North Carolina State University
20 Watauga Club Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695

Response to the Visiting Committee Report
Campus Visit: March 18-20, 2014

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Prepared by:
Dr. Warwick A. Arden, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
waarden@ncsu.edu
919-515-7624

Karen Helm, Accreditation Liaison
kphelm@ncsu.edu
919-515-6648
3.3.1.1 INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves those outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: educational programs, to include student learning outcomes.

REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE’S EVALUATION

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends the university continue to mature its assessment plans for academic programs, demonstrate better overall managerial control of the process through its centralization of the process, and assure that assessment results are used to improve programs over time.

The Reaffirmation Committee noted that NC State’s decentralized assessment process "raised questions about validity, compliance to its own requirements, and accountability." The committee noted that too many programs had missed their reporting deadlines, which suggested lack of institution-level accountability. Accordingly, the committee felt the university should "demonstrate better overall control and evaluation of the institution's assessment plans as well as ensuring that assessment plans are submitted every year for undergraduate programs and biennially for graduate programs."

In addition, the on-site committee noted that some assessment reports did not provide information about the use of results for program improvement over time.

NC STATE’S RESPONSE

Informed by the Reaffirmation Committee’s observations and encouraged by its advice, NC State has taken several steps to strengthen the regulation and oversight of its academic assessment procedures. In addition, spring 2014 assessment reports submitted after the on-site visit reflect clearer instructions to describe how results have been used for program improvement.
Overall Control and Evaluation of Assessment

Until summer 2014, assessment of academic programs had been an expectation but not university policy. Over the last three decades, the undergraduate programs division (now the Division of Academic and Student Affairs, or DASA) and the Graduate School have evolved procedures and carefully nurtured regular assessment of academic programs at the department level. However, there has been no university-level mandate for assessment or effective consequences when departments failed to submit assessment reports.

In March 2014, the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor asked a task force comprised of twelve assessment officers across the university to recommend a new university regulation to govern assessment more effectively. The task force drafted the regulation, which was vetted in May and June by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, deans, associate deans for academic affairs, and executive officers.

In July 2014, the Chancellor formally established and posted the new university regulation codifying existing procedures for regular assessment of academic programs. As before, academic departments are responsible for maintaining an assessment plan that includes measureable student learning and program outcomes and appropriate evaluation methods for each degree and certificate program. Department heads are responsible for designating a qualified faculty member to coordinate implementation of that assessment plan and for preparing and posting an annual assessment report summarizing results and how they have been used for program improvement.

With this regulation, the assessment cycle for graduate programs was changed from biennial to annual. Undergraduate and graduate assessment procedures are now nearly identical.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the new regulation is the establishment of a new review and approval process for assessment reports along the entire line of academic authority, from program directors to the Provost. Department heads and deans are required to evaluate the quality of assessment reports against a standard evaluation rubric and to summarize major findings at the department or college level. College reports are integrated into a university academic assessment report to the Provost. The regulation clearly establishes assessment as an academic line function, and compliance is monitored carefully by DASA and the Graduate School. The Provost addresses lack of compliance with this regulation with the appropriate dean, as he does in relation to all university regulations.

To support the reporting and oversight process, DASA and Graduate School assessment officers developed Standard Operating Procedures for Reviewing Academic Program Assessment Reports. This SOP includes the flow chart outlining...
how department heads, deans, and DASA and Graduate School assessment officers apply the rubric to evaluate the quality of annual assessment reports prior to accepting them.

The SOP, flow chart, and rubric were reviewed with the deans and academic associate deans in August 2014; they will be reviewed with the academic department heads, undergraduate program coordinators, and graduate program directors during the fall semester.

With the collection and posting of spring 2014 assessment reports, NC State is able to provide a current assessment report for all programs, including those identified by the Reaffirmation Committee as missing (see Appendix E of the Reaffirmation Committee’s report). A repository of assessment documents – available from the navigational bar at the top of this page -- includes for each academic program the assessment plan and all assessment reports submitted since fall 2009. The undergraduate census and graduate census summarize the assessment reports submitted in the last five years and demonstrate that reports for all programs with at least five graduates have been submitted for the most recent cycle.

**Use of Results for Program Improvement over Time**

At the same time the regulation was being developed, DASA and the Graduate School made the following improvements in their respective procedures to strengthen the ongoing use of results for program improvement.

- The template for 2013-14 assessment reports includes: (1) learning outcomes, (2) data collected and findings, (3) evaluation of the results, and (4) resulting decisions. The last section calls for a discussion of how results have been used, rather than how results will be used, to improve programs. This template was deployed effective with the spring 2014 reporting cycle, as evidenced by 2014 reports included in the repository of assessment documents.

- For 2014-15, the template for assessment reports will include a new, fifth section asking program coordinators and directors to revisit improvements described in a previous report and to use the new data to determine the extent to which the outcome has improved.

- In addition to the assessment reports submitted each spring, undergraduate program coordinators now submit a regular fall update summarizing how the prior year’s assessment results have been used for program improvement.

