SOAR Summary Report

[insert program]

SOAR FRAMEWORK

A collaborative approach of open dialogue designed to help programs create a shared vision for the future (Srivastava & Cooperrider, 1990).

Positioned as a potential postcolonial approach to organizational development (Mir et al., 2003).

Involves identifying and building on existing strengths and opportunities, rather than dwelling on problems, deficiencies, weaknesses, and threats.

Focuses on determining which actions will bring the greatest benefit to all stakeholders.

[insert date]

Hoare, A., Dishke Hondzel, C., & Wagner, S. (2022). *Program review handbook: A course-based approach to conducting program review.* https://programreviewhandbook.pressbooks.tru.ca/

Summary

This report summarizes the strategic SOAR Analysis Activity that faculty from the [insert program] participated in on [insert date].

Results are framed in discussion of over-arching Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR), as well as a summary of the major themes and goals. The SOAR approach was chosen in order to facilitate action planning and to move forward with the cyclical program review process. SOAR is an information gathering and planning framework with an approach that focuses on strengths and seeks to understand a system and its environment by including the voices of the relevant stakeholders. Focusing on strengths means that the SOAR conversations centre on what is already being done well and the areas or programs that can be enhanced. It can be used to identify initiatives or approaches that are compelling to the various stakeholders.

By engaging many faculty members, we were able to capture a broad picture of a complex system by accessing a variety of different perspectives. This systems approach tries to find patterns within the integration and dynamics of the many relationships and interactions among people, programs, functions, and the broader environment. This helps stakeholders see and understand at a high level how the system works and where their unique contribution makes a difference.

Based on the information collected during the SOAR conversations, the recommended areas to focus the [insert program] goals are concentrated in the following areas:

- Goal #1
- Goal #2
- Goal #3
- Goal #4

The results of this report can be used to help inform the Action Plan component of program review or other program planning activities.

Strengths

Participants were asked to consider the strengths of the program, under headings of four different questions: (1) What have we done well so far? (2) What are we most proud of so far? (3) What positive aspects have students/ faculty/ employers/ others commented on? (4) What makes us unique?

Key strengths are indicated below with a sampling of statements shared by faculty members that supported the main theme. These themes are the foundations for the work to implement the Action Plan. Actions should be grounded in and build upon the strengths and commitments that already exist.

Strength The program offers…	Supporting Statements
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•

Opportunities

Participants were asked to consider the opportunities for the department and programs in relation to four questions: (1) What changes do we expect to see in the next 3 - 5 years? (2) What external forces or trends may impact the programs? (3) What opportunities exist for us? (4) What are students, faculty, and/or the community already asking for?

The exercise brought forward the following areas where there are immediate opportunities to prioritize and create an Action Plan.

Expected Area of Change/Growth	Supporting Statements
	•
	•
	•
	•

Aspirations

Aspirations reflect the values of the faculty members engaged in program development and delivery. Participants were asked to consider the aspirations for the department and programs in relation to four questions: (1) What are we deeply passionate about? (2) What difference do we hope to make for students, faculty, and staff? (3) What does our preferred future look like? (4) What projects, programs, or processes support our aspirations?

Reflecting the statements collected during the SOAR Analysis Activity, the summaries below reflect aspirations the group indicated were important to consider in order to foster continued growth and success. Aspirations at this level can serve as operational goals with targets driven by specific initiatives or desired results.

Goals / Aspirations for the Future	Supporting Statements
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•

Results

Participants were asked to consider the measurable results for the department and programs in relation to four questions: (1) Considering our strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, what meaningful measures will indicate we are on track with achieving our goals? (2) What measurable results do we want to see? (3) What measurements will we be known for? (4) What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?

This is a draft compilation of some of the measures discussed during the SOAR Analysis Activity. I have done my best to align them with the Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations identified earlier, many of which overlap and have been collapsed into the areas listed below. These overarching goals and measures are offered as a starting place to begin action planning.

Goal	Potential Measures
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•
	•

Summary and Next Steps

Based on the conversations that occurred during the SOAR Analysis Activity, many similar and overlapping themes came forward. These aspirations and the subsequent goals must be further broken down with specific tasks and actions. I suggest that the department take on shared responsibility for goal setting and project management, with built-in opportunities to communicate progress at regular intervals during meetings. Movement toward goals should be recognized and celebrated. Pilot projects can be used to test out new initiatives and shape new opportunities.

The Office of Quality Assurance will host an Action Planning Workshop in early Spring. The Action Planning Workshop is intended to create a space for faculty and deans to discuss the program review findings and draft goals for program improvement. During the Workshop, participants will:
- reflect on the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results generated during the SOAR Analysis Activity;
- identify broad themes evident in all of the data collected during the program review (e.g., surveys, external reviewer recommendations, student achievement data, etc.);
- draft goals based on the themes (~ 6 - 10); and,
- explore frameworks for implementing the goals.

After the Workshop, we recommended that the department engage in a series of Action Plan Development meetings to:
- refine the goals and identify tasks, milestones, and responsible parties;
- complete the Action Plan template;
- present the Action Plan to the Dean and Faculty Council for approval;
- incorporate the Action Plan into the Final Report; and,
- submit the Final Report to APPC for information.

I look forward to continue working with you on your department's goals and action plans!

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