

Integrated APR: Guidance for Deans, Department Heads/Chairs, and Faculty

Purpose

“First and foremost, the purpose of the academic program review (APR) process at Cal Poly is to acknowledge the strengths of our academic programs and, at the same time, to seek ways of further enhancing their quality.”

The APR process provides an opportunity for us all, in the department, in the college and at the institutional level, to make more informed decisions that lead to program improvement for the benefit of students and their learning. Due to the role that program review plays in enhancing educational effectiveness, the review of academic programs is mandated by the CSU and is expected by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), our regional accrediting agency.

This pilot for an integrated academic program review has emerged in light of:

1. A recent General Education program review where external evaluators recommended a greater focus on “integration of learning” and “on what students should learn as opposed to simply what faculty will teach”. They suggest that this focus, “will lead to a rapprochement between the major and general education.”
2. The recent adoption of the university learning objectives that will require an implementation plan, with a process of continually improving students’ educational experiences. This implementation plan development is part of the upcoming WASC self study.
3. The recognition this fall, by the academic senate and campus leadership, that WASC CFR 1.2 is the institutional issue of highest priority to address and in need of significant development:
“Educational objectives are clearly recognized through the institution and are consistent with stated purposes. The institution has developed indicators and evidence to ascertain the level of achievement of these.” (WASC CFR 1.2)
4. The acceptance by WASC of the proposed self study, in particular, Theme 1: The Integrated Educational Experience. A pilot for an integrated program review offers an opportunity to explore a mechanism, with an existing process, for intentional integration.

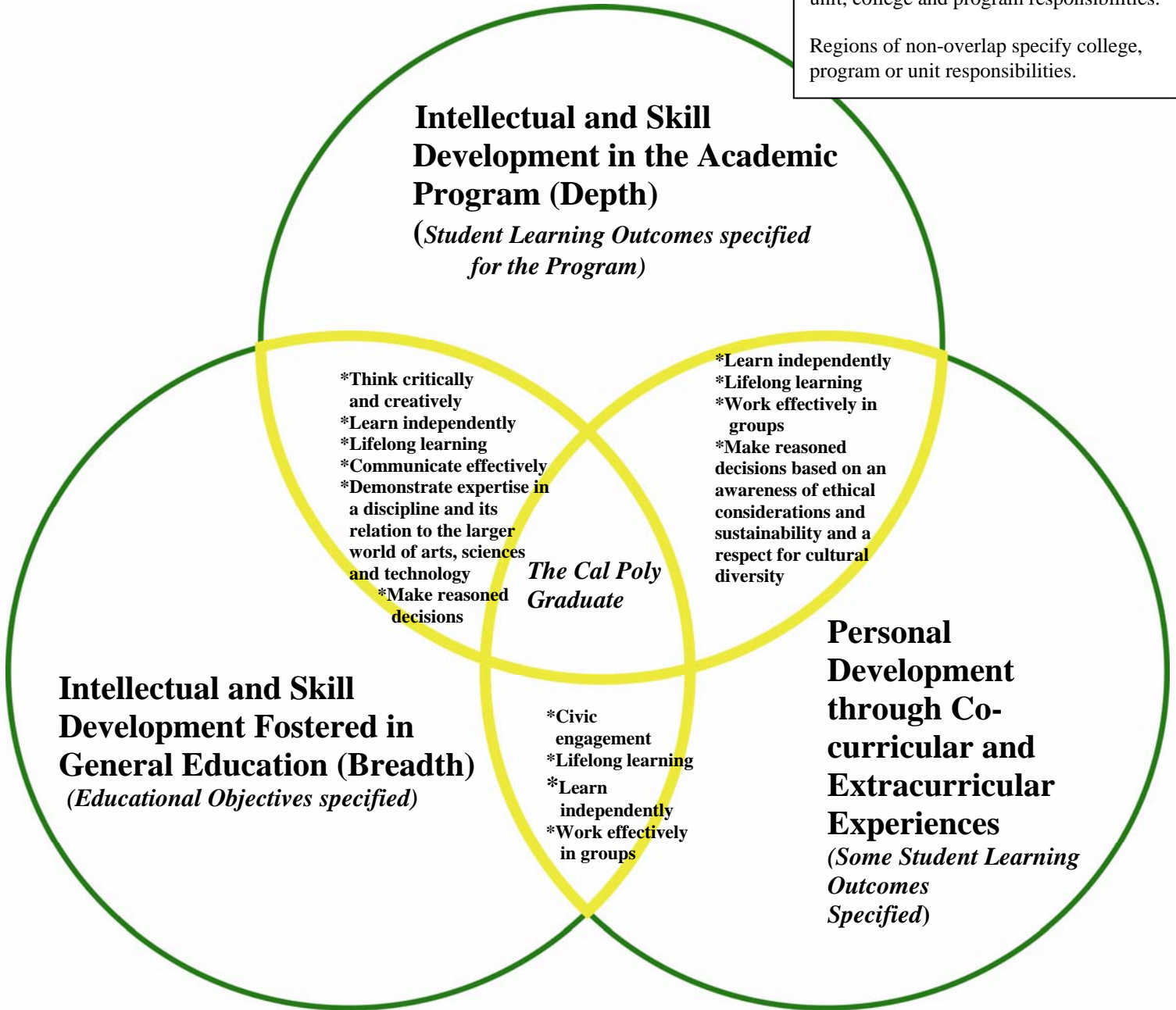
Primary Outcome of the Pilot:

An understanding of how a campus wide reconception of “academic program” could be developed that focuses on students’ work in the major, in support courses, in general education and ultimately includes co- and extracurricular learning. A tentative representation for this integration is shown in the figure below:

*The Cal Poly
Educational Experience*

Interpretive Guide:
Regions of overlap specify institutional, unit, college and program responsibilities.

