



Accreditation Progress Report

Michigan Virtual School

Mr. Jamey T. Fitzpatrick, President

3101 Technology Blvd, Suite G
Lansing, Michigan, United States 48910

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1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 27,000 schools in 65 countries. AdvancED provides accreditation under the seals of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI).

The Accreditation Process.

To earn and maintain accreditation, schools must:

1. Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems.

Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school systems to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2. Engage in continuous improvement.

Schools implement continuous improvement focused on improving student performance and school effectiveness.

3. Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school improve. The school acts on the team's required actions and submits an Accreditation Progress Report at prescribed intervals following the Quality Assurance Review.

The AdvancED accreditation process engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report

Purpose

The Accreditation Progress Report (APR) is a critical component of the AdvancED accreditation process. It engages the school in a detailed review and analysis of the steps it has taken to address the required actions made by the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Completing the report helps the school focus and reflect on its continuous improvement efforts.

It is the responsibility of the school to address each of the QAR report's required actions within the 5-year term accreditation. Deadlines for completion of the report are based on the school's accreditation status and must be met to maintain accreditation. Some schools may complete multiple reports during the 5-year term to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the required actions.

Structure of the Report

The APR is organized around the required actions in the school's QAR team report. The APR lists the required action from the report along with the rationale and evidence supporting the required action. The school then indicates the progress that it has made toward meeting the required action and provides a more detailed response describing the actions it has taken and the results obtained. The school provides a response for each of the QAR team required actions.

Following the school's response is the reviewer's response. Each APR is read by an AdvancED reader in the state or regional office who reviews the school's response to determine if the required action has been met. The reader provides his/her assessment of the progress the school has made and then offers comments to the school. If required actions remain in progress or not addressed, a new APR will be created with a new deadline for completion. As noted earlier, the school must address the required actions within the 5-year accreditation term.

Conclusion

The Accreditation Progress Report is a useful report for members of the school and broader community. It helps community members see and monitor the ongoing improvement efforts of their school. It demonstrates how the school uses its accreditation for the ongoing benefit of the students it serves.

3.0. Summary

1.1. Based on the actions taken by your institution to address the required actions provided by the QAR team, what has been the impact on your institution's overall effectiveness?:

The recommendations of the QAR team has had a positive impact on the overall effectiveness of MVU. It is our belief that our actions to improve data collection and garner additional feedback from parents, students and the schools we serve, has contributed to our mission to provide leadership by expanding, improving and innovating opportunities for K-12 students and educators. The over-arching goal of MVU is to serve as a catalyst for change by providing quality Internet-based programs that strengthen teaching and learning for K-12 education.

1.2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?:

We continue to work with the Office of Educational Performance Indicators at the Michigan Department of Education to collect demographic and assessment data of students who participate in MVS courses. Further, as an online provider, we are challenged by the lack of face-to-face contact with students and parents. However, we continue to explore new innovations in online learning and blended learning opportunities that will greatly impact this challenge. MVU is undertaking a new project with local schools called MyBlend. MyBlend aims to personalize learning for students, using the best practices of face-to-face and online learning.

1.3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?:

Online learning is growing rapidly in Michigan and across the nation. A report released at the recent International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) virtual school symposium in New Orleans asked as "online learning is becoming more common, is it the better way for students to learn than traditional schools?"

The accreditation process has informed our actions as we focus on outcome-based measures including: proficiency, student growth, college and career readiness and closing the achievement gap.

As stated in our mission and vision statements, MVU is committed to

High standards for quality, ongoing research and the use of data to improve operational decisions;

Use of innovative technologies to address persistent educational challenges;

Listening to customer and stakeholder feedback to guide product and service development plans;

Excellence in the design, development and delivery of online educational services;

A professional environment that celebrates creativity, good ideas and initiative; and

Serving as a responsible steward of public and private resources.

Michigan Virtual School hosted a Quality Assurance Review team on 10/27/2010 - 10/28/2010. Through interviews with school stakeholders, classroom observations, and a review of school documents and student performance results, the team developed a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) report detailing its findings from the visit. The full report can be viewed at www.advanc-ed.org.

The QAR report contained commendations and required actions for the school. The school is responsible for addressing each of the required actions in the report. At prescribed intervals based on the school's accreditation status, the school must complete an Accreditation Progress Report. Below, please find the required actions from the QAR report and the school's response to each required action. Following the school's response is the reviewer's progress response and comments.

4.0. Required Action 1

Source: QAR

Date: 2010-11-22

Required Action:

Follow through in the improvement of data collection, analysis, and use.

Evidence:

Although considerable program and financial data are collected and analyzed, student, parent, and school demographic data are practically non-existent. After numerous requests by the team for student, parent, and school contact information, access was minimal. Student survey data and interviews with staff indicate a need for further analysis to inform program improvement for specific populations, such as for credit recovery.

Rationale:

As stated in the Frameworks, stakeholder feedback is to guide product and service development plans. This should include students, parents, and information from feeder school stakeholders.

4.1. School Response

Progress Status: Completed

Response: As a non-profit organization that provides support services to schools throughout the state, MVU has limited access to student demographic and assessment data. However, significant actions have been taken to improve the collection, analysis and use of student, parent and school partners data.

Specifically, MVU implemented a new Customer Enrollment System (CEMS). CEMS streamlines the enrollment process for parents and school personnel. A team of MVU staff from all divisions provided input on the re-design. the Customer Service Director, Tracy Giesekeing gathered information from district and parent customers to determine what features the enrollment system that would improve the efficiency and ease of use by school district constituents and parents. As a result, the new CEMS includes the MVS

course catalog, enrollment calendar, accreditation information, parent, school and mentor resources and feedback links. The Curriculum and Instruction division utilizes the CEMS data to determine course offerings. Curriculum and Instruction reviews all enrollment data two times a year and analyzes student completion data and instructor contact hours with online students. The design, planning and implementation of the system occurred over a two year period of time. Full implementation of the system occurred in the Spring of 2012.

