Review Process

Television Services prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. An external review team, comprising two individuals from similar units at other institutions, reviewed the self-study documents, visited campus, interviewed unit personnel and wrote a report based on their experiences. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs read all the relevant documents and prepared the final report.

Self-Study

Organization and History of the Unit

When the self-study was written, the reporting line for Television Services was in Academic Affairs, through the Vice Provost for Technology and Chief Information Officer. More recently, the reporting line has changed to the Vice President for University Advancement.

Television Services has two major functional divisions, Broadcast Services (WBGU-TV) and Television Learning Services.

Broadcast Services. WBGU-TV broadcasts on Channel 27, in accordance with the requirements of its non-commercial educational television broadcast license. It provides “non-commercial educational, cultural, informational and entertainment programs to the Lima, Ohio market and to the Black Swamp region.” WBGU-TV receives advice from the Public Advisory Council for Television, a community-based group appointed by the Board of Trustees.

WBGU-TV has a membership in the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and acquires a large number of programs through the National Program Service of PBS. It also purchases programs from the American Program Service. In addition to the programming it purchases, WBGU-TV produces its own programs (e.g. “Journal” and “News Six”), broadcasts three or four telecourses for BGSU each year, and broadcasts three hours per day of programs recommended for teachers by Northwest Ohio Educational Technology (NWOET).

Television Learning Services. Television Learning Services (TLS), “is responsible for the direct support of BGSU’s instructional mission through television related technologies.” TLS is involved in facilitating distance learning
through the Distance Learning Facilities in Olscamp Hall. TLS also provides instructional closed circuit television services from a library of over 3,000 programs, satellite teleconferencing, media production for live programs, and programming for Channel 24, the “BGSU Community Channel”.

Mission

As described in the self-study, the mission statement for Television Services is being revised and rewritten. The current working statement is: “The mission of BGSU Television Services is to utilize educational technologies to enrich the lives of those we serve both locally and globally.”

Television Services sees a close relationship between its educational, cultural and entertainment programming and the University mission. Television Services provides a technological vehicle for enriching the learning experience on campus and extending the learning community to households in the broadcast area. Television Services also provides student employment opportunities and allows students to enroll for credit internships.

WBGU-TV programs are distributed nationally on PBS stations and thereby contribute to the national reputation of BGSU.

Personnel, Financial and Physical Resources

The Television Services self-study lists 31 employees. Personnel make up about half of the expenses for the unit. Another quarter of expenses go to broadcasting operations, and the remainder to development, station administration, promotion, and capital items. On the income side, only one third of the budget is from BGSU (TLS and the distance facilities in Olscamp Hall are supported mostly through Instructional and General budgets). The remainder is about equally divided between private sources (principally memberships) and grants from federal and state agencies.

Television Services is housed in the Tucker Center, which has grown through a series of additions to an attractive collection of offices, meeting rooms, studios and production areas. The facilities allow the production of high quality television programs, both in the studio and in the field. Also available are three Media-100 digital editing suites, a portable uplink, WWW production, and graphic art production.

Self-Assessment of Quality

The self-study looked at several indicators of program quality, including awards from external agencies, distribution and/or purchase of locally produced programs, surveys, membership statistics, grants from external agencies, and demand for production services. Information from these several sources all suggest that Television Services’ offerings are of high quality and are consequently in demand.
The self-study emphasizes the fact that “WBGU-TV is unique for Bowling Green State University in the magnitude of its reach into people’s lives of all ages,” transcending ages, cultures and backgrounds in its audience. The ability to reach such a large audience is a significant attribute of the unit. The self-study is equally candid in noting an area of concern, specifically: it has “some duplication of effort and resources with other related areas”, including the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology and Instructional Media Services.

Television Services relies to a substantial degree on outside support. While this may well be appropriate for Broadcast Services, the self-study notes that the efforts of TLS to develop distance learning have been constrained by budgetary limitations. The self-study anticipates a financial challenge in the upcoming transition to digital broadcasting.

Planning

The self-study addresses 16 areas in its five-year plan.

