

Long-Range Planning at the Department Level

The core value of an educational institution is student learning, and the core capacity to attain it is faculty teaching. An effective organization to integrate both is a learning community.

Introduction

The purpose of this note is to assist academic units at Sonoma State University to revise the assessment programs that they developed during the period 2001-2003. The idea is to work first on a long-range plan for an academic unit, and then to develop an assessment process that is functional to an academic plan lead by the single goal to improve student learning. In this way assessment will stand within the broader framework of educational effectiveness.

What follows is neither a template nor an example of a report of the plan. It is rather, an exercise about long range planning: an outline of stages, and how to work out some to tasks necessary to generate a plan.

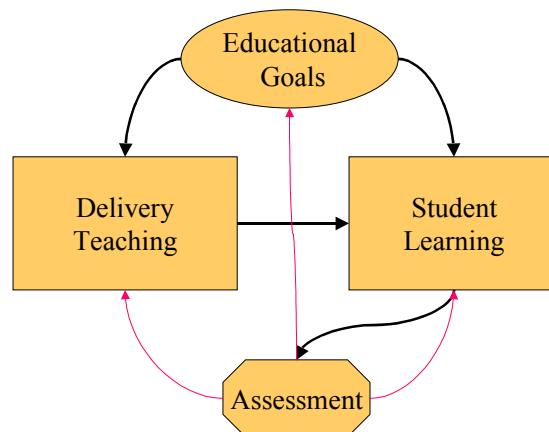
The exercise is carried out for a stylized Department of Economics in an imaginary University.

An academic planning process includes two dimensions:

- Educational effectiveness;
- Capacity to attain effectiveness and to continuously improve it.

The following chart outlines our conceptual framework. For a complete version of the flow chart model, go to [Appendix](#) of this exercise.

Educational Planning



A. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Educational Goals: The core value of a university is student learning; the core capacity to deliver it is faculty teaching; and one way to align these two values is that a university becomes a learning community.

In a planning process it is useful to begin by stating the mission, vision, and learning objectives of an academic unit. The relationship among this statement is based on a conceptual framework

Mission (focusing on Institutional Purposes)—The mission is about the department or program identity. When planning, the Mission statement needs an operational form: in this particular case it is worked out around “institutional purposes”.

| Mission of the Economic Department (Institutional Purposes) |
|--|
| <p>The institutional purposes of the Economic Department are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To serve the University learning goals by teaching in the General Education program; • To prepare bachelor-bound economics majors. • To prepare a select group of economics majors to attend graduate programs in economics, law, and education; • To serve the School of Business and Economics, teaching economics to students of business administration |

Vision—The vision is about how to achieve the institutional purposes stated within the mission. Given the purposes, the faculty, with inputs from the staff, students and alumni, develop a shared vision of the Economics program. In this case it is weaved around delivery of economics knowledge. It seeks to deliver knowledge of economics with a faculty who values the scholarship of engagement, interested on incorporating modes of experiential learning in combination with modes based on cognitive theories of learning.

Vision of Economics Department

The Economics Department seeks to support student learning by means of:

- A scholarship of engagement, and pedagogies that value experiential learning.
- Conducting research about the needs of communities located in the surrounding counties.

Learning Objectives—The faculty recognizes that Learning Objectives need to be teachable, and if they are teachable, they will be assessable. The Institutional Purposes and the knowledge base and traditions of Economics, are guidelines to define those Learning Objectives. The cost-effectiveness criterion has suggested the convenience of a short list of learning objectives. But naturally, at the course level, each objective would be subdivided or interpreted by teachers.

| No. | Learning Objectives |
|--|--|
| Students are required to demonstrate: | |
| <i>For Economics Majors</i> | |
| 1 | Understanding of economic terms, concepts, and theories |
| 2 | Ability to compare and contrast competing views within economics |
| 3 | Ability to research economic issues |
| 4 | Ability to analyze and evaluate contemporary social issues, using economic theories and concepts |
| <i>For Majors who would attend a Graduate Economic program</i> | |
| 5 | Command of mathematical economics and statistics |
| | |

