
Program Review: Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology (OLIT)

Program Review
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I. Introduction

The Review Team provides the following report detailing their findings. Specifically, the Review Team focused on the Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology (OLIT) program quality, student learning outcomes, relevance of curricular offerings; sufficiency of instructional personnel to offer courses, the provision of advising and other student needs, and the distinctiveness of the curriculum in light of emerging disciplinary trends *and* the unique market position of the OLIT program within local and national market requirements. In writing the report, the team reviewers comment on the department or program's strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for program improvements in light of the review of all documents, identified issues, and interviews conducted as well as their own expertise in the field.

Prior to the site visit, the Review Team members read the OLIT Self Study Unit Review document and developed a list of questions to be asked during the on-site visit. During the first 2 days of the visit, the team members also consulted additional College and Program documents as deemed necessary.

II. Program Review Process

As the Program Review Team, we reviewed relevant documents, made a visit to campus to meet with key stakeholders, and wrote the following report. We reviewed publicly available information such as catalog entries for the department, program brochures, internal institutional reports including enrollment information in the discipline, program assessment reports, annual reports, a copy of the last academic program review report, and the current draft of the department's academic program review report. After reviewing these documents, we toured campus and departmental facilities and interviewed and gathered data from (a) Dean of the College of Education, (b) OLIT faculty, (c) senior University Administrators including the Provost, Deputy Provost, Dean of the Graduate School, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Accreditation Director, Academic Program Review Specialist, and (d) graduate and undergraduate students and alumni (both formally and informally).

We initially focused our interview questions on three issues identified from the Self Study document:

1. differentiation - are the undergraduate and graduate programs sufficiently different in terms of focus and content?
2. proliferation - do the number of programs of study offered and the number of students in these programs present a problem given the size of the Department?
3. identity - how does the identity of the OLIT Department fit within the School of Education and the University?

During our discussions with various constituents, we identified three further issues:

1. faculty workload,
2. research support and the rigor of the research for students, and the
3. future focus of the Department.

We also considered the findings of the 2002 Unit Review, which identified a number of concerns including the need to prioritize the mission, create an online Masters program, design the program around learning organization competencies, establish collaborations with other University programs, and better manage high faculty workloads. While the first three concerns have been addressed, the Review Team felt the last two have not been dealt with adequately.

III. OLIT Review

A. OLIT Program Goals and Curriculum

The mission of the OLIT program is to “provide quality education for individuals interested in improving the learning experiences of adults in school, business, government, military, healthcare, and non-profit organizations through the application of instructional practices and organizational technologies that advance individual, group, and organizational learning” (UNM Catalog 2009-2010, p. 355). The student profile reflects the mission in that students are mainly working adults from a variety of organizations including government agencies, higher education institutions, K-12 school leaders, health care organizations and private consultants interested in creating or serving in learning organizations. The range of student jobs include: human resource specialists, instructional specialists, administration and professional positions.

The OLIT program consists of three degree programs and eight certificate programs:

- a 2+2 B.S. undergraduate degree in Technology and Training, in which students may apply 2 years of technical education and 2 years of University education. There are currently 35 students in the program. The degree consists of 132 semester hours of coursework. The program is coordinated by a lecturer, and taught mainly by graduate students in the OLIT graduate program. There is no current assessment plan in place.
- an MA degree in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology which may be completed entirely online or in a combination of face-to-face and online. There are 70 students currently enrolled in the program. The degree consists of coursework plus either a thesis or an internship and portfolio. The

program was revised after the 2002 Unit Review, and students are assessed against an OLIT Competency Model.

- a Ph.D. degree in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology requiring a minimum of 78 coursework hours and 18 dissertation hours. There are currently 50 students enrolled in the program.
- 6 untranscribed Professional Development Certificates which require 12 credit hours of specialized courses in Adult Learning and Training, eLearning, Instructional Technology, Leadership for Innovation in the New Economy (LINE), Organizational Learning, Culture and Adult Learning
- 1 transcribed post master's Educational Specialist Certificate for practitioners.
- 1 special program informally labeled "Educators in Medicine".

