Final Report
Support Unit Program Review
Northwest Ohio Educational Technology

Review Process

The Northwest Ohio Educational Technology (NWOET) foundation 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

Mission

Service to NWOET K-12 member schools is the foundation’s primary mission. “NWOET functions as an academic, technical, and resource support agency to University departments as well as K-12 member schools.” “The Northwest Ohio Educational Technology foundation is committed to offering educational services and to providing assistance in utilizing technology to enhance education.” Increasingly, NWOET is offering instruction to academic areas.

Governance

NWOET is governed by a 16-member Governing Board elected annually by the executive administrators of the member schools. It is also governed by BGSU, as its fiscal agent.

Services

NWOET serves 421 schools, home school participants, residents, BGSU and other colleges and universities in northwest Ohio. The description of services offered by NWOET is not strictly consistent at all places in the self-study. For instance, the brochure (Appendix J) describes four areas (Tape Duplication Center, Media Center, Technology Support Services, and Instructional Television); section C in chapter 3 describes demand for six areas (Instructional Television, Educational Resources, Media Center/Tape Duplication, Computer Resource Center/Technical Support Services, Professional Development, and Areas of cooperation...); and the opening section of the self-study describes eight different areas, as follows:
1) Instructional Television,
   • broadcast over WBGU-TV – the original function of NWOET;
2) Educational Resource Center;
   • assists teachers in the selection and utilization of technology in the classroom;
3) Media Center;
   • a lending library for videotapes, video discs, CD-ROMs and film;
   • described in the NWOET Program Guide and Media Catalog;
4) Tape Duplication Center;
   • rerecord rights to over 1600 programs;
5) Computer Resource Center/Technology Support Center;
   • provides teaching training for the use of electronic resources;
6) Member Workshops;
   • a program of on-site and off-site training for area teachers;
   • run in collaboration with CTLT, CEISP, Technology and EDHD;
7) Academic Services;
   • a program for the development of graduate courses for teachers, in collaboration with several BGSU offices.
8) Statewide Collaborations
   • work with a variety of state programs providing professional development for K-12 teachers.

Human, Financial and Physical Resources

NWOET Foundation has 13 staff members. In addition to the 13 staff, the organizational chart includes two vacant positions, consultants, and students. The budget shows income from three major sources: the Office of Information, Learning, and Technology Services (OILTS), SchoolNet, and memberships. Less than 5% of the budget income is from BGSU (revenue from graduate credit courses offered through Continuing Education, International and Summer Programs). The largest expense categories are: salaries and benefits (36.7%), SchoolNet (28.5%), and WBGU-TV (10.8%). NWOET maintains its own accounting system, in addition to the University accounting system, because reports supplied by the University are not sufficient to allow the analysis of financial resources or the preparation of the annual income tax returns. A concern stated in the self-study is uncertainty of funding, due both to frequent changes in SchoolNet’s guidelines and to policies and procedures of BGSU.

NWOET is housed in a 6,000 square foot addition to the Tucker Center. The addition was built with NWOET revenue; it is currently leased to the Foundation for a 25-year period beginning 1981. The Foundation’s Asynchronous Transfer Mode distance learning equipment is housed in Olscamp Hall. Additionally, the Foundation rents a conference room from WBGU-TV, at a cost of $225 per month.

Audience Served

NWOET has an audience of several thousand teachers in Northwest Ohio and – indirectly – all their students. In cooperation with Continuing Education,
International and Summer Programs (CEISP), Education and Human Development (EDHD), and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT), NWOET answers the demand for professional development opportunities for classroom teachers. Increasingly, this instructional demand is both coupled with and addressed to the need for training in alternative instructional delivery methods.

The self-study notes that NWOET’s connections with BGSU and with area schools and teachers help to “foster an environment of collaboration and reciprocity between higher education and K-12 education.” Given these attributes, the self-study notes that NWOET Foundation “has the capability to be [an] active partner in the continued expansion of undergraduate and graduate admissions.” NWOET has the capabilities and desire to build collaboration not only within the University and regional schools, but extending to the state and national level through distance education.

**Planning**

*Reorganization.* Changing needs, due both to advances in technology and to changes in state legislation governing teacher certification and licensing, have generated a need for reorganization of NWOET. These include increased demand for online learning and distance education. The projects in which NWOET is currently engaged include: Member Services, Academic Services, and Statewide Collaborations. There is a diminished need for instructional television. In response to these changing needs, the self-study proposes a timeline for reorganization that would result in the implementation of a new organizational structure by July, 2000. The self-study implies that the reorganization would be developed around Member Services, Academic Services, and Statewide Collaborations.

