

Advancing Program Review:

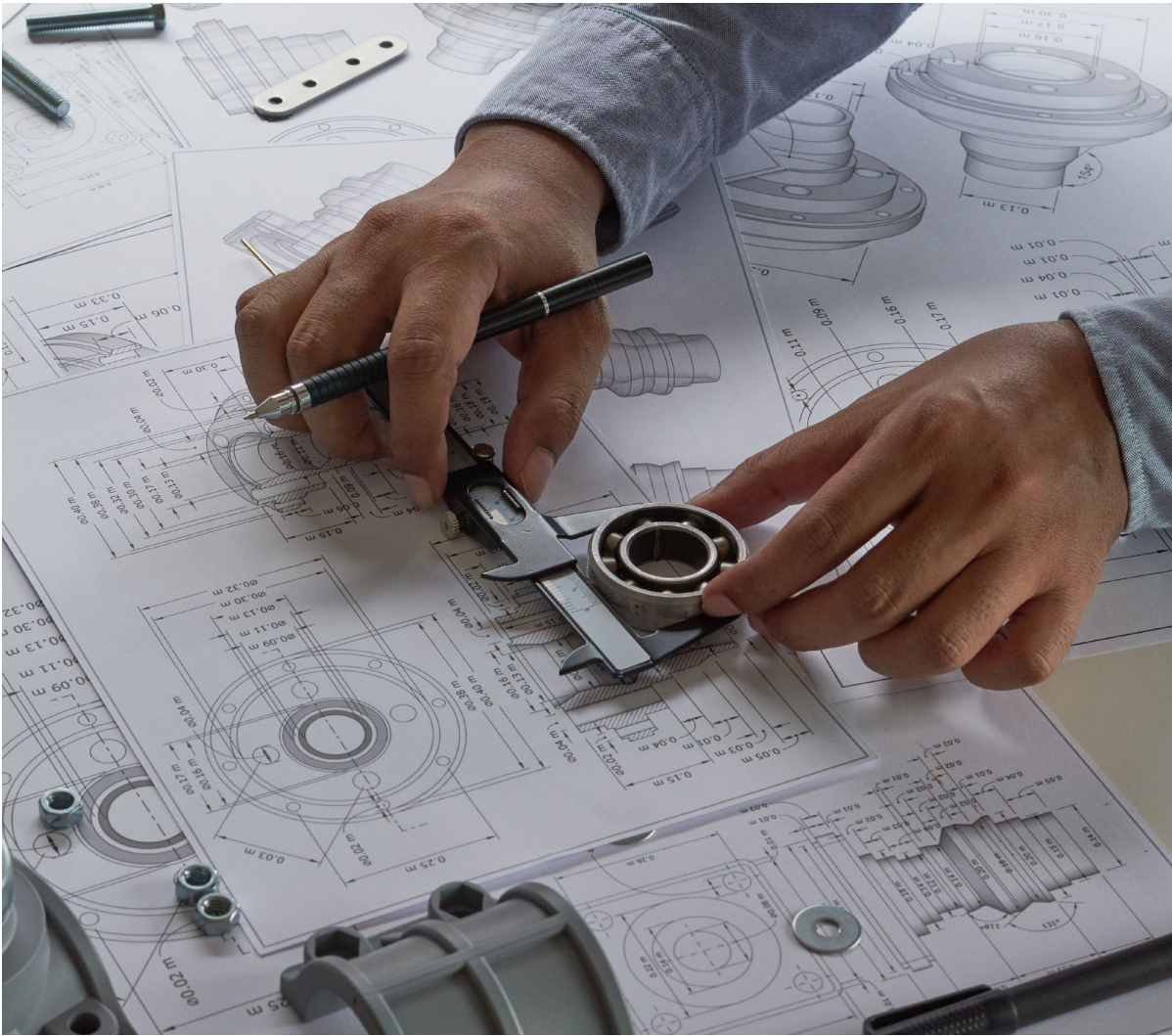
Supporting Illinois Community
College CTE Programs through Equity
Centered Resources



