

2009 Showcase in Excellence Award Recipient

University of Phoenix-Central Admin. Academic Affairs “Program Development Process”



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Type of work
University of Phoenix (UOPX) offers an innovative approach to higher education focused on meeting the needs of working students. UOPX believes it is important to provide educational opportunities that are not only convenient and accessible, but also current and applicable to the real world. This philosophy is reflected in many areas throughout UOPX, including flexible scheduling, practitioner faculty and centralized managed faculty designed curriculum.

Workforce: 47,000 staff & faculty

Testimonial of Value of the Arizona Performance Excellence Award Program

“Central Administration Academic Affairs began its Continuous Quality Improvement journey many years ago. Our journey has resulted in 2009 with our formal participation with the Arizona Quality Alliance’s Performance Excellence Program application process. The experience provided us with many learning and process improvement opportunities beginning with the application and site visit, and concluding with the feedback report. Ultimately, our students directly benefit from our involvement with the Performance Excellence program because our ability to deliver value to our students is enhanced by producing educational programs that are cutting edge, timely, and discipline relevant.”

- Dr. Adam Honea, Senior Vice President & Provost, Central Administration Academic Affairs, University of Phoenix

Highlights of the Program Development Process

The UOPX Program Development process consists of four deliberate phases designed to optimize the alignment with three of the Arizona Quality Alliance core values: 1. Customer Driven Excellence, 2. Agility, 3. Management by Fact. The phases of the Program Development process include research, conceptual design and alignment, institutional and governing body approvals, and program development. The process is designed to engage key stakeholder groups by directly utilizing their input, which in turn informs the development of academic programs.

The current process, which was deployed in 2007, reflects input from students and best practice sharing across all colleges and schools. Additionally, the Provost and the various internal and external institutional governing bodies provided input by reviewing and approving each program development to ensure that the process requirements are met. The process output results in accredited academic programs available for deployment to students on a state-by-state basis.

In 2007 key management changes identified the need to improve the process when the President of UOPX revised several key academic processes to become more systematic and aligned with the mission, vision, and values of the organization. Following this lead, the office of the Provost then redesigned several key processes including program development using the criteria laid out by the President. The need was further defined in the U.S. Secretary of Education's Commission Report on the Future of Higher and upcoming accreditation reaffirmation goals. The improved process demonstrates a systematic approach to program development, which is also grounded in a data-driven philosophy for using results to guide UOPX's decisions about programs. Deployment of the Program Development process prioritizes the need for increasing student satisfaction, improving time-to-market, and reducing variability for all academic programs.

Key requirements of the Program Development process include reduced variability across programs and colleges, rapid response to changing markets, and student satisfaction. Each phase of the process provides for decision/feedback points on these key in-process measurements.

Determining the key process requirements was part of the 2000-2006 UOPX Provost Office Program Development processes review for all colleges. Additionally, best practices in program design as published in extant literature were examined and contributed to Program Development process improvements. The improved process was subsequently shared with various UOPX stakeholders for additional review and input before being implemented in 2007. Upon implementation, and in support of UOPX's philosophy of continuous quality improvement, ongoing feedback from process participants was collected and utilized for process improvement purposes.

The engagement of students and stakeholders and the utilization of their input in the program development process, demonstrates UOPX's commitment to providing customer value. In particular, student satisfaction has been identified as a key process requirement, which is measured through student satisfaction surveys to identify their satisfaction with program-related topics/objectives, assignments, and learning materials. This input informs UOPX's decisions regarding program development process improvement and helps to facilitate customer value creation and organizational success and growth. Additionally, key process measures are positioned to ensure rapid response to student and market needs. Finally, HLC review and approval of UOPX academic programs assures the appropriate level of alignment and compliance with academic quality standards, which enhances customer value.

During the Program Development process each program initiative undergoes an in-depth research phase that begins with a needs analysis. During this analysis, program feasibility is measured through career outlook evaluations, professional trends, and potential student focus groups, which are deployed to determine if this program will contribute to organizational success and growth. For example, UOPX recently developed and implemented a new Bachelors of Science in Accounting degree, which included an extensive analysis of the accounting regulatory environment, the industry outlook, and competitor benchmarking data. Additionally, during the conceptual design phase, input was gathered from the Business School's Faculty Council, an external accounting advisory board, and existing students and stakeholders.

The Program Development process ensures that programs meet acceptable standards for quality as defined by UOPX customers as follows: Students, faculty, Regional Accrediting Body, Professional Organizations/Employers, and Programmatic Accrediting Bodies.

The entire Program Development Process helps UOPX achieve its Mission of "providing access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the productivity of their organization and provide leadership and service to their communities."