



APPLICATION PROCEDURES for 2013 CIRPA Best Practices Awards

Each applicant must be a current CIRPA member and can submit one application for these awards. Applications can be submitted electronically and must be received by May 31, 2013. Up to 3 Best Practices will be chosen by the Selection Committee. Award certificates will be presented at the 2013 CIRPA Conference and each winning team receives up to 2 free conference registrations for the 2013 conference.

To be eligible for assessment by the selection committee, a current CIRPA member must complete the following and email them to sharon.shultz@keyano.ca by May 31, 2013:

1. one electronic copy (Word format or pdf) of the full application form
2. Electronic or scanned copies of any supporting documentation

Although not required to do so, the applicant may include a more complete description of the project and supporting information, including audio-visual materials, manuals and other printed documents, and Internet site references for consideration by the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee may, at its discretion, consider part or all such additional information.

CIRPA may, at its discretion, post portions of the application and supporting documents on its web site.

***APPLICATION FOR THE
2013 CIRPA Best Practice Awards***

Information Page

1. Descriptive Title of Proposal: **Flipped Program Evaluation.**
2. Date of Implementation (preference will be given to projects with implementation dates within the last 2 years): **Fall 2011 to winter 2013 (currently in the process of implementing the action plan)**
3. Name of Institution: **Marianopolis College**
4. Name and Title of Person(s) Responsible for the Idea (if more than one, underline the one to contact for information): **Eric Lavigne - Associate Dean, Programs; Monica Lopez - Academic Resources Professional**

Office Address: **4873 Westmount Ave. Westmount, QC H3Y 1X9**
Telephone/Fax Number: **514-931-8792**
E-mail Address: **e.lavigne@marianopolis.edu; m.lopez@marianopolis.edu**
5. If the project has been submitted for other awards, please indicate the organization, the name of the award and if the project was successful in obtaining the award.
6. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the information contained in this submission accurately reflects the circumstances reported. I further authorize CIRPA to publicize this information for use by other institutions of higher education in whatever way CIRPA may consider appropriate.

Signature of Senior Institutional Research/Planning Officer of the Institution

Name and Title: **Eric Lavigne - Associate Dean, Programs**
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ABSTRACT

The abstract is a condensed description of the project consisting of 150 to 350 words.

At Marianopolis College, the common practice was to review a single program under all the required criteria: Program Relevance, Coherence, Quality of Teaching Methods and Student Supervision, Appropriateness of Human, Material and Financial Resources, Program Effectiveness, Quality of Program Management, and Evaluation of Student Achievement. This comprehensive single-program evaluation proved resource intensive and often required longer than planned. Additionally, this full-time focus on a single program also meant that other programs were not formally reviewed for a number of years.

In December of 2011 an alternative approach to program evaluation was proposed: all of our academic programs would be evaluated together, but with respect to a single criterion at a time, starting with Program Coherence. The choice to pursue an alternate approach to evaluation was based on the following expected outcomes:

- All programs would become involved in a more manageable evaluation process, while reinforcing the message that evaluation is to be an ongoing aspect of operational practices.
- Communication and sharing would increase, both within and among programs, with regard to evaluation practices.
- General Education evaluation would be better integrated and would be done from the perspective of our multiple programs.

In order to achieve these outcomes, a two-level process of evaluation was implemented during the winter and fall of 2012; work was conducted *at the institutional level* addressing evaluation questions or issues relevant to all programs, and *at the program level*, addressing self-identified program themes¹.

The Program Coherence Evaluation process was successfully completed in winter 2013, including the production of the final report and the institutional action plan². Given the encouraging results of this alternative approach to evaluation, we are currently planning the next stage in our program evaluation cycle: Course Coherence evaluation, with a focus on pedagogical methods and evaluation of student achievement.

CRITERIA

1. **TRANSFERABILITY**

Can the project or aspects thereof be applied easily at other institutions? What are the features of the project that make it transferable? What steps would you take to facilitate its transferability?

