SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE PROGRAM REVIEW:

An Equity Analysis of the Instructional Program Review Template

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INTRODUCTION

The text on the opening page of the San Diego Mesa College's website reads, **"We are Mesa…the leading college of equity and excellence."** This shows that equity is an espoused value at Mesa and its placement is symbolic of the high priority attached to achieving it. This report, which is focused on how equity is included in Mesa College's instructional program review template, sought to understand if the level of commitment to equity that is presented above is also conveyed within program review.

The purpose of this analysis was to provide an external review and list of recommendations for embedding equity in the instructional program review template. For the purpose of this report, I will use the term "template" to refer to the comprehensive 2018/2019 instructional program review and the forms that are embedded within the template. The review started with an initial list of questions to guide the analysis, including:

1. How is equity embedded in the program review template? How is equity defined? How is racial equity included?

2. How is equity as a priority or the importance of equity conveyed in the questions asked?

3. What are the strengths of the template and areas in need of improvement from an equity perspective?

To conduct an equity analysis of Mesa College's instructional program review template I began by learning about the program review process at Mesa and reading through pertinent documents available on the Mesa College program review website. The instructional program review template was selected to focus the work because of the sheer number of instructional programs utilizing the template. I was also provided access to TaskStream to learn more about what faculty experience when they open and view their program review template.

To identify the strengths of the template and the areas in need of improvement I paid specific attention to how equity is addressed in the program review template. To assess the template from an equity perspective I focused on understanding how equity was included or excluded. For example, does the college require that programs assess progress in outcomes for minoritized students? Does the review template prompt programs to analyze data by race? In what context is equity mentioned, if at all? How does the process facilitate a program review that provides a space for practitioners to assess how well they are serving minoritized students inside and outside of the classroom?

I reviewed the comprehensive 2018/2019 program review for instructional programs via Taskstream. This considered the categories listed on the left side of the website as well as all the directional prompts listed within each category. Then, I reviewed the documents listed below, making notes in the margins. Each document was reviewed for use of equity language via an Equity Word Search (see Appendix A). The purpose of the word search is to better understand the types of equity language used, the frequency, and the context.

- Program Overview
- Program Analysis
- Outcomes & Assessment
- Curriculum
- CTE Project Plan
- Closing the Loop

- Liaison's Review/Manager's Review

After conducting an initial analysis, I read through the notes to identify strengths as well as areas in need of improvement. It is important to note that my analysis is not a comprehensive analysis of Mesa College's entire program review process but rather a specifc focus on the forms listed above.

FINDINGS

This section is organized into two parts. First, the strengths of the program review template are identified. Then, the majority of text is focused on areas in need of improvement. Recommendations are provided and organized by form type.

Strengths:

From an external perspective, the template has multiple strengths. The template is located on TaskStream, which after logging in is user-friendly. All of the required categories are organized along a left side bar. The template is to be completed on a computer and can be saved and resumed at a later point. Additionally, all the information that faculty members would need to complete the process can be found once the faculty member logs into TaskSteam. When outside information is necessary, the college provides links to access that information. Having all the information in one place makes completing the process an easier task.

Mesa College also has created data dashboards for faculty to use to complete the template. These dashboards are easy to navigate and provide a plethora of information to review programs. Faculty are also prompted to reach out to institutional researchers if there is data that they wish to examine that is not provided on the dashboards.

Another identified strength of the process itself are both the Liaison's Review and the Manager's Review forms. This portion of the program review process provides a point of feedback for faculty and likely increases the quality of the submitted program reviews.

Areas in Need of Improvement & Recommendations

After reviewing the template, three themes were identified as areas in need of improvement. Each theme is discussed below with examples. Specific recommendations are provided in Table 1 per document reviewed.

Race Neutral and Largely Equity Neutral

One of the primary findings of this analysis is that the program review template is race neutral and largely equity neutral. The terms "race" or "ethnicity" or other marginalized student groups are not mentioned across any of the documents and when equity is mentioned, it is not defined nor are faculty directed to look at any specific marginalized groups for students or faculty. This section highlights areas where Mesa College should be more intentional about equity, specifically racial equity, in their program review template.

