

Humphreys College

NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

SUMMER QUARTER

SEPTEMBER 2010

OUR INTERVIEW WITH DEAN JESS BONDS **WE ARE NOT FOCUSED ON MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO: OUR CHIEF CONCERN IS QUALITY EDUCATION**

Two months ago, **Dr. Jess Bonds**, Dean of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, completed a dissertation that deals with the recent developments of Humphreys College. His case study is titled "The Effectiveness and Adaptability of a Quality Assurance Model at a Small Teaching College." To trace the innovative development of an organization, the study combines two research methods: an in-depth insight into the recent history of the college and numerous interviews with the school's faculty members and administrators.



What is the C-DATA Model? Your research revealed that "the C-DATA model is positioned at the end of a long chain of quality assurance systems beginning with TQM."

"The C-DATA model is a type of process model that essentially organizes the efforts of academic personnel to ensure quality in the delivery of education at Humphreys College. C-DATA is an acronym that stands for Community, Development, Advising, Teaching, and Assessment.

- The *Community* area reflects the engagement of faculty members in external and internal groups of scholars. Externally, faculty members attend professional conferences and seminars and pursue advanced degrees. Internally, faculty members engage their peers at the college to share information and make decisions. The activities related to the Community area provide information to faculty members to help them improve the quality of deliverables in the other four areas of the model.
- The *Development* area of the model refers to the work faculty members do to develop the curriculum. This type of work includes writing course descriptions, syllabi, and learning outcomes, setting prerequisites, designing degree plans, and establishing other academic standards such as writing across the curriculum.
- The documents that are produced through the processes of developing the curriculum are forwarded to the other three areas of the model. For example, information about course content and prerequisites is sent to the *Advising* area of the model so that advisors can properly place students in the right classes and the right times.
- Development area documents are sent to the *Teaching* area so that teachers have syllabi and articulate expectations for learning that fit into the grander scheme of an education plan.

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- Documents, particularly program-level learning outcomes, are forwarded to the *Assessment* area so that faculty members are aware of the overall expectations for learning for a particular degree plan and can then devise assessment strategies to identify the extent to which graduates are meeting learning outcomes.

The results of learning outcomes assessments are then forwarded to the Development area, where the results are examined and improvements can be made, based on evidence, to course descriptions, syllabi, learning outcomes, prerequisites, degree plans, and other standards. There are more details, but that's essentially how the model works."

Your thumbnail sketch clarifies that the C-DATA is a process model, evolving in time - in the cycle of each academic year. Has its application influenced the organizational structure of the college?

"It's helpful to remember that the five areas of the model are conceptual – there are not five different divisions that focus on one of the five areas, like you might find at a large university. Humphreys is relatively small, so each faculty members has a role in each of the five areas. The whole purpose of the C-DATA model is to assure quality in the processes of education at Humphreys."

Your C-DATA model is clearly geared toward education. However, "to assure quality" is also a goal of every commercial enterprise.

"Attempts to achieve quality in education have their roots in business. After WWII, in Japan, businesses began to focus on quality manufacturing. Eventually, these efforts gelled into a quality movement called TQM, or Total Quality Management. TQM wasn't easily adapted to education. As TQM developed, another quality movement sprang up; it became known as CQI, or Continuous Quality Improvement. CQI was much more adaptable to education settings. Consequently, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it's fairly clear that regional accrediting agencies, such as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), began to adopt CQI principles in their standards for accreditation. When those standards are applied to an educational institution, such as was done to Humphreys College in 2003, then the efforts of the college to meet the standards naturally produce systems that reflect the standards. So, that's what C-DATA model does – it reflects WASC principles of education quality into a functioning system."

Why did you choose to develop and explore the C-DATA model?

"Well, in 2003-2004, I worked with the faculty to put the model together. We had received a challenging report from WASC about our status in meeting accreditation standards, especially in regard to assessing student learning at the program level. We worked hard and fast to augment what we were already doing. At that time, advising was not officially a part of faculty workloads. Assessment at the program level was not either. And attendance at professional conferences and seminars was more or less voluntary, sporadic, and not systematically supported by annual budgets. We were doing some of these things, but not in an organized, purposeful way with an eye toward quality. More directly to your question, I became interested in the history of model development and wanted to, essentially, memorialize the hard work the faculty had done. There was also interest on campus to apply the model to other areas of the college. The model had always been applied to undergraduate programs, but we wondered if the model could be used to improve quality in our new master's program in Education and our existing *juris doctorate* degree. Additionally, we wondered whether the administrative units – including Admission, Financial Aid, and Registrar – could benefit by adopting a quality assurance

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model such as C-DATA. Would the purposes of the model, how it was developed and implemented, and its effectiveness, have some meaningful relation to other areas of the college? Finally, two other issues emerged: how to adopt the model, and which operational structures in other areas to implement in order to sustain it.”

What does the C-DATA model mean to Humphreys' faculty?