The set of courses offered for the MA and Ph.D. degrees are repurposed by grouping them into subsets of specialized competencies that comprise the untranscribed Professional Development certificates for post baccalaureate non degree students and transcribed Specialty Certificates for post master's students, and a special program for post baccalaureate medical professionals. The certificate programs and the undergraduate degree serve a specialized niche, in addition to keeping enrollments acceptable in the graduate-level courses. The programs also serve as feeders into the degree programs. The Review Team found that despite the number of programs and courses offered, the OLIT Department seem to have successfully integrated the courses across degree and certificate programs while maintaining the diversity and integrity of each program.

B. OLIT Program Strengths

Based on discussions with various stakeholders during the site visit, the Review Team identified six main strengths of the program:

1. The Integrated Content of the Program

The OLIT program offers courses that integrate principles of adult learning theory, organizational learning, instructional design, instructional technology, distance learning, evaluation and socio-cultural understanding. Each degree program builds on the other while maintaining the difference required by each level of study.

Students that graduate from the undergraduate 2+2 program are qualified for entry level instructional design and development position in training and development departments in medium to large organizations. Graduate students are also qualified for entry level instructional design positions as well as that of manager and/or director positions in training and development departments in similar type organizations. Undergraduate and graduate students are

encouraged to develop strong analysis skills so that they are able to conduct applied research and evaluation activities. Students' development outside of the traditional classroom is encouraged and supported by all faculty members, and career development opportunities outside of classroom are provided through internships and practicum. Students are encouraged to complete internships with innovative organizations and cutting edge HRD practitioners.

Upon completion of the graduate program in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Communicate and interact effectively with groups and individuals
- Assess the relevant characteristics of adult learners
- Apply needs, task, and content analysis techniques
- Assess the nature of performance problems
- Design training programs
- Assess the effectiveness of training programs
- Manage human resource development projects and programs
- Plan, develop, and implement techniques which improve department and organizational performance
- Conduct original research, statistical analysis, and contribute to the academic literature in the field of HRD

Students told the reviewers that the course content worked together seamlessly. Although these students had an initial impression that the required courses would not fit their professional goals, they were consistently surprised how important the skills were to their future or current employment.

Upon completion of the 2+2 undergraduate program in Technology and Training students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Knowledge of different organizational settings in which teaching and learning occur
- Knowledge of the training, educational and development needs of organizations
- Skills in task analysis, program planning, and program design in keeping with organizational needs
- Ability to apply principles of learning and motivation to develop instructional programs for adults
- Sensitivity to the psychological and cultural needs of diverse populations needed for adaptation of training/educational planning
- Ability to use instructional methods and technology, appropriate for the learning needs of organizations.

In sum, the Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology (OLIT) programs comprise of a very diverse and international student body and embrace global perspectives, philosophies, and cultural identities. The purpose of

education at the undergraduate and graduate levels of the OLIT program are clear, distinctive, and aligned with common practice in the HRD profession. Therefore, the Review Team believes that the OLIT curriculum is an important strength.

2. The Relationship to the University of New Mexico's Mission, Vision and Strategy

UNM's mission is to serve as New Mexico's flagship institution of higher learning through demonstrated and growing excellence in teaching, research, patient care, and community service. The OLIT program contributes to this mission by continuing to innovate in learning delivery such as E-Learning and establishing learning partnerships with international institutions such as The Open University of Catalonia Spain, and the University of Colombo Sri Lanka. This reflects the global nature of organizations and organizational learning.

