full and frank and saw typical conveyance to the college's Academic Council, the College Executive Team, and Board of Governors. St. Lawrence's quality assurance process is demonstrating appropriate 'falsification' —the process is a robust one which is able to forthrightly and effectively address very serious shortcomings in program quality when they arise, to say nothing of the more formative styled recommendations the reviews typically assert.

The External Team's two affirmations concerned the college's Self Study which the college will again respect for its next PQAPA review: wide college involvement and clearly tasked action items.

The External Team made eight recommendations and St. Lawrence's response to date is outlined in order, as follows:

- 1) A guidebook for the Self-Audit process was recommended and important progress has been made by 1) organizing and communicating the pertinent program data, 2) clearly identifying programs to perform self-audits, 3) systematically securing campus and associate deans' "responses" on each self-audit, 4) identifying annual follow-through commitments and 5) additional support staff will be partly assigned in 2009-2010 to assist Self-Audit administration. The college will be ready by spring 2010 to issue a self-audit guide accurately explaining the complete Self-Audit process and its valuable impact upon college programming.
- 2) Systemic follow-up on the Formal Program Reviews has seen partial progress: annual Self-Audits now refer to their prior Formal Program Review and make action plans on that account. A final checklist and system to track all such action items remains to be implemented in 2009-2010. The college is also exploring a tool to prioritize Formal Program Reviews' recommendations.
- 3) The Formal Program Review Criteria Checklist has not been cross-indexed with relevant policies to assist participants. However, the college is completing the organization of its policies in readily accessible on-line format so that the cross-indexing can be achieved as a next step in the coming year.
- 4) Accordingly, the college has not yet produced "subsequent iterations" of the checklist.
- 5) Formal Program reviews have commenced referring to the accumulated annual Self-Audits as a part of their review resource. The Self-Audits will become a specified item on the new Formal Program Review Criteria Checklist in the coming year.
- 6) The college has not implemented a Faculty Mentor system for the Formal Program Reviews. St. Lawrence is finding each review has distinct characteristics which complicate a too general mentoring approach. A different approach toward achieving the same or better effect is "virtual mentoring" where certain experienced faculty speak in short media clips to just certain aspects of the Formal Program Review Checklist. This "best of the best" and even multiple approaches for specific criteria could enable ideal transference of experience, or mentoring, for widely varying programs. A few such media clips are expected to see piloting following completion of the new Checklist linked to college policies.
- 7) St. Lawrence College has increased its effort to include more attention to Student Service KPI's in its Formal Reviews by specifically requiring Review Teams to meet with Service staff in the course of the Review process when possible issues seem apparent. This is producing more effective recommendations. Still more progress is expected by implementing a systemic capture of relevant Student Service feedback.
- 8) The college agrees some teacher observation by managers or peers in the faculty Performance Review Process has considerable merit. St. Lawrence has not explored the concept further while its new group of deans implements a consistent set of expectations for faculty performance

reviews generally. An innovation along the lines of teacher observation could be explored and possibly piloted by the time of the next Self-Study.

St. Lawrence College expects our 2007 Self Study, the External Team's Report, and now this Eighteen-Month Report will constitute a strong set of base lines upon which our quality assurance system improvements over this inaugural five year PQAPA cycle, will be charted, and measured.