1) Conversion to digital television. The conversion carries a significant financial burden, which Television Services proposes to meet through a combination of federal and state funding and a capital campaign.
2) Development of the unit’s WWW site.
3) Increase in the number of locally produced programs by 10%. To accomplish this, the self-study raises the possibility of collaborations with academic units.
4) Digitize CCTV service.
5) Develop distance learning courseware for degree-completion programs, in collaboration with CEISP.
6) Create new digital products for faculty.
7) Develop donors beyond the reach of the WBGU-TV signal.
8) Create and deliver a consistent image in all its material, to include “a relationship to BGSU, PBS, quality and awards.”
9) Improve response to customers.
10) Provide career training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
11) Develop mechanisms to assess its outreach for pre-school programs.
12) Develop assessment mechanisms for all programs.
13) Create a self-funded position for the development of new productions.
14) Develop a business plan to increase the utilization of Television Services facilities to a minimum of 50%.
15) Review every new service or function for its collaborative potential.
16) Become a complete (“one-stop shop”) service for all aspects of video services.

External Review Team’s Report

The external review team’s report is well-written, thorough, and provides many valuable insights.
The external report finds that Television Services provides excellent service to the community, to education in general and to Bowling Green State University in particular. It characterizes the market area of the unit as “one of the nation’s smallest”, and notes that overlap with the WGTE broadcast area limits “growth in the most populous part of its coverage pattern.”

The external team speaks very highly of the programming provided by WBGU-TV: “Few peer stations have managed to afford such a schedule of quality programming,” including both purchased and locally-produced programs. Similarly, the reviewers have high praise for the large number of people who watch and contribute to WBGU-TV. Collaboration with NWOET is praised, as is the development of projects, such as Math Tek, by WBGU-TV alone.

The external team emphasizes the “tangible public and governmental relations service” that Television Services provide to BGSU. As noted in the self-study WBGU-TV is the primary vehicle by which many people know BGSU. They note, “Positive attitudes toward the station and the University are interconnected and reinforcing.”

Where Broadcast Services is directed outward to constituencies in the community and the state, TLS functions as the internal arm of Television Services. To the description of TLS provided in the self-study, the external report adds reports from students: “Students volunteered strong, specific praise for the supervision, opportunity and acceptance given them by the station.” The external team notes, as did the self-study, the need for greater collaboration among TLS, Instructional Media Services, and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. The external team commented on the obvious similarity in mission of these three units. “The apparent lack of coordination among these three units seems wasteful of resources, valuable synergy and important opportunities.”

The external team expressed a concern over the number and proportionality of revenue sources. Specifically, they find a “significant untapped potential income in corporate and foundation underwriting, production services, and major gifts.” They also expressed concern that a feasibility study has not been conducted in preparation for the capital campaign for digital conversion.

Organization and management of Television Services is strong. However, the external team expressed concern regarding the need for planning in light of an anticipated turnover in management in the near future.

In their interviews with Television Services personnel, the external team learned of frustration regarding cutbacks in University support, “capping the station’s ability to provide campus services and student training.” The external team feels that this situation results from a breakdown in communication between BGSU administration (who expect Television Services to ask for resources needed for the development and coordination of media services) and
Television Services (who assume they will get no increase in funding and so do not ask).

The findings of the external team, as summarized above, are distilled into nine action-oriented recommendations, as follows:

1) Broaden the revenue base. Specifically, develop opportunities in
   a) Corporate and foundation underwriting;
   b) Major gifts from individual donors; and
   c) Media production services.
2) Integrate campus media services. “There should be closer coordination among, and perhaps consolidation of, Television Services, Instructional Media Services, and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Two specific actions that could initiate or contribute to the improved coordination or consolidation of these units include:
   a) Assign the group a priority campus project on which to work cooperatively; and
   b) Reorganize so that there is a common reporting line to a single Vice Provost.
3) Strengthen formal academic relationships with the Department of Telecommunications.
   a) Consider giving Televisions Services personnel responsibility for teaching production courses;
   b) Conduct an assessment of students’ experiences in internships and employment situations.
4) Initiate charge-back fees for services.
5) Improve and increase web content to enhance student enrollment and retention.
6) Prepare a more detailed plan for conversion to digital television.
7) Conduct a feasibility study for the digital-conversion capital campaign.
8) Develop a hiring plan in anticipation of the retirement of individuals currently in management positions.
9) Address the deteriorating relationship between Television Services and NWOET.

Program Review Findings

Television Services appears to be a very effective operation, making significant contributions to both external and internal constituencies. The programming provided by Broadcast Services is of a very high caliber, and includes many programs and services that contribute directly to educational needs in the state. Both the number of viewers and their monetary support of the station set a very high standard. Internally, TLS provides a wide range of services to BGSU teachers and students.