In addition, OLIT contributes to the University's institution-wide strategies by:

- Establishing synergistic partnerships: for example with the Medical School, College of Pharmacy.
- Innovative research-to-application platforms in the field of instructional technology: The faculty utilizes their research in the various fields of instructional technology in the design and delivery of the face-to-face and online courses.
- Student centered decision-making: Students are involved in communities of practice in the Ph.D. program. Students at all levels also reported that the teaching styles of the faculty involved them in curriculum decision making, and that the faculty expected them to express their views, which were respected.

3. Program Quality

A conceptually sound and theory/research-based framework underlies the design of the OLIT curriculum. The core constructs are clear, agreed upon by the faculty, and operationalized in the curriculum. Further, the theoretical and research bases underlying each class in the curriculum, and the students' overall requirements are clear and explicit. The undergraduate and graduate curriculum includes integrative experiences that allow students to draw upon and apply material covered throughout. Additionally, the undergraduate and graduate curriculum enables students to demonstrate skills in continuous learning, which is achieved through the synthesis of program content and critical thinking activities. Finally, the undergraduate and graduate curriculum enables students to develop the skills and competencies of a reflective/scholar practitioner.

The OLIT program provides students with clear and decisive competencies (student learning outcomes). These programs are focused principally on instructional design and adult learning, which are two of the critical specialization

areas within the field of HRD. Accordingly, these programs are very well designed and developed, and maintain rigorous academic standards and graduation requirements, which are clearly outlined and shared with students. The OLIT program is systematically and continuously monitored to assess their effectiveness and revised accordingly to reflect new objectives, course materials, concepts, research, theories, and practice.

The OLIT program has been offering undergraduate and graduate degrees for over two decades, which assures that it has a solid alumni base for current and future support. Moreover, the OLIT program's department head is a seasoned, experienced, and competent supervisor. The OLIT program is well positioned in the marketplace in Albuquerque and the state of New Mexico because it is the only program dedicated to instructional design and performance technology.

4. The OLIT Student Profile and Employability

Three main strengths exist:

- Student ethnicity & nationality, background & experience: Students and alumni of the program felt that the diverse student profile creates stimulating class discussion and beneficial learning opportunities.
- Students put learning into practice immediately: Many of the students work full time in jobs related to organizational learning. Feedback from these students indicated that they can immediately utilize the knowledge and skills they learn in their jobs. Alumni reported to us that the interdisciplinary nature of the skills they learned were highly applicable immediately.
- The OLIT Program provides employable skills in many organizational contexts. Students graduating from the undergraduate and the Master's program are employed and find employment at CNM, K-12 educational institutions, UNM, the two national Labs, and other public and private sector organizations. Two alumni of the program drove a 200 mile round trip to tell us that they employ OLIT B.S. and Master's graduates who can immediately apply their knowledge to the instructional technology jobs and compare very favorably to employees with other degrees. They spoke very highly of the program and its graduates.

5. Faculty

The faculty represents diversity of personal and professional characteristics, including approaches to research and scholarship, intellectual and ideological commitments and preferences, and respect of students' perspectives and viewpoints. Faculty maintains a very high level of collegiality and collaboration, which ensures program effectiveness, growth, and innovation. The faculty is recognized for teaching excellence and is effective in guiding students toward graduation and professional success.

Unfortunately, there are *not* a sufficient number of faculty members to achieve the mission of the Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology program. In the opinion of the Review Team, the program is *at least two* faculty members short of the minimum needed to maintain the quality and high standards of the undergraduate and graduate programs. Without these additions, the present faculty will struggle to meet the needs of either undergraduate or graduate students and provide the quality of necessary interaction with students, or meet identified further needs.

Faculty members are encouraged to participate in continuing professional development activities. Mentoring does exist for junior faculty toward tenure and promotion; and all faculty members are provided with effective feedback and opportunities to enhance their performance.