*Space.* The growth in the services provided and in the number of patrons served has resulted in a lack of space. The self-study states that NWOET has outgrown its current space. A study is underway to explore options for additional space at the University (target date: 12 months from time of writing). The development of additional satellite labs throughout the region could also help address the space needs of the Foundation.

*Collaboration with State Agencies.* Collaboration with an increased number of state agencies would be beneficial to NWOET. The self-study names a number of collaborations that it would pursue to improve and extend its services. These include: develop a Novice Training graduate credit course at BGSU; provide professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers in collaboration with Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRC); collaborate with ORCLISH in Ohio’s Assistive Technology Distance Learning Project (OATDLP); maintain technical support for member schools in collaboration with DA-sites; support the Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC); with Local Professional Development Committees (LPDC), work on certification of instruction and development of new courses; support the statewide dubbing and broadcast services; contribute to the Continuous Improvement Process in
collaboration with ODE; and continue work with SchoolNet on emerging initiatives.

Membership. NWOET’s plans to increase membership levels include: a more significant role for the Advisory Committee, expansion of service hours, establishment of satellite labs, NWOET representatives in area schools, and other initiatives.

Educational Technology. Providing leadership and support to educators in the area of educational technology is a primary commitment of NWOET. The self-study lays out a variety of initiatives to provide the necessary support and leadership. Among other things, the plan mentions a reliance on distance education and collaborations with other units at BGSU.

Training. Provide more extensive staff training opportunities. The strategic plan includes reliance on intranet and web-based resources, as well as more traditional instructional delivery methods, for staff training.

Funding. The self-study states a commitment to develop a plan for the “continuous exploration for additional funding options from alternate sources.”

External Review Team’s Report

Strengths Noted by the External Team

The external report praised the NWOET staff as dedicated and qualified. They also noted the value of the staff’s service orientation and the technical support provided by the NWOET staff.

Weaknesses Noted by the External Team

The external report noted confusion in the relationship between the University and the NWOET foundation. Specifically, NWOET is governed by a separate board while at the same time staff are University employees and the University serves as fiscal agent and provides administrative support and services. Furthermore, NWOET provides instruction to area educators, but is not itself an academic department. There may well be areas of greater collaboration between the foundation and the University, if the relationship between them could be clarified.

The external report agreed with NWOET’s assessment that it has outgrown its current space.
Recommendations of the External Team

1) Clarify the relationship between the foundation and the University. The relationship between the two entities should be as close as possible, while allowing for the continued autonomy of the foundation.
   a) To formalize communication, appoint BGSU administrators to the NWOET Board.
   b) BGSU and the foundation should collectively study additional opportunities for collaboration, possibly involving cost centers for existing activities. These might involve:
      i) distance education,
      ii) professional development,
      iii) graduate credit courses,
      iv) student services, and
      v) shared revenue stream.

2) Provide more space for NWOET staff and programs.
   a) Develop satellite labs.
   b) House consultants and other staff outside the present facility, both on and off campus.
   c) “Consider a larger work space for NWOET.”
   d) NWOET staff should quantify their present and future space needs.

3) Expand and improve promotion of NWOET programs and services.

4) Redefine the customer service model, as recommended in the self-study.

5) Seek additional sources of support, capitalizing on its strengths of rural service and its unique relationship with K-12 area educators.

6) Seek external funding or donations for video dubbing equipment.

7) The search for the next Executive Director should be national in scope. The external team recommended, furthermore, that “the NWOET Governing Board should oversee all areas of the search process, including screening and final selection, in agreement with BGSU procedures.”

Program Review Findings

NWOET is a valuable asset to Bowling Green State University. It provides a variety of important services for K-12 schools, their teachers, and other constituencies. The staff are dedicated and capable. Through its resources and programs, NWOET contributes significantly to the statewide reputation of BGSU, particularly in the K-12 community. NWOET has, however, been underutilized by the University: it has the potential for greater interaction with and contribution to teacher training and distance education at BGSU.
The relationship between NWOET and BGSU is of concern to NWOET staff, the external reviewers, and to the University. There is ambiguity created because of the governance structure. What does it mean that BGSU employs the NWOET staff and acts as the organization’s fiscal agent, but does not participate in the Governing Board? How are the teacher training programs offered through NWOET related to teacher training in BGSU’s academic programs? Furthermore, the self-study states that NWOET is ready, even anxious, to enter into productive collaborations with several units at the University. Clearly, collaborations such as these would be easier to develop if NWOET’s relationship to the University was clearly stated and widely known to other units at the University.