After logging into Taskstream and clicking on the instructional comprehensive program review 2018/2019, faculty members are directed to the main page to write and complete the program review. Along the left side of the page are several categories that have to be fulfilled and specific categories are mandatory noted by the word "(REQUIRED)." We have found at CUE that language is very powerful

and that including the term equity on this opening page can demonstrate to faculty members that equity is a value and priority at the college. Currently, on the homepage for faculty program review, the term "equity" is not displayed at all. The term "equity" is not mentioned until a faculty member clicks on "program analysis" and begins to read the directions for filling out the form. The directions state,

> San Diego Mesa College is committed to becoming the leading college of equity and excellence. This commitment highlights two of the colleges' core values. In order to reach this overarching goal, we must continuously examine our performance in relation to our own standards and aspirational goals.

It is clear from these directions that within the "program analysis" section, faculty should be focusing on these two indicators of "equity" and "excellence." CUE recommends amending the homepage of the comprehensive program review 2018/2019 that says "program analysis" to "program analysis for equity & excellence." This would allow equity to be placed on the first page of the instructional template and also provide additional focus on equity before a faculty member even clicks on the section (see Figure 1 as an example).
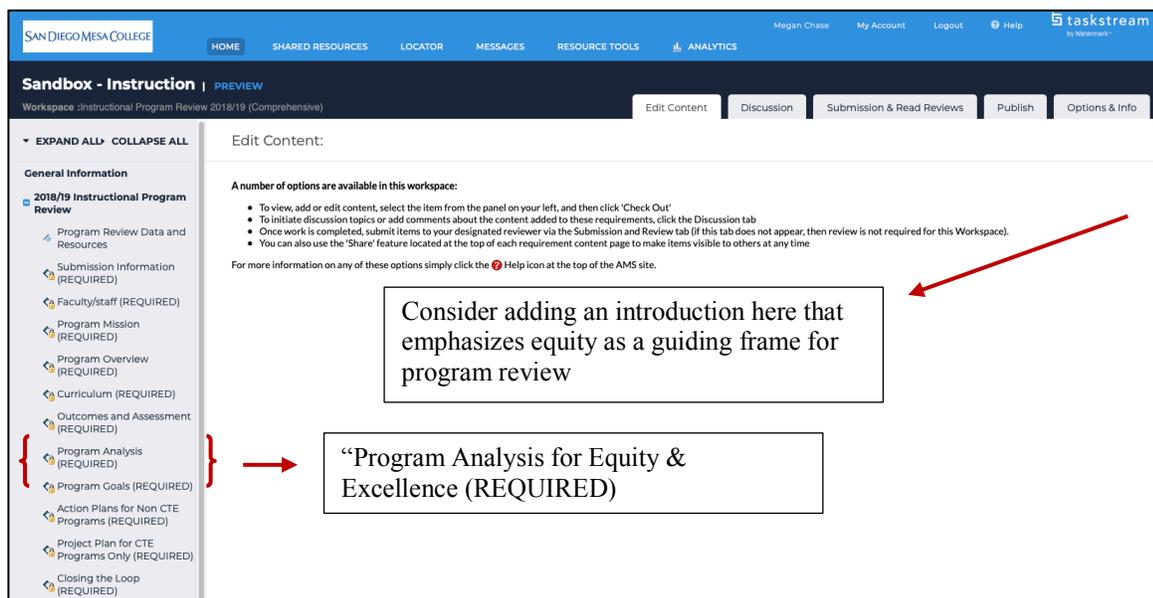

Figure 1. Mesa College instructional program review comprehensive review, 2018/2019.

