

PLANNING, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT IN THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Sub-Committee Members

David Butler

Gavin Henning

Gay Nardone

To understand the ways in which planning, resource management, implementation, and assessment are handled in the College of Liberal Arts, the sub-committee first met with the dean, associate dean, and assistant dean to discuss these topics using a list of topics and questions developed by the Institutional Effectiveness Self-Study Committee. These questions were also sent to each department chair in the college to solicit their feedback. Feedback was received by chairs from Art History, Communication, Education, Music, Psychology, and Theater and Dance. Input was also solicited and received from the business manager at the College of Liberal Arts Business Service Center, the unit that handles the financial transactions for the college.

Planning: Planning in the College of Liberal Arts is largely influenced by its size and structure. This college comprises almost half of the students at the University of New Hampshire and includes 14 departments, 8 programs, 3 research centers, and one institute whose disciplines range from Linguistics to Women's Studies. As a result planning is somewhat isolated. The dean's office initiates planning for the college as an entity and then solicits feedback from the faculty while integrating individual unit plans as well. Chairs are responsible for the planning that occurs at the department/program level. Some departments are externally accredited. Thus, accreditation standards have a substantial impact on the planning in those departments. The planning process at this level varies from department to department. Some chairs develop the department plans themselves and then seek feedback while others involve faculty in every step of the planning process. Since planning is extremely heterogeneous, departmental plans are at various stages of development. The underlying expectation is that department plans are consistent with the college's and the university's academic plan.

Resource Management: With the development of the Business Service Center under the advent of Responsibility Centered Management in fiscal year 2000, the College of Liberal Arts has increased its fiscal efficiency and effectiveness. Budgeting formulas have become clearer. Administrators have a solid understanding of revenues and debits. The dean's office has established an internal policy allowing individual departments to "rollover" any surpluses they have at the end of the fiscal year. This was done to curb end of the year spending and to encourage long-term planning especially for departments anticipate future financial needs or wish to purchase expensive equipment. Each department must provide to the dean the plans for using these reserves. While the budgetary process is clearer, some departments are constrained by the system in that they are small and thus lack the revenues generated by larger departments. This is one situation in that the size of the college is a benefit. The Dean's office is able to subsidize these few shortfalls at the college level allowing the small departments to persist, surviving cutbacks and dissolution.

The two biggest issues facing the departments in the college regarding resources include staffing and facilities. Some departments feel that they are understaffed. Others feel that the facilities are inadequate for optimizing learning.

Implementation: The implementation of unit plans is guided by a variety of sources. The college's Business Service Center provides invaluable information used to facilitate the realization of the unit plans. This information is used by chairs and the dean to actualize the plan with the dean having the ultimate decision-making power in regard to planning and subsequent resource allocation. In the College of Liberal Arts the resource allocation process is informed by two RCM-related committees one of which focuses on RCM in general while the second is centered on research activities. Some departments engage in soliciting private support and others seek grants in order to produce revenue to support their goals. The assurance of quality in the academic programs is provided through a variety of avenues some of which are specific to the department. These quality assurance mechanisms include faculty oversight, the formal program review process, external accreditation, and the promotion and tenure system.

Assessment: With other aspects of this process, assessment too is highly influenced by the structure of the college. There is not a uniform assessment process for the entire college. Assessment is managed within the individual departments. There are two representatives from the College of Liberal Arts on the campus-wide Student Outcomes Committee that does promote assessment within the college and individual departments. For some departments, assessment is largely driven by accreditation requirements. Assessments themselves are as varied as the academic departments. Some assessments are at the program level and include revenue, enrollments, and program reviews. Others are on a smaller unit of analysis including faculty reviews, course evaluations, auditions, grades, and other student-centered outcomes. It is not clear based on the responses how intentional these assessments are, or how integrated they are with each other, the unit/college plan, or resource allocation.

The structure and diversity are the primary components influencing planning, resource allocation, implementation, and assessment. While there are benefits for each of these components due to the structure of the College of Liberal Arts there are also challenges.