St. Lawrence University
Institutional Self-Study
Recommendations
2007-2008
Chapter 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal, and Institutional Resources

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the communication of financial information be maintained and access be streamlined by making data easily and routinely available. This might be achieved by putting it on the Web in a user-friendly format.

2. We recommend that periodic reports of relevant information be routinely shared with specific committees and that an annual report of the financial status of the University be presented at a faculty meeting at the beginning each year. We also recommend that a venue for similar communication to all non-faculty employees be identified.

3. The capital and operating budget process includes the necessary constituents, but the process and plans do not often enough move outside the circles of those directly involved in the planning. We recommend that the budgeting (operating and capital) process be communicated to the larger campus community.

4. The projects identified by the 1997 Facilities Master Plan have been substantially completed and it is time now to initiate a process that will incorporate the Integrated Facilities Plan done in administrative operations into larger strategic facilities planning.
Chapter 3: Leadership, Governance and Administration

Recommendations

1. Formal and informal channels of communication between the Board of Trustees and faculty, staff and students have enhanced the decision-making processes of the University. The University ensures transparency and accountability when all of the constituencies involved in governance and administration are aware of what each other consider to be the important and achievable goals of the institution. These practices should be continued.

2. Communication within the Faculty Governance system needs to be reexamined. The traditional methods used by Faculty Council to communicate with the faculty, such as the Faculty Council minutes, do not seem to be achieving their goals. We recommend continued attention to this issue by Faculty Council.

3. We recommend ongoing assessment of how well the changes in the faculty and University committee system described in this chapter work to reduce faculty time devoted to committee work and improve faculty and student engagement with strategic issues and assessment.

4. The Faculty Handbook requires further revision. We recommend that the academic dean make this a continuing priority. Potentially a summer task force should critically read the handbook and suggest changes that would correct and strengthen the document for Faculty Council review, or full faculty review as necessary.

5. As the designated convener of the Administrative Life Council, we recommend that the associate vice president for human resources, working in conjunction with the president and key staff leaders, investigate ways to reactivate and re-envision the charge of the ALC to best serve the needs of full-time and part-time exempt administrative employees and non-union hourly employees.
Chapter 4: Integrity

Recommendations

1. Recommend that Human Resources continue to find ways to mentor and communicate employee expectations at start of employment and throughout an individual’s employment as his or her job duties and responsibilities change and/or accrue. Ongoing training sessions, especially for staff promoted to managerial positions, is essential.

2. Recommend that Human Resources examine the regularity and consistency with which supervisors conduct 360 degree reviews of exempt staff to assess their effectiveness as a mechanism for performance evaluation.

3. Recommend that Human Resources find alternative ways to communicate campus-wide program, policy and personnel changes in light of hourly staff’s potentially limited access to electronic media. For example, consider inserting weekly or monthly updates in employees’ pay stub mailings.

4. Recommend that Human Resources provide and update a policy guidebook for administrative and hourly staff that parallels the process and information annually provided to faculty and students.
Chapter 5: Faculty

Recommendations

Allocation Process

1. We suggest that, in the interest of protecting the integrity and consistency of the process by which the deliberations of the staffing committee yield the allocation of faculty positions for the entire curriculum, the personnel distribution and the charge of the Faculty Staffing Committee should be described in the Faculty Handbook along with all other standing committees.

2. Additionally, in the interest of open disclosure and maintaining transparency of process, we believe that a formal report of the process results should be disseminated yearly to the University faculty or that the process itself should be made open to faculty attendance (as, for example, the deliberations of Faculty Council may be attended by faculty members during all but closed sessions).

3. We also urge more transparency and public dissemination of the institutional curricular goals and planning process in the Academic Affairs division.

Faculty Workload

4. While we recognize the interrelated and complex factors involved in examining the move to a 3/2 course load, from classroom space to curricular needs to position allocation to the effects of larger class size on admissions, we urge the new dean of academic affairs, in collaboration with Faculty Council, to explore possible options for moving toward a 3/2 course load.
Mentoring

5. We recommend establishing a set of procedures that will articulate and regularize the responsibilities of department chairpersons and program coordinators in mentoring pre-tenure faculty. Specifically, we recommend that chairs be required to meet individually with pre-tenure faculty on at least two occasions during an academic year: once a semester to review the past semester’s teaching evaluations for the junior faculty member; and once a year to discuss the Annual Report.

6. To facilitate this standardized mentoring, we recommend that detailed training in mentoring be made a part of each new department chairperson’s and program coordinator’s orientation, in conjunction with input from the Professional Standards Committee and from the Caucus of Faculty and Staff of Color.

Support for Underrepresented Faculty

7. We encourage the office of the associate dean for faculty affairs to continue working with search committees in efforts to attract faculty of color; to provide department chairs with an explicit structure of mentoring for Campbell Fellows; and to offer an ongoing program of mentoring for full- and part-time faculty of color.

