

Lessons Learned From Piloting An Employer Feedback Process For Gathering EC 2000 Criteria a - k

The SUCCEED Outcomes Assessment Coalition Focus Team

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Abstract - Gathering employer feedback for EC 2000 review is required and will give departments needed information for improving their degree programs. SUCCEED thinks the process can be simplified so that neither faculty nor employers are overwhelmed with the volume of possible data and paperwork. SUCCEED has a team comprised of assessment experts and engineering faculty and administrators from the eight SUCCEED campuses who have been working on identifying, developing, and testing best practices in outcomes assessment for the purpose of curriculum innovation and renewal. This team of 15 people represents experienced assessment directors who have served as national officers of assessment professional organizations, ABET visitors, department chairs, professors, and an assistant dean.

SUCCEED is piloting a two-step, two-year employer feedback process which is simple to use but very relevant to collecting data for the a-k attributes for EC 2000, criterion 3. The two steps can be conducted in any order. Step 1 is an employer/supervisor feedback survey. Step 2 is a focus group discussion on campus with visiting recruiters/employer representatives that discusses a-k attributes and general approaches to eliminating gaps in any of these attributes among graduates.

In fall, 1998, the team piloted Step 1, a survey instrument, with Lockheed-Martin in three locations: Manassas, Virginia, Marietta, Georgia, and Orlando, Florida. The results identified refinements in both the feedback instrument and the process for distribution and collection of the surveys. In spring, 1999, a larger survey pilot with several companies was planned. Results from this larger pilot would position the SUCCEED engineering colleges to formalize and institutionalize their employer feedback required for EC 2000 review. As the SUCCEED campuses represent a range of campus cultures, the larger engineering education community should be able to adapt the piloted employer feedback instrument and process to best suit individual campus needs.

As discussions with large employers continued in preparation for the spring, 1999 pilot, the need for a regional or national framework for collecting this data became apparent. A concern by large employers is the inconvenience of having to respond to several engineering programs with different formats and different timetables. The spring, 1999 pilot was delayed and rescheduled for

the fall, 1999. Based on employer response to our request to participate in the pilot, a forum was organized for July 28, 1999, to identify steps for collecting data beginning in the fall, 1999. SUCCEED and IBM worked together to host a group of large engineering employers to design such a data collection process. SUCCEED has contacted and has confirmation for attending from IBM, Lockheed Martin, Anderson Consulting, and DuPont.

At the November, 1999 FIE Conference, SUCCEED will report on the results of the July 28, 1999, forum with employers and the status of the fall, 1999 feedback pilot with employers of our graduates. This expanded pilot in the employer feedback process will give guidance to degree programs on best practices for collecting data on the demonstration of the a-k attributes that are best assessed from professional work performance.

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