Center for Academic Development and Improvement

Origins and Functions.

The international accreditation process with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) was the detonating event for the assessment activities in CETYS University. The activity of providing evidence of students' learning achievement required, in 2007, the elaboration of an Institutional Assessment Model and an academic unit to operate it. This academic unit was conceptualized as the Center for Assessment and worked under the supervision of the Direction of Planning and Academic Effectiveness.

The changes in the institution's organization, formalized by the presidency in September 2007, particularly within the newly created vice-presidency of academic affairs, recognized the need to integrate the essential academy-related processes: Faculty Evaluation, Faculty Development, Curricular Review and Revision, and the Learning Assessment process. The first three functions or processes were previously coordinated by the Direction of Curricular Design and the last process by the incipient Center for Assessment (CA).

Because the four processes are closely related and represent sources of generation and audit of the Institution's educational quality, the intention to integrate all functions under the same direction led to the expansion of the Center for Assessment (CA). In January 2008, the Center for Academic Development and Improvement (CADI) emerges from the CA as a virtual unit, operating within the three campuses. The CADI's mission is to contribute to the improvement of students' learning, faculty's pedagogical competency, and the quality of the curriculum in Higher Education, through projects and strategic actions in the following areas:

1. *Assessment:* This area seeks to show evidence of students' achievement of the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) through the Institutional Electronic Portfolio (PEI in Spanish) to support and monitor academic improvement processes. Also, the area provides support and advice to the different academies for the selection and development of assessment instruments.

2. *Faculty Evaluation:* This area carries out an evaluation every semester of the faculty's performance in undergraduate programs as learning facilitators (Teaching Practice and Pedagogical/ Professional Training). The instruments used are applied to students and faculty and are designed to collect judgments, which along with punctuality, assistance reports, and course management reports (roll call and assessment), provide the total of points (on a scale of 0 to 100) for each faculty member.

CETYS
UNIVERSIDAD.

The results of the evaluation system are used by the School Directors, College Deans, and Human Resources Directors to identify areas of improvement of faculty's pedagogical competencies, faculty promotion, as well as providing economical incentives based on their performance.

3. *Faculty Development:* Fully aligned to the Institution's mission, this area's purpose is to strengthen the Educational Model through concrete actions within pedagogical and technological formation of CETYS University's faculty members in pursuit of quality in their work.

4. *Curricular design and review:* This area attends the need to review, periodically and systematically, all undergraduate and graduate programs in the Institution, to maintain them updated, relevant, and competent. For this purpose, a process of periodic review of academic programs has been designed, as well as an institutional policy of periodic review; both elements are the basis for the academy to review the programs and identify opportunities of improvement of capacity and educational effectiveness.

    Curricular design is continuously looking for better ways to implement the Institution's educational model in the undergraduate and graduate level programs, providing them with the seal and orientation of the institutional educational philosophy.

    Instructional design and educational technology are also within this area as their purpose is to design electronic tutorials for faculty regarding the use of educational technology resources available in the Institution, such as Blackboard Academic Suite and the Institutional Electronic Portfolio. Other activities include designing online courses and material for faculty within *CETYS Faculty Certification Program* who cannot take the courses in person. Finally, training and guidance of faculty members in the use of information and communication technologies effectively applied to the educational process.

With over three years of operation, the CADI is a project in process coordinated by the Direction of Planning and Academic Effectiveness. The staff in the CADI is integrated by:

① **Cecilia Tagliapietra Ovies**, based in Campus Mexicali and co-responsible for the Institutional Assessment, as well as curriculum design and review functions. (cecilia.tagliapietra@cetys.mx).

- Bachelor in Education Sciences, ITESO University
- Master in Educational Technology, ITESM Online and UBC

② **Karla Morales Márquez**, based in Campus Tijuana and co-responsible for faculty's pedagogical, technological, and information resources formation. ([karla.morales @cetys.mx](mailto:karla.morales@cetys.mx)).

- Bachelor in Clinical Psychology, Universidad Internacional de la Paz.
- Currently studying Master in Psychology, CETYS University.

③ **Edgar Jiménez Soto**, based in Campus Mexicali and co-responsible for faculty's pedagogical, technological, and information resources formation, as well as responsible for the instructional design for CETYS' *Faculty Certification Program*. (edgar.jimenez@cetys.mx).