OCCRL

Office of Community College
Research and Leadership

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Introduction to the Study

Building on the findings of an initial evaluation study of the ICCB program review process (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, 2018), OCCRL engaged the field in participatory action research toward the development of an equity-centered rubric to advance learning and support for the state’s CTE Program Review process. The need for a rubric was identified by participants in the evaluation study:

Participants also felt that job aids such as rubrics could be used to help support internal feedback and professional development, as well as serve as the structure for feedback from ICCB. However, it was emphasized that any such rubric should focus not on the content but on the quality of the response itself (e.g., how well

did it address the question?). A participant summarized:

perhaps they could establish a rubric that would be shared with all the colleges, so that you would know some items and what the various criteria would be for “emerging, meeting, and exceeding” on that rubric. (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, pp. 21-22).

Goals

The initial evaluation study of the program review process for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study in Illinois was driven by four goals:

- 1) improve the efficiency and efficacy of the program review process by identifying challenges, redundancies, and omissions, and provide recommendations for refining the process.

2) Examine variations of the program review process across institutional contexts and institutional identities (e.g., rural/suburban/urban, minority-serving institutions/predominately white institutions, small/large student populations) to understand how the process is utilized across diverse institutions throughout Illinois.

3) Identify professional development, technical support, and supplemental materials that could improve outcomes associated with the program review.

4) Enhance the application of program review findings in colleges' campus-level programmatic planning and decision-making (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, p. 1).

The development of the rubric is a direct response to the third goal of the evaluation study to create relevant supplemental materials to enhance the outcomes of the program review process. This participatory action research will continue to apply the definition of "equity-guided" from the evaluation study "as a commitment that is shared throughout the college geared toward fostering systemic and localized changes that improve equity for underserved students (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, 2018, p. 8)."

Framework

The framework of this study was guided by a differentiation between equity and equality. "Nieto and Bode (2009) clarify that equity is the process involved in achieving the ultimate goal—equality" (as cited in Welton & La Londe, 2013, p. 6). ICCB requires a five-year program review cycle that is facilitated through the Program Review Manual (ICCB, 2021). The Career and Technical Education template within the manual includes three specific indicators of need, cost effectiveness, and quality. Consistent with the original evaluation study, an equity-guided program review process was defined "as a commitment that is shared throughout the college geared toward fostering systemic and localized changes that improve equity for underserved students" (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, participants were asked to engage in conversation toward defining a continuum for equity-guided responses across the three indicators and the overall program review submission (see Appendix A). These

responses have informed the development of an equity-centered rubric that can be utilized across community college contexts in the state of Illinois to support equity-guided program review processes in CTE programs of study.

Methods

This study will be approached as critical action research defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as a "self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way language is used, organization and power in a local situation, and action to improve things" (p. 568). This particular approach to inquiry is selected given the participatory nature of the study and the centering of equity within the rubric. The "practice" of program review is identified as reflexive wherein "coparticipants attempt to remake and improve their own practice to overcome distortions, incoherence, contradictions, and injustices" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 579). The research process of developing a rubric to inform this practice across varying institutional contexts is therefore "constructed as a way of collaborating in the process of transforming their practices, their understanding of their practices, and the situations in which they practice" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 579). Within the critical action research approach, the study will mix groups of participants together (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Role of Researchers as Participants

Critical action research (CAR) combines theory and practice to enable the inclusive participation of all stakeholders in the research process, with the goal of generating practical solutions. One of the foundational tenets of critical action research is the enablement of participants solving problems encountered in their daily processes through reflectivity, to ultimately improve their practice(s).

Under this definition and the transformative principle of CAR, this study was designed, in the concept that knowledge is created through collaboration amongst all stakeholders.