Regions of non-overlap specify college, program or unit responsibilities.



Goals for the pilot integrated academic program review:

- To enhance the institutionalization of assessment and evaluation processes that are efficient, effective and sustainable.
- To improve the ability of students and faculty to integrate GE educational objectives and learning outcomes in the major for the attainment of the university learning objectives.
- To better link assessment at the program, GE and institutional level to curricular decision-making in GE and the major and promote data-driven curriculum revision processes.
- To facilitate the ongoing discussion between faculty in GE and faculty in major departments regarding the establishment of a complementary and integrative relationship between GE educational objectives, program level learning outcomes, and university learning objectives.
- To explore how assessment in GE, at the program level and at the institutional level might be brought to bear in the self study process of an academic program review.
- To develop a mechanism for quickly “closing the loop on improving student learning” with a process that allows a direct implementation of evidence based improvements in curricula.
- To create a more direct link between faculty who make programmatic and curricular decisions and faculty who have expertise in the scholarship of teaching, learning and outcomes-based assessment.

Partners in the Review:

- **Selected faculty in the department undergoing program review** (representing the major—and GE, in cases where the department offers a significant number of GE courses)
- **Selected faculty in GE** (who have expertise in the teaching, learning, and assessment of those university learning objectives selected by the program faculty for the review)
- **Two Representatives from the Academic Assessment Council** (academic and student affairs representatives with knowledge of institutional, college, unit and program assessment)
- **Associate Vice Provost, Academic Programs** (representing the institution and providing program review oversight)
- **In Consultation with: Vice Provost for Academic Programs (as the Provost’s representative), Dean of the College, and Director of General Education**

Review process:

The integrated review is initiated by each department with a proposal to the Vice Provost stating which university learning objective(s) they choose to focus on. The review team (described above) is then chosen in a process that involves consultation with the Senate Executive Committee and the GE Director submitting recommendations about team members to the Vice Provost, for review by the department.

Those appointed to the pilot review process will work in collaboration with the department faculty on the integrated aspect of the self-study. The nature of this collaboration may vary depending on the department, but it normally includes a dialogue around the following issues:

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- How could or does the assessment of student learning based on student work (related to the chosen university learning objective) that departmental faculty have available, point to GE educational objectives, or major learning outcomes in which students could use improvement? Can program level assessment data be used to make recommendations for enhancing integration in the students' educational experience for the purpose of increasing student achievement?
- Are there other types of evidence related to the chosen university learning objective(s) available from GE, the accreditation self study, advisory board reports, student/alumni/employer surveys, or institutional data from national surveys (e.g., NSSE, YFCY) that point to GE educational objectives, or program learning outcomes in which students could use improvement? In other words, can other kinds of assessment data be used to make recommendations for enhancing integration of the students' educational experience for the purpose of improving student achievement?
- Are there additional measures of student learning that could be devised, administered and reviewed in collaboration, by the integrated APR team, in a one or two quarter period that would shed additional light on understanding students' achievement and/or possible modes and methods for integration for the identified university learning objective(s)?

Since this is a pilot, the Associate Vice Provost will work with the integrated APR team to develop a plan of action to address the key questions. The resulting report will become part of the program self study. After this self-study is submitted, the APR team will meet with the external evaluators during their site visit. Then, in response to the evaluator's report, the integrated APR team will collaborate with the department faculty on devising an action plan of steps to enhance integration and improve achievement of identified student outcomes.

Possible action plans steps may include:

- Workshops at the Center for Teaching and Learning on integrative modes and methods that lead to increased student attainment of particular learning objectives,
- Identification of other student learning outcomes and assessment resources (individual consultations, web links, national conferences or workshops) provided by the integrated APR team to the department.

After the action plan is drawn up, the APR team will participate in the action plan adoption meeting that occurs between the department faculty, the college and institutional administrators.

Throughout the pilot program review, the Associate Vice Provost will convey regular updates to the Vice Provost and the GE Director (who consults as needed with members of the appropriate GE committees). At the end of each pilot review, the integrated APR team will meet with the members of the GE Governance Committee to formulate a GE action plan detailing the changes to be made to the GE Program in order to improve integration and student learning.

The Associate Vice Provost will also convey regular updates to the Academic Assessment Council. At the end of each review cycle, the Council will formulate an action plan to address issues related to the institutional assessment of student learning and to provide advice to faculty at the department, college, and GE levels as they carry out their work of assessment.

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Products of this integrated process:

- A program self-study that includes a focus on the university learning objectives. (Please note: the current process does require that programs take a look at “institutional issues.”)
- An action plan from each academic program to address issues of improving student learning that arise during the self-study and to inform curricular decisions within the program.
- A GE action plan to address issues of improving student learning and to inform curricular decisions within the GE Program.
- Topics for CTL workshops on improving student learning.

For more information, contact Delores Lencioni in the Office of Academic Programs (756-7299).