The Economics Department Learning Objectives are aligned with the University learning objectives.

| Department Alignment with University Objectives – Matrix | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | SSU Objectives | Education to support: | | |
| | Department Objectives | Engaged Citizens | Competent Workers | Fulfilled Persons |
| 1 | Economics concepts | GE | | GE |
| 2 | Comparing alternative theories | | M | |
| 3 | Research competence | | M | |
| 4 | Critical analysis of issues | M | | M |
| 5 | Mathematical reasoning | | M | M |
| GE: General Education Courses M: Major Courses | | | | |

Curriculum Development— The curriculum content of this Economics Department is largely determined by: the above Learning Objectives; and by standards of the discipline, in particular those of the American Economic Association. The Curriculum Alignment Matrix demonstrates the expected contributions of each course to alternative objectives.

Check marks within the matrix cells indicate the degree of alignment of courses with Objectives. The Program is well aligned with objectives 1 and 3. The Economics Department will work during the next year on the alignment of courses with the other objectives.

| Curriculum Alignment Matrix | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------|-----|---------|-----|
| | <i>Learning Objectives</i> | Econ 201A | ... | Econ400 | ... |
| 1 | Understanding of economic terms, concepts, and theories | P | I | P | D |
| 2 | ... | | P | | |
| 3 | ... | P | I | D | I |
| 4 | Ability to analyze and evaluate contemporary social issues, using economic theories and concepts | | I | | |
| 5 | ... | | | I | |
| I: Introduced P: Practiced D: Demonstrated | | | | | |

Learning Theories and Pedagogies— Given the Vision of the Department of Economics, the faculty will engage in a gradual adoption of delivering and learning approaches based on experiential learning, such as cooperative learning, service learning, and community engage research that incorporate students. The faculty, however, agree that still there is a role for teaching and learning methods based on cognitive theories and each faculty will choose the approach that is considered more effective. The Faculty has worked on Pedagogy Emphasis Matrix.

| Pedagogy Emphasis Matrix | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----|---------|-----|
| | <i>Teaching Emphasis</i> | Econ 201A | ... | Econ400 | ... |
| 1 | Lecturing | x | | x | x |
| 2 | Interactive Learning | | x | | |
| 3 | Tutoring | x | | | |
| 4 | Seminarian | | | x | x |
| 5 | Service Learning | | | x | |
| 6 | Community Services | | x | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Communication with Students

The Economics Department will inform students, and in particular declared majors, about its learning objectives and pedagogical approaches through various means.

| Communication with Students | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Means of Communication | | Alignment |
| At Department Level | | |
| | University Catalogue | I |
| | Department Web Page | I |
| | Printed forms | D |
| | Oral presentations during Students' orientations | D |
| At Course Level | | |
| | Each class syllabus will include its learning objectives and their correspondence with the program objectives | I |
| At Teacher Level | | |
| | Advising | P |
| I: Introduced P: Practiced D: Demonstrated | | |

The above matrix demonstrates the degree of accomplishment in student communication, and the future areas of work.

Advising is a major academic activity for the Economics faculty. One particular objective of advising will be to identify the potential and disposition of economics majors to attend a graduate program in Economics or Law. Those students with a good potential will be advised to take mathematical and statistical courses, as well as upper division Economic courses that will prepared them for admission in those programs.

B. CAPACITY

The educational effectiveness of a university is associated with its capacity to deliver.

The Capacity of an academic unit results from:

- § Its resources, and
- § Its organizational structures: patterns of resource allocation that assure educational effectiveness.

Resources

Faculty and Staff

- Tenure and temporary faculty

- Distribution of faculty by discipline, areas of specialization, degrees

- Workload distribution: faculty scholarship, teaching, community service, and governance.

- Hiring policies: alignment with learning objectives.