MVU further addressed the need for the collection and analysis of data by creating a Learning Assessment Manager position. The Learning Assessment Manager is responsible for collecting and disaggregating student demographic and performance data. The position was posted and filled September of 2012.

MVU uses a survey tools, Opinion and Think Tank. MVU online surveys provided data from the MVU Advisory Board and Partners of Innovation group. The advisory board and partners group is made up of school leaders from all regions of the state including superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, intermediate school district leaders, and university leaders. The recommendations from these groups guide the development of courses and programs at MVU.

MVU entered into a partnership with six Detroit high schools as part of Michigan's Education Achievement System, which was implemented by Gov. Rick Snyder to redesign public education in Michigan's priority schools by including them in a new system that drives more resources directly into the classroom. The EAA asked MVU to operate the online learning portion of its curricular offerings. Our knowledge of the importance of face-to-face contact for low performing students led to our hiring of Mentors, Caseworkers and a Supervisor for the EAA program. MVU instituted a pilot with the EAA schools and collected student readiness data. This assessment, Smarter Measure provides student data in the areas of learning styles, reading rate and recall, technical competency, and technical knowledge. The data collected is used to help students select appropriate MVS courses for high school completion.

MVU utilizes course completion data to determine student achievement. MVS student course completion rate for the 2011-12 school year was 86.3%.

In late 2012, with support from the Governor and the Michigan Legislature, MVU established the Center for Online Learning Research and Innovation. The Center will serve multiple roles to support Michigan's students, parents, schools and educators. The Center will support and accelerate innovation in education through a variety of activities, including researching technology-based instructional tools and online learning delivery models, designing professional development services for educators, and identifying and sharing best practices for implementing online and blended education delivery models. The Center will also provide leadership for online and blended learning in the state through activities such as:

Producing an annual consumer awareness report for schools and parents about effective online education providers and education delivery models, performance data, cost structures, and research trends;

Providing a clearinghouse for research reports, academic studies, evaluations, and other information related to online learning;

In collaboration with the department and interested colleges and universities in this state, recommending to the superintendent guidelines and standards for a new teacher endorsement credential related to effective online and blended instruction; and

Convening focus groups and conduct annual surveys of teachers, administrators, pupils, parents, and others to identify barriers and opportunities related to online learning; and

The Center will support and accelerate innovation and we plan to focus attention on a variety of strategies designed to build greater capacity for online teaching and learning that further expand Michigan's leadership role in the knowledge economy.

We continue to be challenged in the collection and analysis of data because we are not a public school entity. MVU's President and Director of Online Learning Research and Innovation recently met with leaders from the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) to review MVU's data collection needs. Based on this meeting it is expected that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be executed before the end of 2012 to finalize how student data will be exchanged and used between MVU and CEPI.

4.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed

Comments for Institution: MVU has recognized and made significant process in the area of data collection, analysis and use. Using the iNACOL report 'Measuring Quality From Inputs to Outcomes' may provide additional suggestions for data that will validate the quality of education students received from MVU.

5.0. Required Action 2

Source: QAR

Date: 2010-11-22

Required Action:

Develop strategies to imbed student and parent involvement into the fabric of the school.

Evidence:

The team was unable to identify parent involvement in program development, implementation, and assessment. Although student completion survey data was available for review by the team, substantial interactions with students were not possible. Stakeholder involvement appears to be limited beyond the confines of the internal operations of the school.

Rationale:

As a service provider, MVS should establish systems to connect with the ultimate consumers as players in the strategic planning process.

5.1. School Response

Progress Status: In Progress

Response: MVU Advisory group consisting of representatives from local schools, intermediate school districts, universities and educational professional organizations provide guidance and insights of how we can best serve our constituents. As an outcome of the advisory group, MVU receives recommendations for improving our programs and helps us connect with schools, parents and students.

MVU has created a parent web page that includes parent online resources, help desk assistance, accreditation information and a feedback link.. MVU instituted a student web page that includes course lists, descriptions, requirements, anti-bullying policy, and FAQ's. A feedback link is a prominent feature on the website.

MVU established a process to support local schools and connect with parents. MVU customer service staff conducted face-to-face Parent Orientation sessions at participating school districts. Additional MVS representatives from Curriculum and Instruction personnel attend local district student orientation meetings. MVU curriculum and instructional staff provide information of standards alignment of our courses and instructional activities found in all of our courses.

MVU conducted interviews with student and parents to determine the effectiveness of our courses and the success of students in our programs. Video testimonials are available on the MVS website.

Concurrently, MVS courses include a student and parent survey. The data from the surveys are used to determine the quality of our courses and the effectiveness of our online instructors. We also receive recommendations for new course offerings from our constituent districts, which are evaluated by the product development team and the curriculum and instruction team.

To support building and district-wide school improvement and technology planning efforts, the Michigan Virtual University (MVU) has developed an innovative Planning Guide for Online and Blended Learning that is designed to help create new models for student success. This planning guide includes an overview of online and blended learning, offers a series of guiding questions to support local planning efforts, identifies standards for teaching in online and blended environments and provides a set of student and district planning tools. MVU believes that a school district's plan for online learning should be closely aligned with both its school improvement planning process and its technology infrastructure investments. This document highlights how online and blended learning can support the Michigan School Improvement Framework and help transform teaching and learning. An electronic copy of this report can be accessed online at: http://media.mivu.org/marketing/MVU_RPT_PlanningGuide.pdf.

5.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed

Comments for Institution: MVU has established practices to involve parents in the education process that meet the accreditation standards.