

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I presents a brief synopsis of the self-study process including its purpose, how it was conducted and how the data were analyzed. Numerous staff were involved in collecting the data and significant effort was given to its interpretation.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this report is to provide the North Central visiting team with information addressed to four criteria.

1. What the mission of the college is
2. Whether the college has the resources and organization to accomplish its stated purposes
3. Whether the college is, in fact, accomplishing its stated purposes
4. Whether the college can continue to accomplish its purposes.

The secondary purpose is to engage in self-examination, review and planning to serve as a basis for future development.

Conduct of the Self-Study

The initial work to organize for the self-study began in January of 1982. The co-chairmen for the steering committee -- Mr. Walter Zaida, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Dr. Robert Burke, Chairman of the English/Foreign Language Department -- were selected by the Academic Council. The Academic Council is a group composed of the president, senior administrators and department chairmen.

The Academic Council members provided assistance in the formation of a committee structure for the self-study. The co-chairmen drafted a committee preference form to solicit volunteers among college employees. [See Appendix 1.1.] The response was impressive in that a large number of staff affirmatively responded. Practically every group of college personnel participated in the self-study. Various members of the faculty and staff recommended students to participate in the self study. The co-chairmen appointed volunteer respondents to committees and positions according to their stated priorities whenever possible. [See Appendix 1.2 for members.]

The steering committee was charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Developing a design for the self-study
2. Recommending a refined committee structure
3. Supervising and coordinating the review and writing instructions
4. Planning and executing visitation arrangements.

Following the initial meeting of the steering committee, it held meetings, with few exceptions, every other week. The committee addressed the design of the major survey instruments - surveys 1 through 4 on the succeeding pages.

Two guiding criteria were used in preparing survey items: 1) the committee wanted to include items that could be used to gauge progress from the time of the last evaluation report in 1977, and 2) it wanted to include items related to recent developments.

The committee spent a considerable amount of time conducting a face test for validity. A pilot test was conducted in the latter part of February of 1983, and the major questionnaires were ready for circulation in the middle of March of 1983.

The total college employee population was used as the sample for faculty/administration and staff surveys. The student sample was randomly selected. The return rates for the various groups are as follows: 1) full-time faculty, 46 percent; 2) part-time faculty, 33 percent; 3) administrators, 77 percent; 4) general staff, 46 percent; and 5) students, 55 percent.

Otherwise, surveys were developed among the various committees using the following procedure:

1. Designing instruments that would elicit information appropriate to their area of self-study
2. Submitting the surveys to steering committee liaison members who brought them to the steering committee where they were:
 - a. Edited
 - b. Checked for suitability of computer programming
 - c. Checked for duplication within other surveys already proposed.

Eight surveys were conducted. [See Appendices 1.3 - 1.10.] Four of these surveys were conducted by the steering committee with two of the research committees conducting the other four. These surveys were

1. NCA Self-Study Survey for Faculty/Administration
2. NCA Self-Study General Staff Survey
3. NCA Student Opinion Poll
4. NCA Self-Study Survey of Advisor Satisfaction
5. Faculty/Administration Opinion Survey of Physical Facilities

6. Staff Opinion Survey of Physical Facilities
7. Student Opinion Survey of Physical Facilities
8. Questionnaire for NCA Self-Study - Finance Committee

In addition to these surveys, the self-study is based on information obtained from other data sources: follow-up studies, college publications, faculty and student handbooks, Learning Resource Center reports, budgets, etc.

Analysis of Data

The steering committee used The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the survey data. The SPSS proved to have many features which generated not only quantifiable information but also statistical measures used for qualitative analyses. (Norman H. Nie, et al. "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences", 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.)

Basically, two conventions within the program were used: Frequencies and Crosstabs. Each offers a variety of statistics useful in the analysis of data and a series of options useful in generating appropriate printout formats. The latter convention -- i.e., Crosstabs -- provides for a crosstabulation of variables and generates, among other statistics, a chi-square value with a level of significance. Where cell power allowed, the latter statistic was often used. [See individual printouts in Exhibits 1.1 -- 1.8 for examples of formats and statistics.]

The SPSS program enabled the committees to ferret out variables which deserved special focus and to create new variables by collapsing responses to a given variable and running it against others. Not only was the program valuable in providing committees with an immediate store of information and in enabling them to generate crosstabular data to elucidate and supplement initial findings, but it may also prove to be valuable as an integral part of a model to be used for future monitoring of institutional progress and planning.