The OLIT faculty demonstrates and encourages global and international orientations. Through their academic preparation and professional experience, the faculty has high levels of expertise in theoretical and applied areas of HRD and instructional system design. They maintain a very high level of collegiality and collaboration, which ensures program effectiveness, growth, and innovation. Further, the OLIT faculty, are recognized for teaching excellence and are effective in guiding students toward graduation and professional success. Specifically,

- Faculty bring a range of expertise - both academic and professional – to the program and are able to bridge research into practice into their teaching and scholarship. Academic expertise and interests include: distance and E-learning, knowledge management, organizational learning and leadership, and technology-supported learning environments.
- Faculty has a strong record of scholarship in their academic fields. The faculty publishes in top-tier journals in their respective areas of specialization and regularly present at national and international academic conferences.
- It is evident from all of our conversations with the faculty that they have a passion for the field and for the integrity of the program.
- The faculty is truly collegial.
- The faculty exhibits a commitment to quality education through development of critical thinking in the students that stretches them beyond what they believed they can accomplish. This point was repeated by all of the students with whom the Review Team met.
- The faculty exemplifies what they recommend by applying adult learning theory in their own teaching.

6. Differentiation between Programs

The reviewers found a healthy overlap between the degree programs and certificates, while providing diverse perspectives of the field of organizational learning and instructional technology. Our initial concern about differentiation between the degree programs proved to be unfounded. The undergraduate degree focuses on training and technology, the Master's program on developing the OLIT competencies to improve professional practice in relation to learning at the organizational, team and individual level, while the Ph.D. program's focus is on developing theoretical and applied research skills in learning and human performance technologies. One builds upon the other. Student feedback indicated they appreciated the diverse range of courses offered, balanced with the opportunity to specialize in a particular field. They commented that courses complimented each other and there was little to no duplication of course material. Diverse perspectives are integrated into certificate programs without additional courses or effort, which increases enrollment and feeds students into degree programs.

The students interviewed also indicated that the interdisciplinary nature of curriculum provided graduates with a unique combination of strengths to analyze and solve learning problems in organizations from multiple perspectives. The fact that adult learning theory, organizational learning, instructional design, instructional technology, distance learning, evaluation and socio-cultural understanding are taught to their graduates is a unique strength as compared to other programs nationwide. These courses in other degree programs reside in separate departments or programs, which leaves the unique combinations offered in OLIT to advising or student initiative. These skills make the UNM program offering a very unique and important program in the field.

C. OLIT Program Concerns

Three major concerns arose from this review: course proliferation combined with faculty workload, curriculum inclusion, and program identity and fit within the College of Education. These concerns are complicated by the fact that OLIT offers high quality undergraduate and graduate degrees that complement each other and serve the State of New Mexico. These concerns are elaborated below.

1. Course Proliferation and Faculty Workload

Our initial concerns about course proliferation were compounded when matched with the number of faculty in the Department, faculty workload and doctoral student feedback. Together, these concerns emerged from five identified major issues.

- a) Research collaboration and mentoring in the Ph.D. program.

Ph.D. students expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of their research experience, particularly funded and unfunded research collaborations and

mentoring. One of the main problems they noted related to the lack of opportunity for students to engage in research with the faculty they are being guided by. A major cause of this problem appears to be the high number of advisees carried by particular faculty members, which reduces research and advising time per student. Students also commented that although the communities-of-practice model is a good idea holding much potential, the community activities did not really exist in practice. A related problem identified by the full-time Ph.D. students was the lack of mentoring, including advice on research, conference presenting and publication strategies, and on academic life in general. Doctoral students also commented on the lack of graduate assistantships or travel support.

b) The reputation of the OLIT program.

A recurring theme during our site visit was whether OLIT has a sufficient number of faculty members to achieve the mission of the OLIT programs. Faculty are stretched thin across teaching, PhD supervision, research and administrative duties, and continuing professional development. There is **not** a sufficient number of faculty members to achieve the missions of the T&T and OLIT program emphases. Students recognized this and spoke of the consequences for PhD supervision, advice and support. Given this problem, the quality, high academic standards, and the community image and reputation of the OLIT program may very well diminish as faculty find it increasingly difficult to balance the demands.

c) Labor intensive in the wrong places.