The two functional divisions of Television Services – Broadcast Services and Television Learning Services (TLS) –not only have different constituencies, but different missions as well. The self-study noted that the mission statement is
a work in progress, and perhaps there is opportunity in this work to
acknowledge the differences between the two divisions. Broadcast Services is
primarily a public television station, offering an excellent range and quality of
programming to the broader community. TLS is primarily an instructional
support unit, addressing educational needs of faculty through closed-circuit
library service, teleconferencing, media production, and two-way interactive
instruction.

It is very clear from all sources that there is substantial overlap in the
mission and services provided by TLS with those of Instructional Media Services
(IMS) and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT). The
overlap is a significant source of confusion for users, contributing negatively to
the impression that faculty have of the services available to support teaching.
Furthermore, the overlap among these units signals inefficiency in the
University’s use of resources.

NWOET is yet another unit with a similar mission, although in this case
its status as a foundation and its focus on K-12 education differentiate it.
However, issues of collaboration and interaction of Television Services with
NWOET are important too.

Both the self-study and the external report raise issues about Television
Service’s interactions with academic departments at BGSU. These include the
possibility of Broadcast Service’s involvement in television production courses,
most likely with the Department of Telecommunications. Student participation
in Television Services is a general concern. There is a need to assess the quality of
student experiences at Television Services, and to use that assessment to improve
and perhaps formalize those experiences in the future.

Another opportunity for Television Services is in the area of distance
education. Development of distance education is of general concern to BGSU and
to higher education generally. It is in the area of distance education that issues of
interaction and collaboration – not only with IMS and the CTLT, but with college
and department offices – will be of greatest significance.

Television Services does very well in some aspects of funding, notably
memberships. However, there are opportunities for funding that are not being
used, notably in underwriting. The external team also noted funding
opportunities in production services and major gifts. Broadcast Services’ reliance
on external funding is appropriate given the nature of their service. However, it
does not seem appropriate for TLS to be so reliant on external sources in order
for it to provide services in support of BGSU’s instructional mission.

The station’s conversion to digital television is a very significant event,
both in terms of the technology and in terms of the cost. There is need for more
detailed planning on both counts. Particularly noteworthy is the external
reviewers’ comment regarding the need for a feasibility study for the capital
campaign. This is clearly something that requires close communication and
collaboration with University Advancement.
Television Services needs to develop assessments of its various services. There are also development needs for the unit’s web page, as mentioned by the external team.

The external team’s suggestion to use charge-backs to cover costs of services has some pitfalls. The use of charge-backs by some units on campus currently causes bad feeling. Particularly for TLS, where the services are directly in support of the instructional mission, charge-backs could decrease access to an important campus service.

**Program Review Recommendations**

1) It is recommended that the Provost appoint an ad hoc committee to study and make recommendations about the stronger collaboration or integration of Instructional Media Services, Television Learning Services and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Other similar units, such as (but not necessarily limited to) NWOET Foundation or Uni-graphics, should also be considered. The ad hoc committee should not include members from the affected units, but it should consult with representatives of those units. The charge to the ad hoc committee should include the goal of users of the services being able to meet their instructional needs related to information technology by contacting a single centralized service. Target date for committee report: Fall 2001.

2) In response to the recommendations of the ad hoc committee, the University administration should reevaluate the level of funding for teaching-related technology support services, including TLS. Target date: Spring 2002.

3) Television Services should initiate discussion with the Department of Telecommunications regarding Television Services’ involvement in production courses. Target date: Fall, 1999.

4) Television Services must develop and implement regular assessments of its services. These are particularly relevant to student-related activities. Assessment programs can be initiated for a subset of programs or on a small scale, but assessment should be an ongoing activity with progress evident in annual reports.

5) The growing potential for distance education is of great concern to the University and to educators generally. It is recommended that Television Services actively and aggressively develop its distance education offerings in collaboration with interested college Deans (CEISP).

6) Television Services should actively develop funding sources, as recommended by the external review, in the areas of underwriting, production services and major gifts. This development activity should be undertaken with the advice and collaboration of University Advancement.

7) The Director of Television Services should meet with the Vice President for University Advancement at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss a feasibility study for the digital-conversion capital campaign. That financial discussion should be accompanied by the development of more detailed plans for the conversion in technology.
8) Television Services should enhance its presence on the world-wide web. The update of web material should be an ongoing process.

9) Given the prospect of retirements of managers in the near future, Television Services should develop a plan for retirement replacements. The plan should be discussed with and approved by the Vice President for University Advancement.

Television Services should report annually to the Vice President for University Advancement on the implementation of these recommendations.