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Implementing Program and Department Advisory Boards

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Implementing Program and Department Advisory Boards

College and university administrators and faculty are responsible for developing and delivering academic programs responsive to the evolving challenges and opportunities of 21st century life (Taylor, Marino, Rasor-Greenhalgh, & Hudak, 2010). Advisory boards, made up of local and regional stakeholders, can support and enhance the mission of academic programs and departments through innovative advice and stakeholder vision (Stautberg & Green, 2007).

Advisory board members can provide input on program planning and expansion, course content, assessment of student learning, resource development, accreditation preparation, and long-term vision (Robertson & Beck, 2003). They can also advocate on behalf of an academic program or department and educate the community about its strengths and contributions (Farrell, 2011).

Participants will be guided through a process to establish and maintain an advisory board for an academic program or department. Incorporating the advisory board in assessment activities will be highlighted. Participants will leave the presentation with ideas, suggestions, and a potential plan to share with faculty. Numerous examples of lessons learned will be shared from our department's two decades worth of experience benefitting from advisory boards. Time will be allotted for individual brainstorming, and small and large group discussion.

Presenters will address the intersection of advisory and working boards and when to involve board members in fund raising and resource development (Carver, 2006; Farrell, 2011). Other topics include factors to consider when developing and maintaining advisory boards, such as recruiting members from professional contacts, developing governing documents, and making the advisory board meetings enjoyable (Farrell, 2011; Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011; Taylor, et al., 2010); nurturing a culture that welcomes outside ideas (Stautberg & Green, 2007); incorporating advisory boards into assessment of student learning outcomes and ongoing improvement of academic curricula (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, n.d.; Robertson & Beck, 2003; New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, 2012); recognizing board members' contributions (Taylor, et al., 2010); and benefits of advisory boards for board members, students, community, and faculty.

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