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Strategies for Writing a Self-Study and Conducting a Site Review

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TITLE

Strategies for Writing a Self-Study and Conducting a Site Review

PRESENTATION

This presentation will include a discussion of the principle components of a self-study, as well as sample methods for controlling the narrative created within each section. We will provide some specific examples of reviews written in English and Fine & Performing Arts, and the various intricacies of each of those. The specific self-study structure we developed is especially beneficial for small university campuses that may need to justify programs or budgetary expenditures.

The English Department self-study included detailed descriptions of multiple programs within the department: the writing program, general education courses, the undergraduate degree program with three concentrations, and the graduate program. English offers both traditional seated courses and online courses, including an online degree completion in technical and professional writing and an online graduate certificate in composition studies.

In order to provide a holistic view of our program, the Fine Arts self-study included detailed descriptions of course fee assessments, facilities, and visual examples of student work. The program recently developed studio courses for online delivery. The idea of delivering a visual arts studio course online is often met with skepticism from those not familiar with quality learning management systems and online art applications. In order to assess the effectiveness of this delivery method, reviewers requested examples of student artwork in online vs. face to face studio courses. Unlike other disciplines which use standard classrooms and computer labs, the Fine Arts program self-study required detailed descriptions of classroom and storage facilities including equipment, square footage, and health and safety practices. In addition, site reviewers requested a facilities tour of the art studios and galleries during the site visit. This created a much better understanding of the unique challenges and assets of the physical learning environment.

Chairs who are preparing to write a department self-study in the near future will benefit from learning about our experiences and the challenges we faced, along with seeing the format and template we used. We will make recommendations of ways to streamline the process of writing department self-studies by sharing sections of our reports that are common across departments, such as learning resources, technology, and support staff. In addition, we will discuss why it is important to start early (allow at least three months depending on the size of your program) and involve the department in the process by soliciting documents and input as you draft. We will also engage the audience by inviting sharing with regard to how other institutions complete self-studies and by responding to questions.