Abstract — The Faculty Course Assessment Report (FCAR) is a work in progress that presents a methodology that allows assessment reports to be written in a format conducive for use in ABET Criterion 3 program outcomes assessment. In addition to traditional assessment reporting, the FCAR lists modifications incorporated into the course, reflection on the part of the instructor as to what was effective, and suggestions for further improvements. To assist in program outcomes assessment, additional information is collected in certain specified areas. This facilitates program-level assessment in that, instead of processing raw data, assessors review the pertinent sections of an appropriate set of FCARs, thereby reducing the assessment workload. Reports are collected and disseminated to allow instructors to inspect prior offerings of specific courses and adopt the suggestions presented in the report, thereby improving the course with each offering. This methodology has been found to be effective as part of our assessment reporting process.

Index Terms — ABET Criterion 3, course and program outcomes assessment, documentation of changes.

Work in Progress

ABET Criterion 3 is concerned with program outcomes and assessment. For each outcome, the institution must provide evidence that there is an implemented process to achieve the desired outcome, that there are metrics in place to assess the outcome, and that the results from these metrics have been analyzed and applied to the further development and continuous improvement of the program. Additionally, among the minimum expectations of Criterion 3 is the documentation of the changes that have been implemented to further develop and improve the program, and the providing of the qualitative and quantitative data used to support these changes. The Faculty Course Assessment Report (FCAR) was created to provide one method of dealing with these expectations. The FCAR is based on the philosophy that the person closest to the source should be the one who gathers raw data and processes it into useful information. This is a role already filled by an instructor when performing course assessment. By providing structure to the process and requiring a slight amount of additional effort and documentation, an ordinary course assessment report can be transformed into a document suitable for use in program outcomes assessment. In this way we have developed a methodology where, with one report, we are able to document how assessment results are used to effect change at the course level, show both qualitative and quantitative assessment data from various sources, summarize this data into useful information for program outcomes assessment, and provide suggestions for future improvements to both course and curriculum.

The FCAR is structured into eight sections: catalog description, grade distribution, course modifications, course outcomes assessment, program outcomes components, student feedback, instructor reflection, and proposed actions for course improvement. The course modifications section provides documentation of each improvement made and references the source from which the recommendation for that improvement was received, which helps to demonstrate how the program “closed the loop” for a particular modification. The program outcomes components section roughly correspond to the individual items listed in the ABET 3(a)-(k) program outcomes, and presents information as to how these outcomes were met. The person performing program outcomes assessment in this area can now document where a particular ability, knowledge, recognition, or understanding is taking place by citing the FCARs of the relevant courses. Student feedback is incorporated to allow an instructor to publically document and share constructive comments from student evaluations concerning the course. The reflection section promotes self-awareness on the part of the instructor, and is beneficial for both the improvement of the course and of the instructional methods used. The specification of proposed actions for course improvement begins the “closing the loop” process, as these items constitute the result of the instructor's evaluation of the course. Whatever suggestions are recorded by the instructor, it is essential that these suggestions are reviewed by the appropriate parties in the department; to that end, one needs to incorporate the FCAR review into the overall assessment process as a regularly scheduled activity.

The Faculty Course Assessment Report, although used only for the last two years at our institution, has shown itself to be an effective documentation tool for the purposes of both course and program outcomes assessment. It has assisted in the gathering and processing of much of the data required for outcomes assessment into a manageable set of information, and allowed for instructors to reflect upon their classroom performance. Our work is now focused on refining the methodology so that the development of the reports, and their use in program outcomes assessment, can be performed in as efficient of a manner as possible.

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0-7803-7961-6/03/$17.00 © 2003 IEEE

November 5-8, 2003, Boulder, CO

33rd ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference

T4B-8