8. We also encourage the Center for Teaching and Learning to work with the caucus on creating a mentoring program for newly appointed faculty of color and to bring consultants to campus to deliver workshops and seminars for faculty of color, as suggested by the dean in his response to the 2003 Diversity Task Force recommendations.
Chapter 6: Student Admissions and Retention, and Student Support Services

Recommendations

1. Formalize a line of communication between Admissions and academic departments/programs so that Admissions is aware of changes to the curriculum.

2. Formalize a similar line of communication between Admissions and Student Life so that changes in opportunities there are communicated to Admissions.

3. Make more apparent to the campus community the reports and assessment outcomes of student support programs such as HEOP, PDS, CSTEP and McNair.

4. Institute a support system for non-program-identified students of color, ideally through the new Center for Diversity and Social Justice.

5. Create faculty development workshops focused on academic advising for students of color.

6. Convene the relevant offices to coordinate one consistent list of special needs students.

7. Encourage the Office of Academic Services for Students with Special Needs to develop a way of measuring the number and nature of contacts students have with their office.

8. Conduct a detailed longitudinal study of the effectiveness of OASSSN on the academic performance of students who work with them.

9. Continue the current discussions about finding a permanent place for students to have late-night music and dancing, and find ways to empower students to control that space in responsible ways.
Chapter 7: General Curriculum

Recommendations

1. We recommend the director of institutional research and the special assistant to the president for assessment produce a report based on a complete analysis of the spring 2007 Survey on Mission data. This report should be shared with the academic and student life divisions.

2. We recommend the dean of academic affairs initiate a process for the reconsideration of our curricular objectives and distribution requirements by the full faculty.

3. The results of the SYE assessment report about the impact of the SYE on the University budget, curriculum, student learning and faculty time should be broadly discussed by faculty groups this spring semester.

4. Faculty Council should be asked in conjunction with the dean of academic affairs to consider whether the Academic Affairs committee may be an appropriate venue to engage with larger questions of curricular innovation, pilot projects and grant funding.

5. Encourage the dean of academic affairs to identify individuals and groups of faculty who are working on significant grants, especially those with potential for broad curricular impact and development, and to report on and discuss new or continuing initiatives once each semester.
Chapter 8: Assessment at St. Lawrence: Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning

Recommendations for Institutional Effectiveness

1. The University has no process established yet to assess the “assessment process” in itself – specifically, provide a means for identifying what is currently not - but should be - assessed. We recommend that the institutional assessment plan articulate a review process of the individual assessment plans that are being established.

2. We recommend that when communicating major decisions (either made or pending), the president or members of his senior staff or the Institutional Strategy and Assessment Committee should also explain the specific assessments that led to the decisions.

3. All divisions of the University need to communicate on a more frequent basis (and possibly through a central Web site) their strategic plans to the broader campus community. Several venues for articulating the strategic direction of the University no longer exist, including the speeches of the president and the vice president of the University and dean of academic affairs at the opening faculty-staff meeting each year. We recommend that the president issue an annual report to the faculty and staff and the dean revive the annual report to the faculty. Other such overarching reports to the community at large would be very helpful in achieving the goals of greater transparency and dissemination of information regarding strategic planning and assessment, which, in turn, would better inform both processes.

Recommendations for the Assessment of Student Learning

1. While the Institutional Research Web site contains extensive institutional data, it should be expanded to include as much aggregate data as possible for use by campus departments. In addition, venues for faculty and staff discussion of institutional data on student learning outcomes may facilitate our expanding assessment efforts.
Overall Recommendations for Assessment at St. Lawrence University

We acknowledge that the scope of the institutional and learning outcomes assessment work at St. Lawrence requires the regular planning and ongoing organization that extends beyond the current and reasonable charges of any single committee and/or committee chair. Furthermore, the implementation strategies and necessary feedback mechanism will require a degree of expertise that is not easily or quickly developed by rotating committee chairs. Continued leadership for assessment at the University level is warranted and the following three recommendations address this necessity:

• The special assistant to the president for assessment is currently only a temporary appointment through spring 2009. We recommend the creation of an ongoing appointment in a leadership position for this work. Ideally, we envision a reporting line to the president and liaison relationships to senior staff members. The title of this position still needs to be determined but it is strongly recommended that the person who fills the position should come from within the ranks of the current St. Lawrence faculty. Suggested responsibilities for this position are detailed in the institutional assessment plan.

• The University Assessment Committee should become a permanent University committee. We further recommend that the assessment leader co-chair the committee with a faculty member selected by Faculty Council. Additional details regarding recommendations for the committee charge and membership are outlined in the institutional assessment plan. At a minimum, the University Assessment Committee’s charge should be developed in such a way that it continues to serve as a resource to the evolving assessment leadership position, the director of institutional research, and senior staff regarding the selection of data, benchmarks, survey
summaries and other reports and the means by which they will be made available to the broader campus community.

- The University should turn its attention to addressing the potential costs of conducting ongoing assessment by exploring options such as summer stipends, departmental assessment grants and continuing operating budget lines devoted specifically to assessment.