OCCRL researchers worked collaboratively with practitioners to co-generate knowledge regarding advancement and support for those engaged in the CTE Program Review Process. Researchers participated in dialogue within the focus groups, providing insights from their own professional experiences as well sharing resources and tools.

Participants

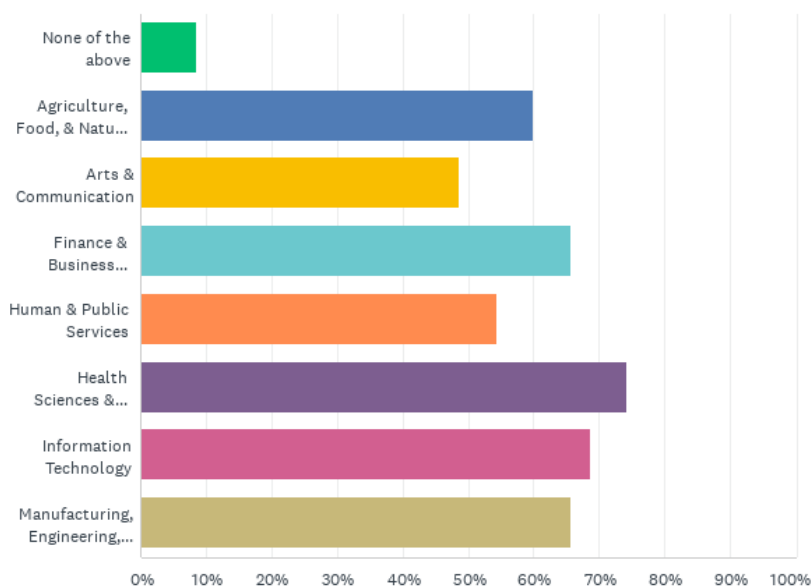
Participants were asked to complete an introductory online survey (see Appendix A) to inform focus group facilitation and provide scheduling availability for pre-determined focus group dates and times. All focus groups were facilitated virtually and scheduled for a maximum of 90 minutes guided by a protocol (see Appendix B). Following the conclusion of all focus groups and the creation of a draft rubric, participants were asked to complete a second follow-up survey for final feedback (see Appendix C).

In order to ensure a wide range of relevant stakeholders from Illinois community colleges, participants were recruited via e-mail from the following groups: individuals that participated in the previous Program Review Illinois participatory evaluation study, current and former members of the Program Review Advisory Committee, Perkins Administrators, Illinois Community College Faculty

Association, Illinois Community College Chief Student Services Officers Commission, Illinois Community College Chief Academic Officers, and faculty professional organizations for CTE disciplines. These recruitment efforts led to a total of 36 eligible survey respondents, 30 of whom participated in focus groups representing 21 community college districts in Illinois.

Thirty-one respondents identified their primary role as administrator/staff while five identified as faculty. For those respondents that provided demographic data, 26 identified as female, 9 as male and 27 as white or Caucasian, 4 as Black or African American, 2 as white/Latino, and 1 as Pacific Islander. Participant affiliations with Illinois CTE career pathways at their respective institutions are identified below. Following the development of a draft rubric, a second survey was sent to all 31 focus group participants yielding nine responses.

Q10 Please check all Career and Technical Education (CTE) career pathways that you are affiliated with in a professional capacity (this could be an instructional or non-instructional role):



Rubric

[Click here](#) to view the full rubric.

Reviewing Results & Concluding Thoughts

The development of the Program Review Rubric, as a self-assessment tool to support practitioners, pursuant to quality completion and submission, enabled the examination of historically homogenous demographics in CTE programs. The rubric's assessment of responsiveness to advancing equity is reflective of the participant's responses to the need to identify underserved students and redress racial equity gaps. In alignment with the study's purpose to aid the state's CTE program review process, mechanisms to increase institutional participation across administration, faculty, and industry partners were shared as well as the data points that institutions can explore for further queries related to student outcomes and experience.

