FAQs for the Planning Process at Cerritos College

Q: What is the “Guide to Planning and Resource Allocation?”
A: The “Guide to Planning and Resource Allocation” represents a college-wide effort to unify the program review, planning, and resource allocation process as well as to develop and document a transparent, uniform practice of planning, resource allocation, goal implementation, and self-evaluation. It was reviewed, discussed, and/or adopted by the Faculty Senate, Planning and Budget Committee, and Management Leadership Council in Spring 2007. Please visit the research website (http://www.cerrtitos.edu/research) for more information on the guide.

Q: What is difference between planning and program review?
A: Program review is a comprehensive evaluation of a unit and it is conducted at least once every six years. In contrast, planning is a process in which a unit identifies and documents the unit’s mission, directions, goals, activities, and resource needs and it is conducted annually. In short, program review focuses on data collection and assessment, whereas planning focuses on goal development, implementation, and achievement.

Q: What kinds of institutional data are available from the Office of Research and Planning?
A: The Office of Research and Planning at Cerritos College provides selected institutional data regarding students and staffs on an annual and ad hoc basis. The institutional data can be found by following these steps: (1) Go to http://www.cerrtitos.edu/research, (2) Click on the “Planning Resources” tab on the navigation bar, (3) Click on the respective links to data. Note that data are limited to FTES (Full-Time Equivalent Students), WSCH (Weekly Student Contact Hours), FTIE (Full-Time Instructor Equivalent), course fill rates, course sections, programs awards, success rates, and retention rates. Most of them are quantitative-oriented cross-sectional and/or longitudinal data and can be widely used for planning process at the college. Note that the data are historical, and may not be current. More updated institutional data may be available from instructional division managers.

Q: What kinds of more updated institutional data are available from instructional division managers?
A: Instructional division managers may provide more updated institutional data regarding FTES, FTIE, WSCH, and grade distribution. However, the data available from division managers may vary depending on divisions, so please communicate with your division managers for more information on the data.

Q: How can a unit (i.e., program, department, or office) identify whether the unit’s goals are incorporated or prioritized by the next planning level (i.e., division plan)?
A: A unit may identify which goals of the unit were incorporated and prioritized by the division plan by seeing the Section 10 of the Annual Division Plan (Mapping of Unit Level Goals to the Division Level Plan). In the section, division managers describe which goals of your unit are incorporated into the Annual Division Plan and which are not. Division managers are responsible for communicating the Annual Division Plan to members of the division including unit mangers.
Thus, after division managers have completed the division plan, they are instructed to give a copy of the plan to unit managers in their division.

**Q: If a department consists of two or more disciplines, should the department submit a unit plan or multiple unit plans?**

**A:** If you feel that your department needs more than one unit plan or your department is not represented in the planning chart at Cerritos College (see page 10 to 11 of the *Handbook for the Planning Process at Cerritos College*), you should discuss it with your division manager. Generally speaking, division managers identify the units in their divisions, and based on the information the planning chart was created. Please note that the planning chart is only for the purpose of planning and is a living document, which means that the chart may be continually updated.

**Q: If a unit does not have or report to a division for the purpose of planning, where does the unit submit an annual unit plan?**

**A:** In this case, a unit should submit an annual unit plan directly to their area manager, complying with the same deadline as planning at the division level, where a division manager submits an Annual Division Plan to the area manager. That is, for this year, a unit which does not have a division for the purpose of planning should submit an annual unit plan for the 2008-2009 academic year to their area manager no later than December 14, 2007.

**Q: How should we complete Section 2 of the Annual Unit Plan (Unit’s Plan for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes)?**

**A:** Section 2 of the Annual Unit Plan was developed by SLO coordinators Dr. Jan Connal (x2143) and Dr. Frank Mixson (x2820). Thus, we highly recommend that you contact them if you have any questions or concerns regarding the SLO planning process. The purpose of Section 2 is not to develop actual SLOs for your unit, but to indicate your unit’s plan for developing and assessing SLOs. Thus, in this section, you should indicate where your unit is in the SLO planning process and what your plan is to proceed to the next stages of the process.

**Q: What is the difference between “Strengths and Weaknesses” (Section 4 of the Annual Unit Plan) and “Opportunities and Challenges” (Section 5 of the Annual Unit Plan)?**

**A:** The main difference between “Strengths and Weaknesses” and “Opportunities and Challenges” is whether the factors are a unit’s internal (inside the unit) or external (outside the unit) issues. Strengths are internal issues that make a unit stronger or unique, whereas weaknesses are internal issues that affect the unit’s performance negatively or inhibit its performance. In contrast, opportunities are external factors that provide an opportunity to further a unit’s goals, while challenges are external factors that threaten the unit negatively and prevent the unit from achieving its goals. The external factors may be institutional (i.e., of the college), environmental (i.e., of the community or economy), or related to your field or discipline. For examples on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, please see the presentation (“The Annual Unit Plan: A Tool to Link Program Review, Planning, and Resource Allocation”) that is on “Planning Resources” page of the Research and Planning website.

**Q: What is the difference and relationship among a unit’s strategic directions, goals, and activities?**
A: Strategic directions are general and broad, whereas goals and activities are definite or specific. Strategic directions are general statements that describe where a unit wants to go or desired aspiration of the units. In other words, strategic directions are your vision for where you want the unit to go. Goals are statements of what the unit wants to accomplish for its improvement, and activities are specific steps or tasks to reach the goals. Theoretically, a unit’s goals are generated from the unit’s strategic directions, and the unit’s activities are generated from the unit’s goals.

Q: Why does the Annual Unit Plan separate the Section 9 (Unit’s Resource Needs) from the Section 8 (Unit’s Goals and Activities) rather than integrating two sections?
A: The main reason that Section 8 and 9 are disaggregated is that each section of the Annual Unit Plan was developed to include a single concept (e.g., unit’s mission, strategic directions, or planning impact) or two concepts that relate to one another (e.g., characteristics and trends, strengths and weaknesses, or opportunities and challenges) to improve its flow and clarity. Thus, a concept—unit’s resource needs—was separated from the other two concepts that relate to each other—unit’s goals and activities. Moreover, the unit’s resource needs section is optional, whereas the unit’s goals and activities is not. If existing resources of a unit are enough to implement the goals and activities presented in the Section 8, the unit does not need to complete the Section 9.