Additionally, equity in faculty composition is critical to achieving equity and excellence. However, under the "Faculty/staff (REQUIRED)" category there is no requirement for faculty to assess their faculty composition by race and ethnicity. In the directions portion of this section, faculty are asked to enter several items of information regarding faculty data (see Figure 2). Faculty should also report on their faculty composition by race compared to their student population by race. The goal of adding this bullet to the list would be to bring about an awareness to racial composition within their program. CUE also recommends having faculty examine each bullet within this section by race.
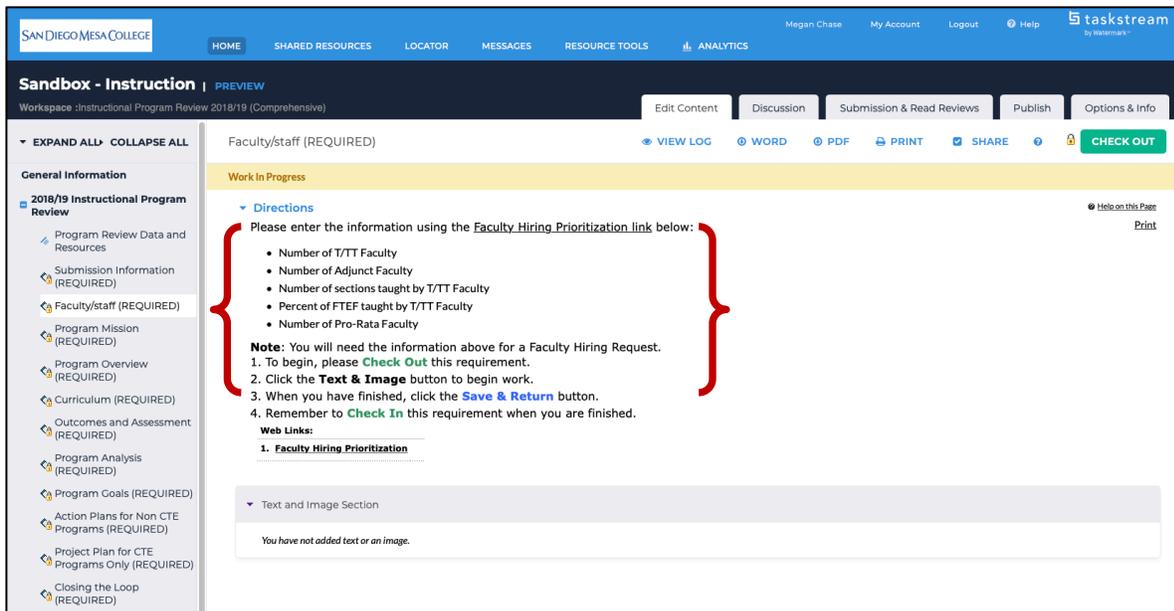
Figure 2. Mesa College instructional program review directions for the Faculty/staff (REQUIRED) section, 2018/2019.

The contents of the program analysis section is also race neutral. Faculty are asked to reflect on the following:

Figure 3. Mesa College program review prompt #2 within the Program Analysis form for instructional programs, 2018/2019.

The program analysis prompt in Figure 3 is vague and does not provide faculty direction as to which student groups to inquire into. Additionally, the "etc." that was added at the end of prompt makes the list of indicators seem more like suggested indicators and not necessarily a mandatory list. The data dashboards have a plethora of data that can be disaggregated in many ways. In CUE's experience working with faculty and data, many faculty members need to be specifically told which indicators to examine and for which student groups. One of the characteristics of being equity-minded is the notion of race consciousness. To help faculty become more race conscious it is important to ask them to assess student outcomes by race.

Within the same program analysis form, equity is mentioned in one of the prompts (see Figure 4). The prompt asks,

Figure 4. Mesa College program review prompt #5 within the Program Analysis form for instructional programs, 2018/2019.

This is a good follow-up question to a data question that ask faculty to identify gaps for specific student groups along a set of indicators. However, as a stand-alone question the responses received could greatly vary in quality. CUE recommends specifically having faculty identify equity gaps along specific indicators and then asking a question such as this.

Faculty are also prompted to look at data in the Curriculum form (see Figure 5). The prompt asks,

> **(REQUIRED) How many of each degree and certificate have been earned in the past 4 years?**

Figure 5. Mesa College program review prompt within the Curriculum form for instructional programs, 2018/2019.

Similar to the program analysis prompts, faculty are not encouraged or asked to assess this data by racial group or other marginalized status group. This is inherently problematic, as not examining completion data by race is likely to hide inequities within programs. CUE recommends asking faculty to examine this same data but disaggregated by race.

