WSU Five-Year Program Review

Telecommunications Administration Major
Evaluation Team Report
March 2, 2012

Overview/introductory Statement

Weber State University's Telecommunications and Business Education Department performed a self-study on the Telecommunications Administration Major. The Department requested a Program Review Committee be formed to perform an external assessment of the program and self-study findings. The department documented within the study detailed program elements and standards. A five member team external to the department was asked to provide an assessment of the program identifying strengths, challenges, areas where the program did not meet set standards and recommendations for change. The team performed interviews with David Ferro, Dean of College of Applied Science and Technology, Alden Talbot, TBE Department Chair, Faculty Diana Green and Ken Cuddeback. Also interviewed were five students who are either currently enrolled or are graduates of the program.

1) Program strengths (please reference Standard where appropriate)
   - Students are amazed at how well the program is running even though there is a lack of resources
   - Faculty are very responsive to student needs.
   - Faculty working with industry to help fill jobs. Employment placement rate post graduation high.
   - Good equipment (rotate older equipment to other departments). Although some equipment may be dated or end of life, manufactures selected for hands on are industry leaders and provide students opportunity to work with manufactures equipment they will see in future employment.
   - Good advisement. When students seek advisement Faculty provides clear and most effective course path to complete the students' objectives.
   - Using great technology (packet tracer)
   - Chair is very supportive and does a great job scheduling the resources available to the department.
   - Department has good collegiality and support for each other. Each member of the Department interviewed has strong personal commitment to ensuring the program's success.
   - Exceptional administrative staff support
   - Good morale in department since collegial
   - FBLA support and achievements
   - Continue to work collaboratively with Computer Science Department
   - Curriculum is mapped well to industry. Strong Adjunct instructors and curriculum advisement committee provide valuable input into curriculum refreshes.

- Works well with IAC
- Requires masters degree for adjuncts
- Recent department name change seen as a significant event. Network Technology and Business Multimedia (NTM) name provides instant name recognition clarity for students looking to select a major and degree.
- Evidence of learning student assessments documents positive input from employers regarding students preparedness for employment

2) Program challenges (please reference Standard where appropriate)
- Not enough hands on for students. Enough to complete projects but not enough for some network principals to be "learned".
- Some employer internships don't have clear directions, need to set expectations for students (also need mentors)
- Even though most of the advisement is good, some students slipping through the cracks and not get required advisement
- Main campus doesn't have physical equipment for hands on and no place to put it
- A faculty member can be somewhat biased in speaking about international students
- Faculty do not have time to keep current on certificates
- Department feels like the Provost provides limited support and don't feel like they really have longevity or a home
- No long term vision or future plan
- No time to work on outreach to market in the High Schools
- Too many adjuncts
- Not a sustainable model with current staffing and physical resources.
- Lack of faculty – 1.5 deep faculty for core courses, advisement and internships
- Not enough resources like faculty and classrooms
- Due to rapidly changing industry technologies and standards the Programs curriculum must be adapted quicker than other programs within the University. This industry pace of change also creates challenges for Faculty to keep current on industry trends and standards, particularly with their current workload of instruction and advisement.
- Since the degree is somewhat unique it is hard to communicate to employers the ability's and knowledge graduates have. Department name change will help in providing clarity for students.
- Confusion with IS&T major
- Faculty work load limits their ability to perform program enhancing functions such as grant submissions, program marketing activities.
- If both the department name change and increased program marketing activities are successful in recruiting, there is a potential threat to the programs integrity due to limited resources, Faculty and physical resources.

3) Areas where the program did not meet the Standards and why
   - Faculty to student ratio is extremely high

4) Recommendations for change – suggested changes for meeting Standards
   - Hire immediately! If you can't hire then consider other measures such as sharing resources
   - After hiring a faculty member, hire department advisor that will also market program

5) Additional recommendations and comments from the review team
   - Get equipment donations from IAC
   - Increase lab fees to keep networking labs current and under maintenance support
   - Do NOT buy equipment with own funds
   - Hire student lab aides
   - Create a department vision that expands beyond current BS degree. Set long term vision for Master's degree.
   - Need better communication (and honest) from Provost's office
   - Continue to research and pursue ABET accreditation
   - Encourage Dean to learn program so he can become an advocate for the program
   - Work with WSU IT to create Intern jobs
   - Add a student and a faculty member of CS department on IAC
   - Indentify ways to market the Cisco courses in regards to preparing students for Cisco certification (CCNA)