

Case Study Higher Education

University /
Academic Assessment



Assessing the College of Social Work within the Largest University for Women in the GCC

BACKGROUND

The largest university for women in the GCC ("University") was created by agglomerating 12 colleges from several geographic locations within the same country into one very large 8 million-square-meter campus. Such geographical integration of colleges was accompanied with many challenges to both the colleges' deans and the University's leadership. Each college was very protective of its own processes and academic operations, and resisted deferring the global decisions to the University leadership. The College of Social Work ("College") was one of the 12 colleges, with 1,200 female students. For one single undergraduate program, the college had one dean and four chairpersons to manage the academic operations. The University leadership engaged LAU Consult to perform a thorough assessment of the College. The initial assessment plan delineated the collection of input from students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Furthermore, the plan included organizing various focus groups and site visits. The College had a very distrusting environment with a new dean joining during the assessment, and an intolerance of University wide policies and procedures for academic management and strategic planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Client Challenges

- The College of Social Work lagged behind in program assessment. The program had not developed an evidence-based accountability system for student learning.
- Various improvements were needed in order to re-position the College so that to attract new students and thus better serve the community.
- The College offered only one program and had four chairpersons. A change in terms of the College structure was needed in terms of programs and leadership.
- Few faculty members graduated from universities that are accredited by Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The percentage and distribution of faculty ranks were not in line with North American standards. Furthermore, the faculty research record at the College was not on par with the research level at a CSWE accredited university.
- Social workers in the country where this College is located faced employment challenges.

Our Solution

- Established an evidence-based accountability system for student learning outcomes
- Recommended:
 - New structure for the College
 - New degrees in the domain of social work
 - Guidelines to faculty in order to meet the scientific requirements of the promotion criteria and in accordance with CSWE accreditation.
- Assessed:
 - College Structure
 - Faculty
 - Students
 - Alumni
 - Environment and Facilities
 - Employability of Students
 - Government planning in Social Work

Our Intervention's Impact

- Galvanized the College of Social Work into planning ahead and effecting key structural changes to meet the demands of the market
- Helped the College look within, find the things it wants to change, and plan for a better future.

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IN FOCUS

Key Client Challenge

There was an urgent need to provide an assessment to the College of Social Work at a university for women in the GCC, organized around the following areas: assessment and continuous improvement, curriculum, administration, students, faculty, facilities, and employment and job market.

Our Solution

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

- Revisited the program's mission, vision, objectives (goals), and outcomes so that they become aligned with international standards.
- Recommended establishing an evidence-based accountability system for student learning outcomes that includes proper assessment instruments.

Curriculum

- Encouraged the inclusion of new degrees in the domain of social work
- Recommended the establishment of interdisciplinary areas of focus in cooperation with other colleges
- Recommended the establishment of postgraduate certificates

Administration

In terms of the current College administrative structure, we recommended the following:

- The Social Work Program should be led by one chairperson
- The leadership of the College should be afforded administrative support including at least two Associate Deans for Academic Programs and for Student Affairs

Students

- Encouraged students who are majoring in public health, public administration, education, and business administration to pursue dual degree programs in social work

Faculty

Recommended:

- Establishing an internal research granting system, ensuring that 27% of the budget expenditure is allocated to research
- Establishing a visiting faculty system, encouraging faculty to publish in international social work journals and/or participate in top international social work conferences
- Establishing a probationary period
- Encouraging faculty to take sabbaticals and study leaves in CSWE accredited colleges / programs
- Ensuring that faculty are involved in the recruitment process through search committees

Facility

Recommended:

- Improving the library's current collection of books and periodicals in the social work domain
- Limiting the number of students per classroom to a maximum of 40 students per section
- Recommending the use of assistive technology in the delivery of classes

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