

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL
TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM**

**RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL TEAM REPORT AND
ACTION PLAN**

FALL 2002 – SPRING 2009

Prepared by

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Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology Program**

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Introductory Comments

The OLIT program faculty members would like to express our sincere appreciation to the external review team for all their hard work on our review. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the Program Review Team: Barbara Grabowski of Pennsylvania State University, Ann Cunliffe of our very own University of New Mexico, Alexandre Ardichvili of the University of Minnesota, and Jerry Gilley of Colorado State University. We realize that they spent many hours trying to understand the faculty, our students, other stakeholders, and our mission – and how we can improve that mission. We especially want to give some sort of “extra thanks” to this review team – starting with Barbara and Ann for keeping the review on schedule after Jerry and Alexandre could not make the onsite review due to illness and unexpected medical complications. We recognize that keeping Jerry and Alexandre updated on the review process at a distance took a lot of effort and diligence by Barbara and Ann. And our admiration goes out to Jerry and Alexandre – they still managed to give us their expertise even through all their own difficulties. For these members of our extraordinary review team, we realize that your efforts truly were a labor of love for the profession and we are extremely grateful for all you have done for us.

In our following paragraphs, we provide our response to the written report by Program Review Team dated December 1, 2009. Excerpts taken from the Program Review Team are highlighted in italics. Responses by OLIT program faculty members are provided in bold.

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.

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.

OLIT faculty members agree with this assessment that the OLIT curriculum is an important strength of the program. We are pleased that the benefits of all of our work to put together an integrated curriculum can be easily seen by outside reviewers.

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.

OLIT faculty members believe that this strength is a core reason for the success of the OLIT program. We also agree with the external review team that OLIT contributes to the University's institution-wide strategies by establishing synergistic partnerships, innovative research-to-application platforms in the field of instructional technology – and that faculty utilizes their research in the various fields of instructional technology in the design and delivery of the face-to-face and online courses and student centered decision-making.

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.

We, OLIT program faculty members, also believe that our “research into practice” approach to our curriculum is a great strength of our program.

4. The OLIT Student Profile and Employability

Three main strengths exist: student ethnicity and nationality, background and experience -- stimulating class discussion and beneficial learning opportunities; students put learning into practice immediately; and the OLIT Program provides employable skills in many organizational contexts.

We believe this is an accurate characterization of the interdisciplinary nature of our program and the outcomes we strive to obtain.

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.

How can OLIT faculty members disagree with this generous assessment of us?

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.

OLIT faculty members are only too painfully aware of this assessment of our shortage of faculty members to achieve our mission. In our action plan below, we do make some plans – although not ideal – to relieve at least some of the problems associated with this shortage of faculty members.

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.

We are quite pleased that our ongoing work to provide the most appropriate preparation for each of our degree programs is easily visible to those outside our program. This has been a continuing area of examination and revision in the different curriculum areas of our degree programs.

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.

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.

Painful to admit, but OLIT faculty members are concerned about this issue as well because of the high workloads they carry. In spite of this difficulty, research opportunities are offered to doctoral students to work on unfunded research projects led by faculty. Faculty do present and publish research with doctoral students. Many students however, are unable to follow through on faculty led research projects, as they are employed full time as well, and find it difficult to commit a significant amount of time to a research study. One way we have tried to support doctoral student research is through the doctoral student Community of Practice which meets once a month and is guided by a faculty mentor. We also work with students to publish research they conduct as part of the course requirements in doctoral level seminars. Since we are deeply concerned about this issue, we will explore all means possible to mentor and support doctoral student research and obtain external funding to support graduate research assistantships.

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.

Again, OLIT faculty members have to agree with this assessment. We are – as stated by our reviewers above – “at least two faculty members short of the minimum needed to maintain the quality and high standards of the undergraduate and graduate programs.”

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.

We agree in general with this concern and suggested solution. Since PhD students are so labor intensive we have gone to a more rigorous admission process that involves several faculty members in order to improve our selection of students who will successfully complete the program. However, we will examine our admission process to see if we can streamline it and still achieve the same quality in our selection process. As for the professional portfolio option for the master’s degree students – we will take this process improvement suggestion to heart and significantly reduce our number of faculty that are directly involved in evaluating each student portfolio. This is a welcomed suggestion that could only come from peers at other institutions.

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.

OLIT faculty members believe that there is little course duplication with courses in the Anderson School of Management and the Communications Department. However, we do embrace the suggestion that the synergies between OLIT courses and the courses in different Schools could be leveraged to reduce the workload burden on OLIT faculty with collaboration between faculties and agreements between Schools regarding course access. As outlined in our plan of action below, this has also become our strategy to create affiliation agreements with faculty in the Anderson School of Management and the Communications Department.

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. ...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.

OLIT faculty members find this recommendation very insightful and useful – but also quite frustrating at the same time. We found it quite insightful that our students and other constituents could potentially benefit greatly from more courses related to the traditional HRD area. This is good to know – but we found it painfully frustrating given our current shortage of faculty members. However, as discussed below in our action plan, we plan to investigate affiliating faculty members to teach graduate courses in performance management, change management, organizational development, and performance consulting – to see if we can make some progress with this recommendation.