The transferability of the project depends on the presence of specific features:

- A relatively small institution (Marianopolis has around 2000 students and 200 faculty members).
- A relatively small number of programs, similar in nature.
- Active participation of faculty members in program development.
- Support from administration.

Those features, when present, provide for easier transferability. Institutions of a larger size with more diverse programs could still use this approach by focusing on clusters of programs sharing similar features (for example: a cluster of all Health Technology programs).

¹ For details on the process and methodology see the attached document 'Framework for the Evaluation of Program Coherence'.

² For details see the attached document 'Program Coherence Evaluation – Final Report'.

A first step towards transferability of this experience has been taken in 2012, by joining a community of practice, where tools and best practices are shared with other local institutions interested in reviewing program evaluation approaches³.

2. **INNOVATION**

What makes this project particularly innovative in the context of institutional research and planning in higher education? How does it differ from previous/current practice at other institutions?

The key innovation is the flipping of criteria and programs. Instead of doing one program at a time, for all criteria, we proposed evaluating one criterion at a time, for all programs. We also moved away from the official structures in charge of program evaluation (small program evaluation committees) in favor of a more participatory approach that included all faculty involved in the program.

In comparison with previous program evaluations done at the College, the new process resulted in the following improvements:

- The evaluation task was more manageable, both for the central office facilitating the process (development of tools and data collection support), as well as for the faculty involved in the review.
- Greater faculty buy-in was achieved through working with large assemblies of faculty members, involved in the selection of themes to be evaluated. Once the themes were identified, volunteer groups of faculty were tasked with the data collection and the reporting of findings and recommendations. These assemblies allowed for further discussion and increased ownership of the program changes that were proposed as a result of the evaluation process.
- The adoption of changes that resulted from the evaluation process was easier and faster than in previous program evaluations (under the traditional model), mainly due to the close involvement of faculty in the evaluation process.

3. **QUALITY IMPACT**

What were the expected qualitative outcomes? What are the results? How and over what period were the results assessed?

As mentioned under the innovation criteria above, creating a more manageable and participatory evaluation process had a very positive effect in the perception and attitude towards program evaluation among our faculty. We believe that this increased 'buy-in' was the main factor in the successful completion of the evaluation process, which can be attested by:

- All the volunteer faculty groups charged with the review of the issues/topics identified by the faculty assemblies completed their work and submitted their reports on time (end of Fall 2012).
- The timeline proposed for the evaluation process in December 2011 was respected (which was a rare occurrence under the traditional model).
- Of the 18 program changes proposed in the Action Plan, half have already been initiated or completed (even before the final report and associated action plan has been officially approved)

For the next stage of the Program Evaluation process (Evaluation of Course Coherence) we plan to spend more time in the development of tools that can be used to self-evaluate, in a more rigorous manner, the alignment of course elements (objectives-activities-assessment). The challenge ahead is to find a balance between maintaining

³ For details see related article on the creation and value of the **Ongoing Evaluation Community of Practice**: <http://www.profweb.qc.ca/index.php?id=4081&L=1&cHash=71d4bf14f8a086e40ee301aa90afabf2>

the momentum that a more manageable evaluation approach has created in the institution, while still making sure that the evaluation process is rigorous and thorough.

4. ***TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE***

Did the project have a transformative effect on institutional research, planning or the institution as a whole? Describe its impact.

The program coherence evaluation process has provided a desired 'boost' to the program life at Marianopolis. It has engaged most faculty members, at different levels, in conversations about program goals, program issues, and possible solutions for these issues. It has also changed the negative connotation that program evaluation had among some faculty and some administrators. More importantly, we believe that the program changes that resulted from this evaluation will have a positive impact on the quality of our academic programs. Our challenge now, is to maintain the momentum as we continue with the evaluation of the remaining criteria and refine the process to maintain a high level of faculty involvement while increasing their evaluation capacity and expertise overtime.