“For the faculty, the model provides a structure for their workloads. In fact, the faculty workload policy is linked directly to the C-DATA model; faculty members are expected to interact with other scholars, develop the curriculum, advise students, teach classes, and be involved in assessing student learning at the program level.”

What might the model mean to Humphreys' students?

“Well, the ultimate goal is to have the model translated into a better quality education for our students. There are indicators that this is happening. The first-year retention rate has increased since the model was implemented in 2004. The results of a recent advising survey indicate that students took expressed overall satisfaction with advising services. Our curriculum maps have improved greatly under Dean Humphreys so that teaching and learning are explicitly linked to expected outcomes. Assessment projects have been used to make specific changes in course content. And faculty attendance at conferences and seminars has really grown with the investment the college has made in professional development budgets. The theory is that if the college supports the continued development of professors, they will, in turn, improve the curriculum, improve advising, improve teaching, and improve assessment. All these areas directly affect students by establishing a system of, well, CQI – continuous quality improvement.”

Your study explores the applicability of the C-DATA as an "institutional quality assurance model"--beyond the undergraduate programs of the college, including its graduate studies in Law and Education, and even its administrative division...

“Yes, in fact, one of the primary purposes for the research was to determine the extent to which the model can be adapted for use in other college divisions. Already, the master’s program has adopted the model, and the law program is continuing its adoption. The hard part is with the administrative units. The model was originally designed to improve quality in academic programs, which are managed quite differently than administrative programs.

However, the Humphreys leadership believes that both types of programs share similar concerns about quality. Certainly, *community activities* apply to faculty and administrators; the college wants its employees to be engaged with other professionals and attending relevant conferences and seminars. While the administrative units do not develop curriculum, they do develop *services* that they offer to students, services that provide timely, accurate information, for example. Administrative workers frequently meet and talk with students. Though their contact with students is not the same as the *advising* contact that faculty members have, there is still a sense of advising students about the services that are provided and how to access them. Teaching is probably the biggest difference. Administrative offices provide services to students; this area needs to be viewed as something like *servicing* instead of teaching. Then, of course, there’s the *assessment* area that applies to both types of programs. Academic and administrative programs have a keen interest in knowing if students are meeting the goals of their programs. With academic programs, those goals are expressed as learning outcomes.

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With administrative services, those goals might be expressed as experience outcomes. What do we expect students to experience as a result of receiving services provided by Admissions, Financial Aid, or Registrar? As you can see, some adjustments to the model will need to be made in order to apply it to the administrative services, but I think it can be done. In fact, based on the research I conducted, especially the interviews, it became clear that it can be done. It may not be easy, but with enough support, Humphreys could become among the first, if not the first, higher education institution to have a single process model used in both academic and administrative divisions. That would be something to crow about.”

Paradoxically, the United States does not have any "national standard of quality in higher education." To some extent, some standards have been articulated by various regional accrediting agencies, including WASC that accepted the C-DATA model for Humphreys College. Do you think that your model could be applied beyond a small teaching college environment?

“I think it would be difficult to apply the model at any large institution that has a faculty union because the model would call for a change in faculty workload, and that would require a lot of negotiating. There’s much turf to be protected at many other institutions. Instead of focusing on the needs of students, providing them a quality education, and endeavoring to improve for the students’ sake, some institutions are focused on maintaining the status quo. Our faculty members take a different stance. I’ve worked with them, been one of them, and still teach. And I can say their chief concern is in providing a quality education. For this reason, they were eager to develop the C-DATA model and exchange parts of their longstanding workload activities for new workload activities. They wanted to improve the process of education at the college, and they did it. I’m not sure whether the faculty at many large colleges would be willing to jump in and make major changes in their institutional culture in general, and in their role in particular. For that matter, many administrators may not be willing to jump in and make major changes either.”

How would you answer the question you posited at the end of your study: “Does a single model improve institutional effectiveness, or does it just reorganize activities into a visual framework?”

“Well, it certainly does reorganize activities into a framework. But it adds activities and puts more emphasis on certain aspects to create a balanced approach to ensuring quality. My guess is that, at a minimum, having a single quality assurance model would help to bridge the communication gap that typically exists between academic and administrative sides by having everyone speak the same language about what is valued by the institution.”

Your study links the quality assurance modeling with strategic planning. How does the current Strategic Plan of Humphreys College (2009-2014) utilize the C-DATA Model?

“Actually, the strategic plan calls for implementing the model in the law school and in the administrative units. That’s a big help for implementation because it reflects institutional commitment from the Board of Trustees, the President, the deans, the faculty, and the staff to apply resources and energy to ensuring quality education and services to our students.”

~Stanislav Perkner

Editorial Note: A copy of the dissertation discussed in this interview is available at the Humphreys College Library. Author: Jess Bonds. Title: *The Effectiveness and Adaptability of a Quality Assurance Model at a Small Teaching College*. Northcentral University, Graduate Faculty of the School of Education, 2010, 139 p.

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