Finally, on the main homepage for Mesa College is a link that says "Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)." If the link is followed, there is a definition as to what it means to be an HSI and then several programs that are related to HSI Student Impact. However, there is no mention of being an HSI within the program review template.

The label "Hispanic-serving" suggests that HSIs have a special mission to serve Hispanic students, however studies show that is not the case (Contreras, Malcom & Bensimon, 2008; Laden, 2004). The federal category was created in 1992, at which time, over 200 institutions (a combination of community colleges, four-year universities and regional institutions) received the designation. The designation of an HSI encompasses a range of students. The proportion of Hispanic students at HSIs range from 25% to 99%. Even in cases where Hispanics are in the majority, the culture of the college may still reflect normative, Anglo values, academic content, and a lack of a Hispanic-serving identity (Contreras et al., 2008; Bensimon, Dowd, Chase, Sawatzky, Shieh, Rall & Jones, 2012).   In fact, past studies have found little difference between HSIs and predominately white non-HSIs in terms of faculty perceptions and institutional practices (Stage & Hubbard, 2009).

To truly embody an identity of Hispanic-serving versus Hispanic-enrolling a college should have a question(s) in their program review that reference being an HSI. For example, a question can be added to the program mission section or program overview section that asks faculty to identify ways their program is Hispanic serving. Additionally, a question could be added to the curriculum section that asks faculty to reflect on how their curriculum is Hispanic serving. Other questions that could be considered,

- What would it mean to embody the identity of an HSI throughout program review?
- What would a Hispanic serving program review process look like?
- How can faculty be asked to reflect on how their program is Hispanic serving vs. Hispanic enrolling?

Disconnect between Data and Goals

The second finding is a disconnect between the data and goal sections. To have alignment between data, goals, and action planning requires explicit language to help faculty connect each piece. To achieve alignment, the prompts need to ask faculty to reference each previous section. As an example, in the goals section, faculty should be asked to reflect back on the gaps (and specific equity gaps) that were identified in the program analysis section. The goals written should be directly linked to this data. CUE also recommends combining the goal and action plan sections to make the coherence more explicit. CUE has found that more coherence can be achieved between gaps in the data and resource requests, if done in this manner. Figure 6 provides an example that CUE created for another college who was working on adding more coherence between data, goals, action planning and resource requests.

Figure 6. Sample program review worksheet to align data, goals, and action planning.

Lack of Reflective Practice

Part of CUE's theory of change is the notion of reflective practice or inquiry into practices.   Part of creating an equity-minded program improvement process involves creating a space for faculty to identify gaps in their data but also to have them answer two types of questions about the data:

1. What are possible practitioner, programmatic or institutional factors that contribute to the identified gaps? What is your institution or program doing or not doing that may be contributing to these gaps? What are your faculty doing or not doing that may be contributing to these gaps?

2. What can your program faculty do to learn more about why specific gaps are occurring?

These two question types or similar questions can be added to the program review template, specifically the program analysis form, to help faculty reflect on what they can do or the institution can do to better support their students along a given indicator. Adding these or similar questions can also help provide a space for faculty dialog around issues of equity. The second question, in particular, can help faculty to develop an equity-minded frame instead of one that is solution-focused. A solution-focused frame takes an identified gap in the data and jumps to a solution without truly understanding the root cause of the issue. Brainstorming methods to inquire into why gaps occur can help faculty move from a student-focused lens to one that is more practitioner-focused.

In addition to the three broad findings listed in this section, Table 1 provides specific recommendations for the template and forms reviewed.