Furthermore, the study served to provoke consideration of how the program review process should lead to action steps reflective of equity-guided continuous improvement models, including the necessity of student's voice to inform practice and participant commitment to strategic planning and resource sharing. It should be noted that some limitations were present, including the overall lack of student participation, racial/ethnic diversity, and faculty participation. These limitations substantiate the need for the study's rubric outcome to support how the program review process is approached and completed with attention to equity consciousness. The absence of student and faculty voice and participation across racial and ethnic groups prompts significant consideration about who is not represented, why they are not participating and the needed inclusionary action.

Engaging with stakeholders across the state of Illinois confirmed the importance of strengthening partnerships between researchers, practitioners, faculty, and students. The study and resulting rubric demonstrate the value of focus groups to provide an opportunity to "create forums in which people can join one another as coparticipants, to remake the practices in which they interact" (McTaggart & Kemis, 2005, p.563) as insights and considerations from multiple contexts inform the rubric.

The elements and standards for assessment

provided in the rubric encourage thoughtful considerations of policy and procedures to eliminate static or linear responses. The program rubric review rubric assists institutions' completion of the program review process to consider barriers, address inequities, and supports campus-level planning and decision making. The rubric provides considerations for self-evaluation in order to support institutions' measurement of effectiveness and delivery of high-quality programs and services.

References

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Fox, H.L.; Thrill, C.R.; Keist, J. (2018). *Advancing program review: Evaluating and envisioning the future of program review at Illinois community colleges*. Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

McTaggart, R., & Kamis, S. (2005). Participatory Action Research. N.K.Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Ed.). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (3rd ed. pp.539-609). Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Welton, A.D., & La Londe, P.G. (2013). *Leadership for college and career pathways*.

Appendix A

Developing an Equity-Centered Rubric for CTE Program Review in Illinois Community Colleges Introductory Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study and future focus group. To assist us in preparing to facilitate the focus groups and inform our research, please answer the questions below. If you don't know the answer or the question is not applicable to you, please indicate that as well.

- 1) Name
- 2) Select Role:
 - Administrator/Staff
 - Faculty
 - Student

[Based on their selected role, participants will be directed to one of two surveys below]

Administrator/Staff and Faculty

- 1) Professional Title
- 2) Institutional Affiliation(s)
- 3) Would you like your name, title, and college affiliation included in a listing for the acknowledgement section of relevant OCCRL products resulting from the study?
 - Yes
 - No
- 4) Gender
- 5) Race/Ethnicity
- 6) Please identify all Career and Technical Education (CTE) program(s) of study that you are affiliated with in a professional capacity:
- 7) Please describe your role in constructing or informing the responses to the questions in the CTE Program Review template available for review here.
- 8) At your institution, who or what department is ultimately responsible for finalizing the responses submitted for CTE Program Review?
- 9) Within the context of this study, participants are asked to differentiate between equity and equality. As cited in Welton & La Londe (2013, p. 6) "Nieto and Bode (2009) clarify that equity is the process involved in achieving the ultimate goal—equality." Therefore, "equity-guided" in the context of program review is defined "as a commitment that is shared throughout the college geared toward fostering systemic and localized changes that improve equity for underserved students (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, 2018, p. 8)." Applying these definitions, what would you look for in a completed CTE program review document to know that the process of answering the questions was equity-guided?

Student

- 1) What community college are you currently attending?
- 2) Would you like your name, title, and college affiliation included in a listing for the acknowledgement section of relevant OCCRL products resulting from the study?
 - Yes
 - No
- 3) Gender
- 4) Race/Ethnicity
- 5) What Career and Technical Education (CTE) program(s) of study are you currently enrolled in?
- 6) Approximately how many courses have you completed toward your program of study?
- 7) What is your ultimate goal for completing these courses (check all that apply)?
 - Completing a certificate(s)
 - Completing an Associates degree
 - Transferring into a Bachelors degree program

- Advancing my skills for employment
8. Every community college CTE program of study has to complete a five-year review of their program for submission to the Illinois Community College Board. The questions for this review begin on page 12 of the ICCB Program Review manual available here. In order to answer these questions, colleges collect data from students. What opportunities have you had as a student to provide feedback on your experiences (e.g. course evaluations, student surveys, interviews)?
 9. As a student, how would you know that your college was committed to removing barriers for students to complete their goals?

