

## **Georgia Southwestern State University**

### **Comprehensive Program Review of Academic Programs**

#### **Overview**

Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) of Academic Programs provides a common base for internal review and evaluation of all Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) academic programs. The Faculty, Academic Program Heads, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA), and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) participate in the CPR and incorporate CPR findings in their recommendations for short- and long-range institutional planning.

Academic Programs in the College of Business and Computing, the College of Education, and the School of Nursing maintain external accreditation, and therefore, CPRs for these schools are aligned with their regular accreditation reviews, and follow the format dictated by their accrediting organization. The frequency of these reviews is determined by the external accrediting organization, although none exceeds ten years. The VPAA completes the final institutional evaluation of programs after the external accreditation reviews are complete that establishes the quality, productivity, and viability of the program, as well as whether the program is vital to GSW's mission. This evaluation by the VPAA includes a judgment of whether program should be continued and at what level.

Academic Programs in all four Colleges that are not externally accredited participate in an internal CPR process as outlined below. Bachelor programs are reviewed every seven years, and graduate programs every ten; minor programs and single discipline specific certificate programs are reviewed as part of the regular CPR process at the same time as the degree programs associated with them. As with the programs that have external accreditation, the VPAA completes the final institutional evaluation of programs after the external review. The VPAA's evaluation establishes the quality, productivity and viability of the program, as well as whether the program is vital to GSW's mission. This evaluation by the VPAA includes a judgment of whether program should be continued and at what level. GSW's General Education Program (the Core) is reviewed every five years at the time of the SACSCOC Interim Fifth-Year Report and the time of SACSCOC reaffirmation. GSW's Co-Requisite Learning Support program is reviewed at the same time as the general education program.

As a collaborative activity between academic programs and the Office of Academic Affairs, Comprehensive Program Review serves three primary purposes:

- To elicit informed judgments about how well a program supports student success given its collective resources.
- To make projections about emerging opportunities and the ways a program may best take advantage of those opportunities.
- To ensure that the program has a strategic plan to support student success and the ways and means to implement its plan.

In addition, the CPR process assists programs in maintaining high academic quality and stimulates change that enhances the program's performance. When done well, the process is both an honest

evaluation of current circumstances and a candid dialogue about future possibilities and mutual commitments. The discussion and thought invested in the process leads to actions designed to increase the value of the program's contributions to student success, to Georgia's economic development, and to the general welfare of its graduates.

### **Responsibilities for CPR Process**

The Office of Academic Affairs oversees the CPR process by setting the schedule of internal reviews, or implementing the schedule set by the external accrediting organizations, and insuring that all parts of the process are complete; however, the process begins with the academic program under review and places the following responsibilities on the faculty serving each program:

- Development of a self-study that draws evidence-based conclusions about the current strengths and areas for improvement of the program, shows how the program has improved since its last review, and identifies specific areas of focus for future improvement.
- Participation in an external review of the program.
- Development of a response to conclusions and recommendations of the external review, and a strategic plan to implement the recommendations.

Deans overseeing each program under review have the following responsibilities:

- Providing feedback on the self-study while in development.
- Recommending possible External Reviewers from programs similar to the GSW program in states other than Georgia to the AVPAA.
- Participation in all external reviews.
- Deans may choose to append their own conclusions or recommendations regarding the program under review to the external review report.

The AVPAA has the following responsibilities.

- Approving, inviting, and compensating External Reviewers.
- Assembling an external review team including in addition to the external reviewer, a GSW faculty member from a program that undergoes external accreditation review and a current student in or graduate from the program under review.
- Facilitating and supporting the external review.
  - Providing Self-Study to External Review Committee
  - Organizing initial and exit meetings for the External Review
  - Sharing the External review Report with the Provost, Dean, and Program Chair (if applicable).

In addition to overseeing the CPR Process, the VPAA has the following responsibilities:

- Participation in all external reviews.
- Discussion of review results with academic program representatives and the deans.

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- Making the results of all CPRs available to the University System of Georgia by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the review takes place.