- Bachelor in Education Sciences, UABC
- Master in Human Resources, CETYS University
- PhD Student in Values Education, CETYS University

④ **Miguel Guzmán Pérez**, full time faculty of the School of Psychology in Campus Tijuana, collaborator in the Faculty Evaluation area. (miguel.guzman@cetys.mx).

- Bachelor in Psychology, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Master in Public Health, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.
- PhD in Psychology, CETYS University
-

⑤ **Héctor Vargas García**, Director of Planning and Academic Effectiveness, based in Campus Mexicali and co-responsible of the first three areas or functions in CADI. (hector.vargas@cetys.mx).

- Industrial Engineer, CETYS University
- Master in Engineering Sciences, Arizona State University
- Areas of teaching or research: Process Engineering and System Planning, Supply Chain Administration, System Simulations, Assessment, Curriculum Review and Design, Strategic Administration.

Center for Academic Development and Improvement (CADI)
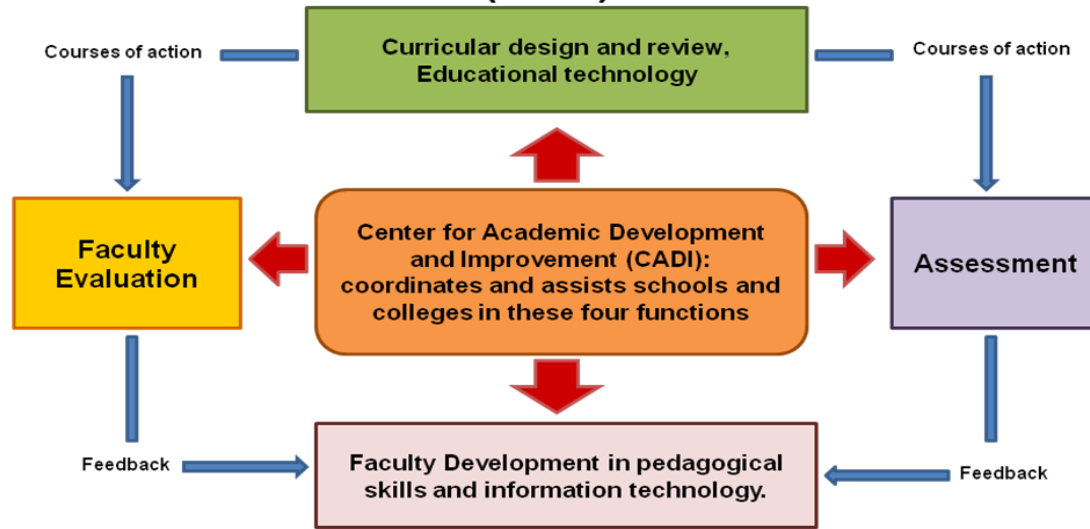
The cycle of improvement in the academic ambit.

Fig. 1: Areas of the Center for Academic Development and Improvement (CADI)

CADI staff works with an approach towards processes aiming for continuous improvement. The assessment results are crossed with the faculty evaluation results and, with that crossing of information, recommendations are done for the academies, impacting faculty formation, as well as the academic program's curricular design. The periodic review of the academic programs establishes guidelines that impact the assessment and faculty evaluation. As noted, these four processes are closely connected and actions affect all areas. For the Center, it's important that the results obtained become recommendations for the vice-presidency, schools, colleges and supporting areas to contribute to students' success. That is, for them to learn and complete what is established in their academic programs in the time expected.

On the other hand, every time a process is done, its operation is documented to detect areas of opportunity and turn them into actions for improvement. According to this perspective, the rubrics used for the assessment of the four Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) have been modified and improved; the questionnaire for faculty evaluation has been modified, standardizing its operation in CETYS' three campuses; an institutional policy for the periodic review of academic programs has been done. Using the results of the institutional assessment, CADI has recommended the academy to adopt the "final essay" and "research project" as two best practices in higher education to improve students' competency in clear and effective

communication in Spanish and their ability to use information resources and technology in CETYS' libraries.

Among the most relevant projects currently running in CADI, are:

❍ PRIASEPES: (initials in Spanish) Project for the revision, integration and automation of higher education's faculty evaluation system.

❍ Joint project with the Technology Department for the development of the necessary elements to generate reports in the Institutional Electronic Portfolio.