- Faculty Development

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

- Budget in dollar values

- Offices

- Information Technology

- Access to Classrooms

- Access to Library

- Access to other Instructional Materials

Organizational Structures and Decision-making Process*Delivery Process*

- Class Schedule development

- Class size distribution

- Student faculty ratios

- Students' served

- GE students

- Business Administration Students

- Economics Majors

Advising Process—Advising is a major academic activity for the Economics faculty. One particular objective of advising will be to identify the potential and disposition of economics majors to attend a graduate program in Economics or Law. Those students with a good potential will be advised to take mathematical and statistical courses, as well as upper division Economic courses that will prepared them for admission in those programs.

*Department Meetings**Planning Process*

Assessment and Grading Processes— The Department Faculty assesses students learning outcomes, resulting from the faculty teaching and advising, and students learning activities. For this purpose identifies data sources, process and interpret information, and with an intention of scientific inquire, develop **evidences** about educational achievements; it also compares its achievements with some standards (benchmarking).

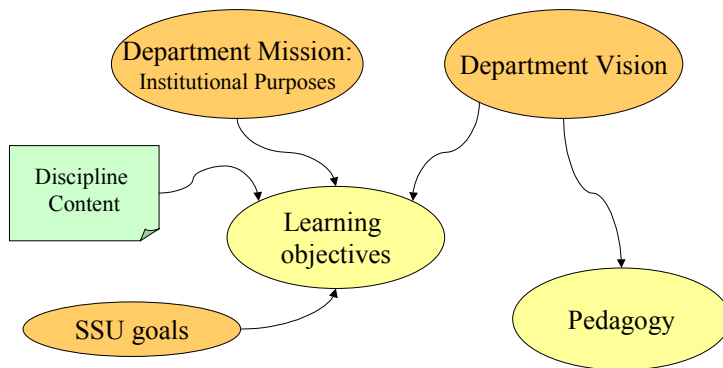
Program Review Process

RTP Process

Feedback—The knowledge generated with assessment translates itself into action items, such as adjustments in curriculum, changes in class schedules, new pedagogies, hiring, and so forth.

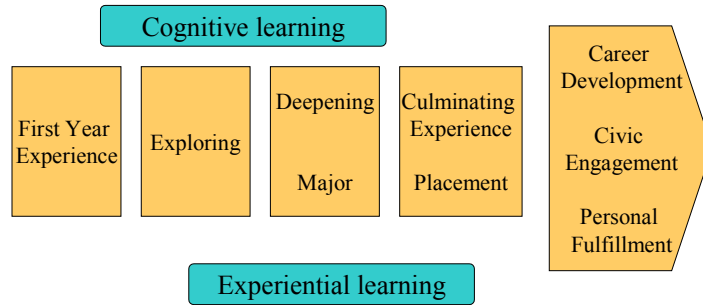
APPENDIX: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Educational Goals

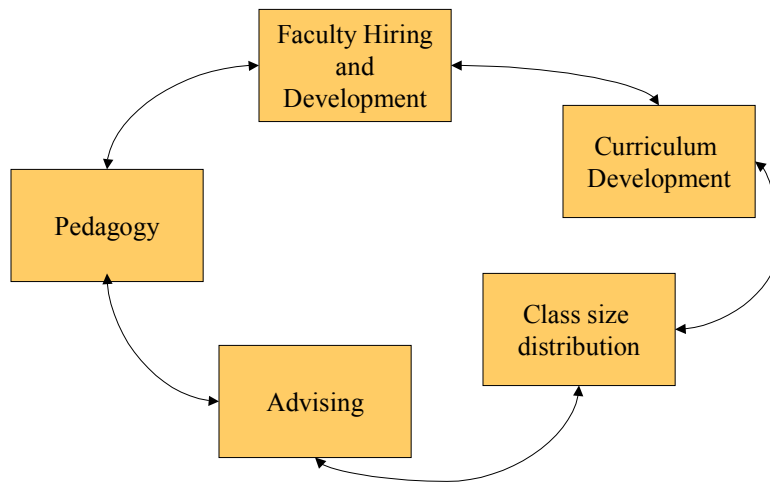


Student Learning

Focus on student college cycle



Teaching - Delivery



Assessment of Student Learning at Program Level