**Timeline of Internal Reviews**

Date	Tasks
August to November	Program faculty complete Self-Study Report
Before Thanksgiving Break	Draft of Self-Study Report due in Dean’s Office
Beginning of January	External Review Committee selected
January-March	External Review scheduled
January-March	Self-Study Report provided to External Review Committee.
By April 15	External Review Committee reports due in Dean’s Office
End of April	Response to External Review Committee Report, if any, due in Academic Affairs
June to July	VPAA shares and deposits completed CPR documents

**The Self-Study**

The self-study is intended to help faculty and administrators assess a program’s current situation, its emerging opportunities, and its plans for the future. The members of the program faculty undertake the self-study in order to take a thorough and reflective look at the program as a prelude to developing plans for its future. The focusing questions below are intended to guide faculty through the self-study and planning process. They are also framed to focus the attention of the review team that adds an external perspective to the process. The self-study narrative does not need to take the form of an itemized list of questions followed by specific answers, but each question that applies to the program should be addressed somewhere in the self-study. Each self-study should include an executive summary of the program’s strengths and areas for improvement, its progress since last being reviewed, and its plans for the future. In addition to addressing the guiding questions, the self-study narrative should contain a brief history of the program(s), a description the program degree(s) and associated minor or certificate programs, and any other information that will enable the review team to make good use of their time. Programs are encouraged to provide data and data-driven analyses by making use of reports routinely available through Institutional Research, and their discipline’s professional societies in addition to data collected by the unit.

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## **Focusing Questions for the CPR Process**

The following questions are intended to guide a program's self-study process, but not all questions may apply equally to all programs. Some questions require data to answer that will be provided by the Office of Institutional Research and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning.

- How has the program addressed recommendations from its last comprehensive program review? Have the actions taken by the program produced positive results?
- Are the program's Storm Tracks providing clear pathways to graduation for students supported by sustainable course rotations?
- What have the program's one-year and two-year retention rates been since the last CPR?
- What is the average time to degree since the last CPR for students who begin the program at GSW?
- What is the average time to degree since the last CPR for students who change to the major program while at GSW?
- What is the average time to degree since the last CPR for students who transfer into the major?
- From a curricular analytics point of view, are there any courses in the current program curriculum that delay or block student progression?
- How many graduates has the program produced since the last CPR, both in total and as a yearly average?
- What has been the level of performance on the program's learning outcomes during the last two assessment cycles? What actions for improvement have been taken during those two cycles? What have been the results of those actions?
- What is the aggregate level of performance on course evaluations since the last CPR? How do those aggregate numbers compare with college and university averages? What do the patterns in the numbers and comparisons show?
- What collective actions have been taken by the program faculty to improve teaching and learning since the last CPR? What actions have program faculty members taken individually to improve teaching and learning since the last CPR? What faculty development activities have been undertaken by program faculty collectively or individually?
- Are students in the programs engaging in experiential learning, including but not limited to internships and undergraduate research?
- What actions has the program taken to encourage student sense of belonging in the program?

## **Format of the Internal Self-Study**

Executive Summary should include (1-2 pages in Times New Roman 12pt or similar font, single-spaced with 1 inch margins all around):

- Major Strengths
- Areas for Improvement
- Two bullets deleted that relate to Opportunities and Threats

- Draft Strategic Plan to maintain the program's strengths, address its weaknesses, take advantage of its opportunities, and meet its challenges during the next seven years. To the extent that it is possible, this plan should correlate to GSW's current strategic plan; however, the primary purpose of a program strategic plan is to improve the fulfillment of the unit's mission.

Major strengths might include such things as strong career or graduate school placement rates, continuing success of graduates in their careers, or strong retention and progression rates for the program. Areas for improvement might include the same indicators if they are weaker than one would hope.

Self-Study Narrative should be limited to twenty pages, and should address in detail the points covered in the executive summary providing some evidence to support the conclusions drawn in the executive summary. Wherever possible, the narrative should demonstrate continuity with previous CPR improvement plans.