We feel that the heavy workload problem is exacerbated by the fact that some of the departmental procedures and processes are what one of the Review Team members described as “labor intensive in the wrong places.” For example, applicants for admission to the OLIT Doctoral program are interviewed by a panel of three faculty members. While contributing to the rigor of the selection process, this practice also adds significantly to already heavy workload for a small group of faculty members. Comparisons with peer institutions suggest that selection/interview processes could be more streamlined and less labor intensive. Second, both Action Research and Professional Portfolio options for master’s students are evaluated by committees consisting of three faculty members. While we agree that a committee of minimum three faculty is needed to evaluate Master’s theses, evaluation of the above two types of projects can be conducted by a smaller number of faculty.

d) Demands of the small undergraduate degree.

Initially, we had some concerns about the viability and the demands of the undergraduate degree in T& T. An undergraduate degree consisting of 35 students is a small program. However after talking to faculty, students and alumni we found that the undergraduate degree acts as a feeder to the graduate degrees, and that undergraduates are as employable as Master’s students

(especially in the National Labs) – and carry a significant advantage in the training and instructional technology field over other majors.

e) Relationship and access to courses outside of COE.

There appears to be course duplication with courses in the Anderson School of Management and the Communications Department. However OLIT students have access difficulties to these courses because they are often oversubscribed by School majors. The Review Team felt that the synergies between programs and courses in different Schools, and the workload burden on OLIT faculty could be leveraged by collaboration between faculties and agreements between Schools regarding course access. The resulting diversity of student majors could greatly enhance classroom discussion.

2. Curriculum Enhancement

Coursework in the OLIT program is focused on organizational learning and instructional technology with foundations in adult learning theory, organizational learning, instructional design, instructional technology, distance learning, evaluation and socio-cultural understanding. Two of the Reviewers felt however, that the content areas in the HRD programs (Master's and Ph.D.) at peer institutions (University of Minnesota, Colorado State University, Texas A&M, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Minnesota, and George Washington University) whose curriculum include, in addition to these areas, coursework in organizational and individual performance management, performance consulting, organizational development, and change management should be added to their competencies. It is important for the OLIT faculty to consider these skills to determine if these courses would bring added value to the already strong synergy within the OLIT curriculum, especially if they wish also to compete in the HRD field nationally. However, caution is advised because adding this dimension to the curriculum is not reasonable to expect with the current staffing configuration of the OLIT program within the College of Education. Other ways, such as partnerships with other programs within the University, or additional faculty, would have to be seriously considered to insure the addition would not result in just more course proliferation, duplication of courses already offered in other parts of the University and increased faculty workload.

Further, the OLIT program does not have an active advisory board to provide relevant, current, and just-in-time advice, expertise, and recommendations useful in improving the quality of the similar HRD program.

3. Program Identity and Fit

The third area of concern that arose was prompted by faculty apprehension regarding the identity/image of the program and its fit within the core mission of the College of Education. While the fit with the mission of the University of New Mexico's mission is clear, it is less so with the College of Education (COE).

Several administrators could not specifically describe the mission and purpose of the OLIT programs. They were concerned that the OLIT programs did little to help the College of Education achieve its mission. This led the Review Team to believe that the OLIT programs may not fit within the College of Education given its current focus and strategy. However, the management department has an interest in collaborating with the OLIT program. Accordingly, the Review Team is concerned that the image (brand) of the OLIT may prevent it from being perceived as a value-added program.