- As required by the new regulation, the reporting cycle for graduate programs has been changed from a two-year cycle to an annual cycle to facilitate reflection and
reporting on use of results on a more continuous basis, thereby demonstrating program improvements over time.

- The rubric used by department heads, deans, and the provost to evaluate the quality of assessment reports includes a requirement that reports describe decisions and/or actions that have been taken to address an identified area for improvement (see Column 4).

**Conclusion**

At NC State, assessment processes have been evolving continuously since first implemented in the early 1990s. This year's new regulation, SOP, rubric, and procedural changes are strengthening assessment by improving oversight, accountability, and reflection on and use of results.

**References**


Census of Graduate Assessment Reports [Chart] // NC State University Graduate School.

Census of Undergraduate Assessment Reports [Chart] // NC State University Office of Assessment.

Evaluation Rubric for Outcomes Assessment Reports [Chart] // NC State Graduate School.


3.7.1 FACULTY COMPETENCE

The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and qualifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE’S EVALUATION

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution implement planned steps to improve the process of justifying and documenting faculty credentials.

When reviewing the documentation of faculty credentials, the Reaffirmation Committee noted that the university “did not have in place a process to adequately justify and document the qualifications of its faculty.”

NC State began planning for the Reaffirmation Committee’s review of faculty credentials in 2011-12. At that time, transcripts, degree verifications, and other credentials documentation were filed in various locations including academic departments, college personnel offices, and the university’s Human Resources office. The university began to assemble these materials in a single, electronic repository.

In addition, to facilitate the completion of a central credentials repository, the Provost’s Office drafted a plan ("Transcript Requirement for New Faculty Hires") that would require new faculty hired in the future to provide official academic transcripts as a condition of employment. Those transcripts would be posted in the central repository, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs would monitor compliance with this requirement.

Despite considerable effort by all departments, the repository was still missing some documents by the time of the committee’s visit, and navigating the database to locate materials proved challenging. Although by the end of the visit the Reaffirmation Committee found the credentials of individual faculty members to be appropriate,
questions remained about overall procedures for justifying and documenting faculty credentials.

Following is a summary of steps NC State has taken to implement the transcript requirements for new faculty hires and to improve the central repository of faculty credentials.

**NC STATE’S RESPONSE**

**Implementing the Transcript Requirement for New Faculty**

Consistent with the plan shared with the Reaffirmation Committee, the Provost issued on July 9, 2014, a memorandum to deans, academic department heads, and college human resources officers. This memo states that all tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty hired on or after July 1, 2014, are required to provide official transcripts for all graduate-level courses and degrees as a condition of employment. New faculty holding degrees from an institution other than an accredited US institution are to provide a transcript evaluation from a foreign credential evaluation service.

In support of these requirements, Human Resources revised offer letter templates, which are used by departments to hire new faculty members. These revisions include the new transcript requirements, as follows.

- **Professor and Department Head**
- **Tenure Track Assistant/Associate Professor**
- **Tenured Associate/Full Professor**
- **Non-Tenure Track Faculty**
- **Summer Sessions Lecturer**

These new procedures have been in place since July 2014, as evidenced by the following redacted example of an offer letter.

**Improving Procedures for Justifying and Documenting Faculty Credentials**

In addition to changing the procedures for hiring new faculty, NC State has also taken steps to complete its central repository of credentials documentation for all continuing faculty, as follows.
• The Provost approved and posted a **new regulation** that codifies university expectations for instructor qualifications and for justification, approval, and documentation of credentials.

• To accompany that regulation, the Provost posted a **new standard operating procedure** describing steps for justifying, approving, and documenting the credentials of faculty qualified by either academic degrees or by alternative credentials. This SOP includes a **template** for department head’s and dean’s signatures approving credentials for all instructors qualified by alternative credentials.

• The university has created a new central repository for faculty credentials in PeopleSoft and is moving credentials from its current home in Digital Measures into this more user-friendly and secure location. Once this process has been completed, the Provost’s Office will fill any gaps in documentation, as described in the SOP.

**Conclusion**

NC State has implemented the planned steps described by the Reaffirmation Committee. Effective July 1, 2014, all new faculty hires must provide an official transcript as a condition of employment, and hiring procedures have been changed accordingly. In addition, the university has adopted a new regulation codifying instructor qualifications and new Standard Operating Procedures outlining steps for justifying, approving, and documenting credentials. Efforts to complete the central repository of credentials for all faculty – new and continuing – are in progress.

**References**

**Alternative Credentials for Instructors_Justification and Approval Template** [Online] // NC State Office of the Provost Website.


**EPA Offer Letter – Professor and Department Head** [Online] // NC State Human Resources Website.

**EPA Offer Letter – Tenure Track Assistant/Associate Professor** [Online] // NC State Human Resources Website.

**EPA Offer Letter – Tenured Associate/Full Professor** [Online] // NC State Human Resources Website.
EPA Offer Letter – Non-Tenure Track Faculty [Online] // NC State Human Resources Website.


Offer and Acceptance of Faculty Employment as Assistant Professor [Letter] // NC State College of Veterinary Medicine, July 9, 2014.