Appendix B

Developing an Equity-Centered Rubric for CTE Program Review in Illinois Community Colleges Focus Group Protocol

During the focus group, we will use the CTE Program Review submission template to guide us through the conversation. For each of the identified sections of the template, we will ask participants to identify and describe a continuum of quality for equity-guided submission responses.

In preparation for the focus group, you were asked to read two publications from the Office of Community College Research and Leadership as well as review the program review template. Please recall how these readings differentiated between equity and equality as you enter our discussion. Specifically, as cited in Welton & La Londe (2013, p. 6) “Nieto and Bode (2009) clarify that equity is the process involved in achieving the ultimate goal—equality.” Therefore, “equity-guided” in the context of program review is defined “as a commitment that is shared throughout the college geared toward fostering systemic and localized changes that improve equity for underserved students (Fox, Thrill, & Keist, 2018, p. 8).”

The end goal of this research will be to create an equity-centered rubric for Illinois community colleges to assess the extent to which their program review responses are equity-guided and make progress toward being exemplary. This provides a visual representation of what this continuum might look like:

Minimally equity-guided submission

Exemplary equity-guided submission



As we get started, please feel free to share your thoughts and responses both verbally but also in the chat box. Please be respectful of your fellow participants and balance your own participation to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute positively to the discussion.

As indicated in the template, colleges are asked to review three indicators of need, cost effectiveness, and quality. We will begin by asking the same set of questions for each of these indicators beginning with need.

- 1) How is equity relevant to program need?
- 2) What evidence would demonstrate an equity-guided review of program need?
- 3) How would you describe an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program need?
- 4) As you think about the continuum ranging from a minimally equity-guided response to an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program need, how would you know an institution was making progress toward becoming exemplary?

Now we will move into indicator 2: cost effectiveness

- 5) How is equity relevant to program cost effectiveness?
- 6) What evidence would demonstrate an equity-guided review of program cost effectiveness?
- 7) How would you describe an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program cost effectiveness?
- 8) As you think about the continuum ranging from a minimally equity-guided response to an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program cost effectiveness, how would you

know an institution was making progress toward becoming exemplary?

We will now move into indicator 3: quality

- 9) How is equity relevant to program quality?
- 10) What evidence would demonstrate an equity-guided review of program quality?
- 11) How would you describe an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program quality?
- 12) As you think about the continuum ranging from a minimally equity-guided response to an exemplary equity-guided response to assessing program quality, how would you know an institution was making progress toward becoming exemplary?

Overall Document

How would you know that a submitted program review prioritized a commitment to advancing equity in a program of study?

What would you look for as evidence that a submitted program review would result in action and accountability for advancing equity in a program of study?

How would an institution do an exemplary job of demonstrating that their responses were informed by student voice, particularly the voices of those students experiencing inequitable outcomes?

How would a submitted review demonstrate an exemplary job of conducting an equity-guided program review process?

As you think about the continuum ranging from a minimally equity-guided to an exemplary equity-guided overall review, how would you know an institution was making progress toward becoming exemplary?

Appendix C

Developing an Equity-Centered Rubric for CTE Program Review in Illinois Community Colleges Final Feedback

Thank you for your continued participation in this research. Since the rubric is still in draft form, we ask that you not share it at this time. Please click here to review the draft document and provide any final feedback for each section as indicated below.

Q1: Select the role that most describes you

- a. Administrator/Staff
- b. Faculty
- c. Student

Q2: Need

Q3: Cost Effectiveness

Q4: Quality

Q5: Incorporation of Student Voice

Q6: Overall Review

Q7: Process of Review

Q8: Please share any additional feedback here



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