A clearer internal organization would contribute to productive collaborations between NWOET and other units at the University. That the self-study presented somewhat different descriptions of its programs at various places in the self-study is symptomatic of a need for reorganization. Indeed, reorganization is a key feature of the self-study’s plan. Reorganization should not just be an internal concern. Discussions about reorganization should include University representatives and address not only efficiency of internal operations and interactions with K-12 teachers and schools, but how both those sets of relationships could benefit through interaction with University departments.

Changes in organization and governance should be structured in a way that facilitates teacher training and distance education. Teacher training and distance learning are important areas of mutual interest for NWOET and the University, and both will very likely be of growing importance in the near future. Both, as well, can contribute to BGSU’s efforts in the areas of recruitment and retention.

Another aspect of NWOET’s organization that deserves consideration is its placement within the University. During the course of this review, NWOET was moved from Academic Affairs to University Advancement. Whereas it is clear that NWOET makes contributions in advancement, all aspects of the program review emphasize NWOET’s academic mission. That is, advancement is a byproduct of success with K-12 teachers and schools. Wherever NWOET reports, it’s connection with the College of Education and Human Development must be nurtured, as its mission is closely aligned with the teacher training mission of EDHD.

NWOET’s plans to increase membership, collaborate with state agencies and develop alternate funding sources are commendable. Space needs appear to be pressing. Having to pay WBGU for use of a conference room is an unfortunate symptom of the space shortage. The space needs of NWOET have both grown and changed. Increased use of satellite locations and the possibility of using offices not physically adjoining the current location are both sound recommendations. However, space needs should be addressed in the context of the reorganization. For instance, as the demand for instructional television decreases, the association with WBGU seems to be of less importance to the effective functioning of NWOET.
Program Review Recommendations

1) The appointment of two BGSU administrators to the NWOET Governing Board is recommended for immediate action. The Executive Director should take the responsibility to determine how such appointments can be made. The decision as to whom to appoint should be agreed upon by the Executive Director of NWOET and the Vice President for University Advancement. This report recommends that the Director of ICURE would make an excellent representative on the Governing Board, as would the Dean of the College of Education and Human Development. Target Date: beginning of fall semester, 1999.

2) Internal reorganization, which is the first element of the self-study’s plan, is an important undertaking. However, the self-study conceived this reorganization too narrowly. First, discussion about reorganization must involve departments and administrators at BGSU, so that NWOET’s internal organization is well-suited to collaboration with BGSU departments and programs. Secondly, the timeframe for reorganization as put forth in the self-study is too rapid: the reorganization should not be undertaken until the next Executive Director is appointed. Thus the target date for reorganization should be the semester after the appointment of the next Executive Director. The internal reorganization should be informed by discussion with other units interested in:
   a) outreach (ICURE, and EDHD),
   b) credit-bearing courses and degree programs (EDHD, Graduate College, and CEISP) and
   c) instructional technology (IMS, TLS, and CTLT).

3) The growing potential for distance education is of great concern to the University and to educators generally. It is recommended that NWOET actively and aggressively develop its distance education offerings in collaboration with the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology, and with interested college Deans (especially EDHD and CEISP).

4) NWOET’s efforts to build collaborations are hindered by its lack of visibility. Thus, following the external reviewers’ recommendation, NWOET is encouraged to market itself to internal and external constituents, seizing the initiative in making contacts and proposing collaborative projects with departments within the University as well as with external constituents.

5) NWOET should develop a comprehensive evaluation of its space needs, as suggested in the external review. This should follow the appointment of the next Executive Director and the reorganization, and so is not expected until end of fall semester, 2000.

6) The self-study’s plans to increase membership, collaborate with state agencies, and develop alternate funding sources are all sound. NWOET should proceed to act on these ideas immediately and continuously.
7) The search for the next Executive Director should be national in scope, as recommended by the external reviewers. This does not, of course, preclude qualified individuals from BGSU from applying and competing successfully.

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