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).... 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.

The OLIT program faculty members are pleased to find that the outside reviewers also saw what we see as a identify problem for our program. We have long recognized that we are an interdisciplinary program whose service is best seen from the university level. Within the context of this review, we have talked with several members of administration in our university about the problem of fit for our program. Beginning with our own dean, Dr, Richard Howell, we discussed whether our interdisciplinary mission would be better served in another part of the university as an interdisciplinary program. Dr. Howell listened closely to our issues and answered questions about possible solutions. He suggested that we explore the possibility of moving our program with other administrators to a place more accommodating to interdisciplinary study within the University. With this in mind, we next discussed this with Dr. Richard Holder, Deputy Provost, Mr. Doug Brown, Dean of the Anderson School of Management, and Dr. Amy Wohlert, Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies. While each of these individuals were quite gracious with their time, listened to our issues intently, all agreed that moving our program is not within the tradition of the University and not feasible in the near future because of all of the focus on budget considerations due to the downturn in the economy. Given the reality of our situation, we decided to continue to perceive our program as interdisciplinary, strengthen our relationships outside the College of Education -- and develop new relationships within the College that can benefit from the strengths of our program. This direction can be seen in our action plan below where we outline our plans to affiliate with faculty members in other Schools and collaborate with other programs within the College of Education.

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 programs 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.

We agree with this assessment of our value and prospects. We have been a very central and needed contribution to the mission of the University and the local community. However, we also recognize that we will have to modify the program and mission to meet the current levels of funding and support. Note that in our action plan we anticipate hiring a lecturer to help with teaching, research, and advising duties. We realize that what we need are two full time tenure track faculty members, however, this seems to be the only option at this time to help shore up our program to meet the high quality standards of service that we have established.

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.

OLIT faculty members thought this was a great idea and immediately began to pursue it. However, as described in our response to “3 Program Identity and Fit,” above, we found that after discussing this with several top level administrators, we were advised that moving our program is not within the tradition of the University and not feasible in the near future because of all of the focus on budget considerations due to the downturn in the economy.

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.

We whole-heartedly agree with this recommendation and have tried to act on it before this review. The OLIT program faculty members have tried – without success – for eight years to secure approval for one or more faculty positions. Given the importance of this recommendation, the OLIT program has taken a different tack at accomplishing this recommendation. OLIT faculty members and leadership have done some analysis and have shown that hiring a faculty member in a lecturer position would save money over the current situation where several part time faculty members are hired to cover courses. As a result, this request was brought forward to the College leadership (the chairs and the dean) and approval was received to hire a lecturer. While not an ideal solution, it will provide some relief to faculty members in the program.

2. Provide advising, mentoring and financial support for OLIT graduate students (e.g., assistantships and graduate student travel).

OLIT program faculty members agree that this is an important recommendation. Given the reality of our economic situation here at the University of New Mexico for the next few years, this will take some creativity. We plan to work on creating innovative ways to provide assistantships and graduate student travel. We are also involved in seeking external funds to support graduate student research.

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.

OLIT faculty members have discussed this recommendation in previous years – recognizing the value of establishing an Advisory Board. We tried to assemble an Advisory Committee of Alumni in 2007. However, because of the reduced number of faculty members and workload issues, we have focused our main energies in maintaining the high standards of our academic program through other means. We recognize the value of this recommendation and will work on it in the future.

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.

Since we agree with this recommendation and see its value, OLIT program faculty members have given this a considerable amount of thought. Our strategy is to “recruit” faculty members from other “partner programs” that have faculty members who serve on our dissertation committees such as faculty members in the Anderson School of Management and the Communications Department. We plan to investigate affiliating faculty members to teach graduate courses in performance management, change management, organizational development, and performance consulting. Also, affiliation with our program would give these faculty members access to our doctoral students – allowing them to work with our students as their own, including co-chairing dissertations.

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.

We also agree with this recommendation and plan to pursue it. Our promotional strategy is to take more action than simply talk about it. As noted above, in our response to recommendation number 4, we plan to offer more courses through faculty and programs with affiliation. This should strengthen the interdisciplinary nature of our program and help to show its value beyond the College of Education. Also, we are planning on expanding our program to K-12 professionals (media specialists, school librarians, technology coordinators/facilitators, and teachers). Many of these professionals already have – or are seeking -- positions as teachers and technology coordinators in schools. We plan to recruit more K-12 professionals seeking expertise as technology coordinators – and provide more sections of our courses to support them. In addition, we plan to offer to team with Teacher Education in offering distance education courses aimed specifically at teachers to help them develop online courses. Since there is a mandate by the state department of education for teachers to offer online courses, there is a tremendous

expected need by teachers to be prepared to teach online. This possible collaboration -- combined with our preparation of technology coordinators -- will also support K-12 professionals in offering online courses and could be a huge contribution to K-12 education in the State of New Mexico.