The Academy for Institutional Learning Outcomes should also be mentioned, as it is a group integrated by faculty and members of the CADI; it's the academic mechanism that facilitates institutional assessment and identifies areas of improvement, to ensure higher education students gain competency in the following Learning Outcomes:

❶ Clear and effective communication in Spanish

❷ Continuous learning

❸ Critical thinking

❹ Awareness of cultural diversity

### *Training for the Institutional Assessment.*

To facilitate the assessment process, CADI- as the coordinator of the Institutional Assessment process- organizes training workshops for undergraduate and graduate faculty members since 2008. These workshops are given in person for a period of two hours and are focused on explaining the use and relevance of rubrics as assessment tools, as well as the review and practice of assessment in their courses. Since early 2009, CETYS began using the Institutional Electronic Portfolio (PEI for its initials in Spanish) to collect and save performance evidence of the assessment process; the workshops were modified to integrate this process as well.

These workshops have been carried out since 2008, adding over 200 professors of the three campuses trained in the use of rubrics and PEI.

Furthermore, CADI has organized several courses and workshops with external experts on assessment as an additional effort to facilitate assessment. Some of these experts are Dr. Mary Allen and Dr. Marilee J. Brescianni- both recommended by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges to work on assessment.

Here is the distribution of participating faculty, organized by College and Campus.

Faculty participating in Assessment training workshops (By College)
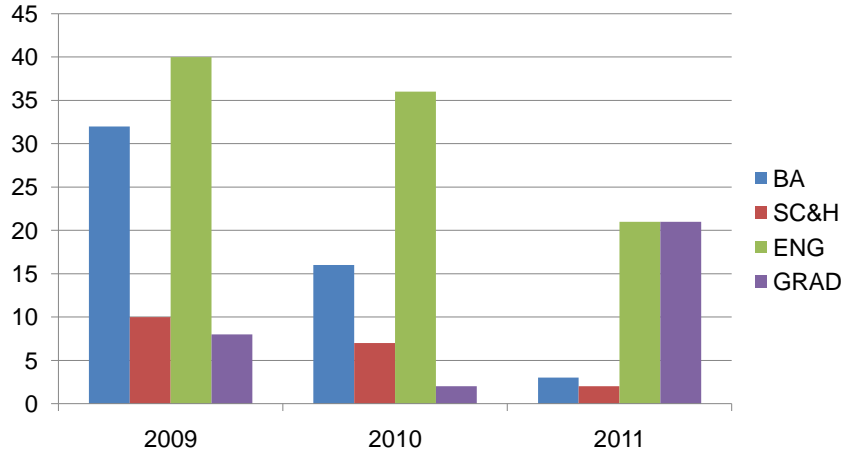
Faculty participating in Assessment training workshops (By Campus)
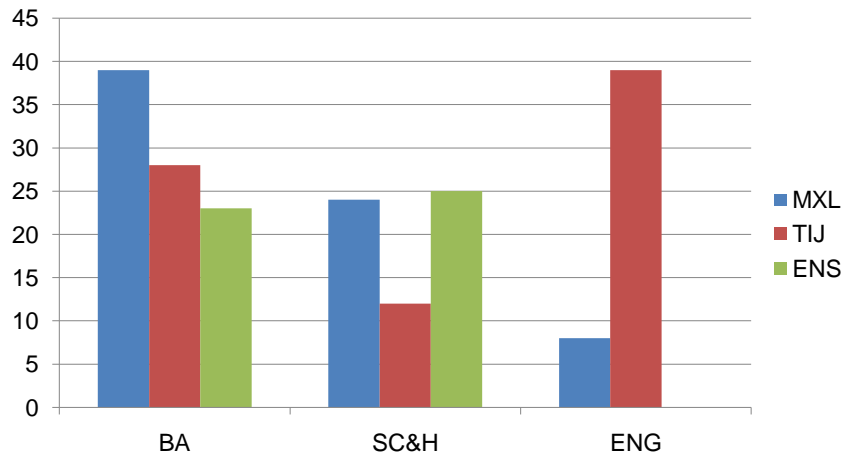
Although formal training in courses or workshops has been somewhat irregular, professors also seek informal support or advice from CADI, as well as other professors who have previously participated in the assessment process. The participation of professors in the assessment process has increased; evidence of this can be seen in the portfolio's participation rates.