NADE Accreditation: The Right Decision for the Current Time

NADE Accreditation Commission

NADE has long recognized that "Developmental Education is a comprehensive process that focuses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students. Developmental Education includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, personal/career counseling, academic advisement, and coursework" (NADE website at https://thenade.org/Mission-Vision-and-Goals). Sometimes at odds with this holistic vision is the narrower and more traditional view of Developmental Education as a sequence of stand-alone, semester-long remedial courses. This aspect of the field has been challenged, and now new paradigms and platforms for instructional delivery are being mandated.

In the current climate of scrutiny, the NADE Accreditation process is more relevant and important than ever to the discussion of students' success and completion of meaningful credentials. Clearly, the continuous, systematic self-assessment and evaluation inherent in the self-study and accreditation process—both formative and summative—is vital to the effectiveness of any academic support program (Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Boylan, 2002).

Changes to the traditional instructional model, whether in the form of paired courses, learning communities, embedded instruction, contextualized learning, or any of a number of other designs, have a direct impact on the student population served by developmental programs. The effectiveness of these changes, as well as the short- and long-term implications they hold for various student groups, must be continuously evaluated. Though many revisions to traditional educational delivery systems have been mandated at state or system levels and/or by external grants, individual institutions and developmental/transitional programs must exercise their responsibility to ensure the quality, effectiveness, integrity, and efficacy of the support services they offer to students. The assessment and evaluation required for NADE Accreditation allow developmental programs to study the effect of these changes on the students they serve.

At a time when developmental and transitional education programs are being asked to radically change their program designs, the professionals working in these programs need to advocate for the students who will be most impacted by such policies. They also need to have confidence that they can successfully implement changes to enhance student success. As MDRC senior policy expert Thomas Brock suggested at the June 2012 National Center for Postsecondary Research conference, research alone is not enough. Policy makers need to make the case for change, generate the will to change, and either reallocate or find new resources to support the change (Brock, 2012).

In the current politically-charged climate, NADE Accreditation helps programs demonstrate not only to themselves and their administrations, but to their states and systems, the *effects* of changes made to their programs. The accreditation process, itself, demonstrates the results of changes, mandated or self-determined, to student success, and it provides the evidence needed to make data-driven decisions about programs. The process also explores the intended and unintended consequences of various types of interventions for different groups, cost and cost effectiveness of strategies, and holistic implications for student success, including completion of meaningful credentials.

Developmental/transitional education and learning assistance professionals should participate in developing a larger body of evidence about learning and teaching strategies. It is imperative that professionals in the field work together to apply the best practices that support students and programs. Programs that follow the NADE Accreditation process utilizing the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* have an opportunity to demonstrate that they are following recognized best practices.

NADE Accreditation promotes standards for research and practice in Developmental/ Transitional Education. The accreditation process additionally creates an avenue for innovations to emerge and become part of the fabric of Developmental Education and :Learning Assistance. NADE Accreditation requirements promote a *culture of evidence and continuous improvement* for the Developmental/Transitional programs dedicated to student success in colleges and universities.

NADE Accreditation is flexible and responds to the wide spectrum of developmental education programs found in the profession. Accreditation provides opportunities to examine all aspects of programs that offer academic support to students—traditional and innovative coursework programs, course-based learning assistance for credit-level courses, and tutoring services (Clark- Thayer

& Cole, Eds., 2009). It is ultimately intended to advance research in the field.

NADE Accreditation will continue to support Developmental/Transitional Education professionals in their efforts to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their students in this changing and uncertain environment. In summary, NADE Accreditation is highly relevant for any institution serious about making research-based changes and assessing their outcomes in student support programs.

References

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An Overview of NADE Accreditation

Jennifer Ferguson and Naomi Ludman

As noted in the introduction to this issue of the *Digest*, the articles here present many "voices" or perspectives on the accreditation process. This article is intended to provide an overview of the steps involved and, at the same time, to share the "voice" of the commission on the value of accreditation. Those who have gone through the accreditation process have, perhaps, the most eloquent "voices" as to the value of accreditation. However, those of us who serve on the Commission speak with the collective "voice" of the many programs who have shared their experiences. Therefore, this article provides both a broad overview of the accreditation process and gives what we have come to call our "elevator speech," our "collective why."

In short, accreditation is a process by which programs demonstrate their academic quality; that is, they demonstrate that they are making decisions for programmatic changes based on

- a sound theoretical foundation,
- clearly stated mission, goals, and objectives,
- a comprehensive self-study and thoughtful use of best practices, and
- consistent, systematic data collection and analysis (both baseline and comparative).

Additional benefits of this project include gaining knowledge about professional standards in the field(s) of the program, including assessment and evaluation models, awareness of national standards and student outcomes, student learning outcomes, and student success measures in general. Once involvement has begun, the program often finds itself contributing to the research of the field and becoming a voice of authority on its own campus and beyond—even nationally.

One way to get a quick overview of the accreditation process is to look at the "Application Checklist" which can be found on the accreditation website www.nadeaccreditation. net. In looking at this, it might appear that the accreditation process is very linear: 1) complete the application narrative, 2) complete the self-study, 3) collect and analyze two years of base-line data, 4) create and implement an action plan, 5) collect and analyze two years of comparative data, 6) collect and analyze data required on the minimum data templates (both baseline and comparative), and, 7) put it all together and turn in the application.

However, in reality, the process is rarely that straight forward. Applicants may decide to start with the self-study and then work on tasks such as mission, goals and theory simultaneously. Sometimes applicants already have data that can fit the requirements of the baseline data for the application so that data becomes the starting point. Wherever applicants start, the process is likely to be quite recursive, but it is helpful to keep the "straight line" laid out in order to see where all the pieces need to fit in the end.

The application packet consists of several sections: a narrative component containing a brief description and his-