The missions of the OLIT program and COE do overlap in that both “address critical education issues; test new ideas and approaches to teaching and learning; educate professionals who can facilitate human growth and development in schools, homes, communities, and workplaces; and prepare students for participation in a complex and challenging society” (COE Mission Statement). However the unease that exists amongst OLIT faculty stems from the differing constituencies served by COE and OLIT. While COE focuses mainly on K-12, OLIT’s constituents are working adults in a range of public and private organizations. This leads to the feeling of OLIT faculty that the OLIT program is perceived within the College as not being central to the COE core mission. This in turn plays into a perceived lack of support in relation to funding and faculty positions. The Review Team recognizes the difficulties of allocating resources within a College with so many different departments and programs.

A lack of initial awareness but then subsequent interest by several administrators regarding the strength of the program, its mission and how it fulfills the mission of the college or university further confirmed that there is a branding issue related to the program identity and fit.

The Review Team discussed this issue at length including positioning the OLIT program as an interdisciplinary program outside a particular School and within potential School homes. The former is problematic in terms of management, administration and funding. While we see clear synergies with the Anderson School of Management, we felt that any move to another School should be accompanied by institutional changes (funding, structural, promotion, tenure and review issues) and by a willingness of OLIT faculty to negotiate program changes to ensure alignment. Faculty are clearly passionate about the role and mission of the OLIT program and about maintaining its integrity, however if the program is to be relocated then it seems prudent to be flexible within the mission. This repositioning of the OLIT program also may provide a unique opportunity to enhance the OLIT curriculum to make it even stronger and more responsive to current trends in HRD and human performance training.

IV. Recommendations

The unique interdisciplinary nature of the OLIT program, its ongoing and potential contribution to the mission of UNM and to the economy of the State of New Mexico, and the viability of the program through the number of credit hours

generated through their resident, online degree and certificate programs (1,927 credit hours with 3 FTE), situates the OLIT program as viable, ongoing and a very central and needed contribution to the mission of the University and the local community. However, we feel that given the program's strengths and concurrent difficulties, a crucial decision exists: whether to maximize the potential growth and contribution of the program to the State and national community or whether to modify the program and mission to meet the current levels of funding and support. It is difficult to envision maintaining the current high standards and reputation of the program given the current demands on OLIT faculty. This decision is complex, encompassing many institutional considerations. The Review Team, therefore, offers an overall, broad recommendation, and a .number of recommendations relating to the specific concerns identified in this report.

A. Overall Recommendation

Given the identified concerns, and in particular the 'fit' of the OLIT program within the University, the Review Team recommends a task force be formed and a study be carried out on the future focus, role and position of OLIT within the University. Such a study seems to be appropriately located under the remit of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Review Team recommends the study consider:

- first and foremost the viability of the program,
- the integrity of the program and whether it be maintained, or re-focused and re-branded, including the addition of an organizational performance focus in the curriculum
- the nature of the degree program: potential collaborations with other academic units within UNM, nationally and internationally,
- the student population served and the specific needs being met,
- the cost, benefits and consequences of particular options,
- the appropriate positioning of the degree within the University for the Unit to capitalize on the value of the OLIT program, and OLIT to capitalize on the value from the Unit, and
- strategies for anchoring and promoting its brand throughout the University.

B. Specific Recommendations

1. Increase the number of faculty by at least one position, preferably two, so that the quality and high academic standards that currently exist are maintained. Over time, the added faculty will maintain the image, reputation, and position of the OLIT program.
2. Provide advising, mentoring and financial support for OLIT graduate students (e.g., assistantships and graduate student travel).
3. Establish an advisory board that consists of critical stakeholders within the university and community employers, and HRD leaders. This should be

done so that the OLIT program has access to relevant, current, and just-in-time advice, expertise, and recommendations useful in improving the quality of the programs useful in improving the quality of similar HRD program as well as access to additional financial support.

4. Expand the curriculum to include a greater focus on performance management, change management, organizational development, and performance consulting by capitalizing on the positioning of the program within the university so as not to result in duplication of courses or curriculum across the University.
5. Develop an aggressive promotional strategy to inform, persuade, and remind administrators of the OLIT programs value-added proposition to the College of Education in achieving its mission and goals.