Table 1. Recommendations for Instructional Program Review Template and Forms

PROGRAM REVIEW DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATION
Comprehensive 2018/2019 Review	1. Include more equity language to signal a commitment to equity and excellence. Change "Program Analysis" to "Program Analysis for Equity & Excellence."
Faculty/staff (REQUIRED)	2. Add a bullet that requires faculty to examine the number of faculty in their program by race. 3. Add a bullet that requires faculty to examine the composition of faculty in their program by race to the composition of students by race. 4. Have faculty examine all existing bullets in the directions by race.
Program Mission (REQUIRED)	5. In the direction area, add a link to the college's definition of equity. 6. Add a prompt to this section to have faculty reflect on what equity means to their program (given the college's definition.) For example, "one of the core values at San Diego Mesa College is equity (link to definition). What does equity mean to your program?" To help programs answer this question, prompts can be added from a tool the Equity Efforts Advisory Board created in collaboration with CUE (see Appendix B for specific prompts.). 7. Add a question referring to Mesa College's HSI status. "How does your program contribute to the college's identity of being an HSI? "How is your program Hispanic serving rather than Hispanic enrolling?
Program Overview (REQUIRED)	8. Add "What are your program's strengths in terms of equity?" then "What are your program's challenges in terms of equity?"
Curriculum (REQUIRED)	9. Ask for how many degrees and certificates disaggregated by race (or other marginalized group.)
Outcomes & Assessments (REQUIRED)	10. If not already doing so, programs should be required to disaggregate their assessment data by race.

Program Analysis (REQUIRED)	11. List the indicators that the college wants faculty to examine and by which student groups. The current form does not direct faculty to examine any particular marginalized group.
	12. Have faculty identify equity gaps. Then, ask them the following reflective questions:
	   a. What are possible practitioner, programmatic or institutional factors that contribute to the identified gaps?
	   b. What can your program faculty do to learn more about why the gaps are occurring?

Program Goals (REQUIRED)	13. The previous section asks faculty to focus on equity and excellence. If changes are made to have faculty identify specific equity gaps, in this section, faculty should be asked to write numeric goals focused on closing the equity gaps.
Action Plans for Non CTE Programs (REQUIRED)	14. There is a field to complete that says "describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective." Mesa College might consider adding "Please list the data sources you will use as part of this assessment plan." If this question is added, another prompt can follow it that says, "If/how will this data be disaggregated?"
Closing the Loop (REQUIRED)	15. Part of this form asks program faculty to identify from what areas they received support/funding. If the program identifies that they received money from Equity, ask the faculty to discuss how the resources have been used to support a specific marginalized population. Then, ask for specific data to support their claims. 16. Have the program list their goals from the last program review and then discuss the data used to monitor progress towards the goal and any progress towards achieving this goal.
Liaison's Review	17. Have Liaisons check to ensure that all resource requests are linked to the program analysis data section or some other form of data.
Manager's Review	18. Have Managers check to ensure that all resource requests are linked to the program analysis data section or some other form of data.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: EQUITY WORD SEARCH

	Term	Comprehensive 2018/2019	Program Overview	Program Analysis	Outcomes & Assessment	Curriculum	CTE Project or Action Plan	Closing the Lopp	Liason & Manager Review
Equity-minded language	Racial / ethnic equity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Predominately Black Institution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Ethnicity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Race / racial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Latino / Latina / Latinx	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	African American / Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Native American	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Culture / cultural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Culturally relevant / responsive pedagogy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Social justice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Minoritized	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Equity	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Low-Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diversity language	Diversity / diverse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Underrepresented / underserved	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Multicultural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Students of color	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Minority Serving Institution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Minority	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deficit-minded language	At-risk / high-need	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Underprepared	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Untraditional / non-traditional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Underprivileged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Marganalized	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Achievement gap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Disadvantaged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX B: DEFINING EQUITY IN YOUR PROGRAM

Defining Equity	Measuring Equity	Applying a Race-Conscious Lens
What does equity mean in the context of our work as a committee, department, office, program, etc.?	What data do we currently collect on student outcomes? How often do we monitor these data?	Do we commonly disaggregate data by race/ethnicity and other target student populations?
Ideally, what would it look like if our area was to achieve the goal of equity?	When we make a change in our practice, how do we know that the change is effective?	Have we observed our organizational spaces, documents, and processes with a race-conscious lens?
What is our sphere of influence during a student's pathway to their educational goal? Are we exerting our influence to equitize outcomes for marginalized student groups?	Who is charged with convening key members of our area to look at student success data?	Do we regularly seek out and/or organize professional development opportunities within our area to better understand the systems of structural racism that affect our students' experiences?