Appendices should be limited to the material necessary substantiate the claims made in the narrative that are not available on the program's or the university's web site. CV's for full-time program faculty are not compulsory in the appendix, but may provide supporting evidence for the self-study narrative.

### **The External Review**

Since fresh perspectives improve assessment and planning, an external reviewer will be invited to familiarize him or herself with the program and to take part in the deliberations about the program's assessment and planning. External reviewers will be expected to provide candid assessments of the program's current strengths and weaknesses and their best judgment on where the program should invest its intellectual and other resources in the future. The external reviewer will head the review team that will also include a GSW faculty member from outside the college that houses the academic program under review and a current student in or graduate from the program under review.

The external review team will be chosen by the AVPAA with advice from the academic program, the Dean of the College and the Provost. External reviewers will be established scholars whose areas of expertise represent a diversity of interests coinciding with the areas of importance to the program and whose programs are regarded as successful, innovative, and effective in managing resources. The GSW Faculty member on the team should come from an academic program that is externally accredited and have experience with assessment and planning. For programs with graduate programs, GSW Faculty member should have graduate faculty status. The role of the GSW faculty member on the review team is provide the external reviewer with insight into GSW's institutional culture. The role of student in or graduate from the program is provide a student view on the program.

To help the AVPAA identify appropriate candidates as external reviewers, the program provides a list of two to four programs or departments at other institutions that model different forms of excellence to which the program aspires. To the extent that it is possible, recommended external reviewers should come from programs with roughly the same number of faculty and the similar financial resources; recommended reviewers should be from SACSCOC accredited institutions, primarily from outside Georgia. To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, individuals with particularly close relationships

to the program (former faculty, former mentors or students of program faculty, or research collaborators) should not be recommended and will not be used as external reviewers. The Office of Academic Affairs will identify and contact individual scholars at the institutions nominated and make arrangements with them to do the review online.

### **Procedures for the External Review Report**

There will be two compulsory web conferences required during each review, an initial meeting to get the review started and an exit interview after the external review is complete.

After the initial meeting, the review team, including students or alumni, will be provided with access to the self-study, as well as a template for the external review report. The review team will have two to three weeks to complete the review report.

Once the final report is received by the Provost, an exit meeting will be scheduled between the VPAA, Dean, and department chair, if applicable, to discuss the external review report with the external reviewer. The external reviewer will receive an honorarium after the completion of the exit interview.

### The Review Report

After reviewing all the pertinent information, the team will prepare a final report addressing how the program's strengths can be maintained and improvements made in the future. If there are choices to be made, alternatives should be outlined and critiqued. Obviously, if the University invested more resources in a program, the University would reap additional benefits. What the University asks of reviewers is a much more crucial task; they are asked to provide advice about the quality of what the program does, how current resources are used, and how they might be used better to achieve the program's aspirations. While recommendations for additional personnel or facilities will be considered, it may be more productive for reviewers to assume that no additional fiscal resources will be available when making their recommendations.

The review team should agree during its deliberations on a single, consolidated report (typically about five pages of single-spaced text). The report should address the items highlighted in the Self-Study Executive Summary, as well as any other issues deemed pertinent by the review team. The report should conclude with recommended strategic priorities for the program and GSW designed to improve the effectiveness of the program and the success of its students.

### Disposition of the Reports

The external reviewer should notify the Provost when the report is completed. Copies will be downloaded and forwarded to the program, and to the dean of the college that houses the program, each of whom will have an opportunity to respond in writing to the report, sending their responses to the VPAA, and to participate in the exit meeting. The Provost will prepare the Office of Academic Affairs response and send it, along with copies of the consultants' report, program's response and Dean's response, to the President. Copies of this packet and of the Self-study will be posted in a password protected CPR archive on GSW's web site, which is accessible to Deans, the program, and others within the University who have been involved in the evaluation process. The Provost will also make the report available to the University System of Georgia by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the review occurred.

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