

SPRAC SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM REVIEWS

FIRST REPORT – ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

December 1, 2004

The subcommittee met 16 times between March and October 2003 and several times in the winter of 2004 in conjunction with the PVA Review process. This report briefly summarizes the results of those discussions.

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF MU PROGRAMS

A significant majority of committee members agreed that a comprehensive program review process (for both academic and non academic programs) is needed and is probably long overdue. We also agree that this needs to become part of the “strategic planning” environment and not just a one-off event connected to the current budget situation. If strategic planning is to be something other than a paper exercise there needs to be a sustained institution-wide effort to move resources into areas that support the goals of the strategic plan.

Some committee members expressed concern that a high-profile, comprehensive program review effort might well divide the campus and possibly lead to no result much as was the case in the early 1980’s effort at MU. In short, would the potential gains be worth the likely high price? Ultimately, this is a question for campus leadership to answer.

Early on we agreed that it was too complex to tackle both academic and nonacademic programs simultaneously. We decided to concentrate on academic programs in the first phase of our efforts and then turn our attention to nonacademic programs in the second phase.

PRECURSORS TO A REVIEW

Our discussions were assisted by the availability of Robert Dickeson’s book (Prioritizing Academic Programs). Dickeson lays out three necessary conditions, which institutions need to address prior to tackling the difficult task of prioritizing their programs.

First, there needs to be a clear recognition among all parties that such a process is needed. We as a subcommittee feel that is the case but some “testing of the waters” also needs to be done among other groups such as the Faculty Council, Council of Deans, UM system, and the Curators.

Second, the institution's strategic plan must be written in such a way that it provides a framework for making decisions. Dickeson outlines the qualities a plan ought to possess and our subcommittee felt that the MU plan fell short of meeting those standards. While our assigned task is to suggest criteria, before those criteria can be meaningfully applied, the MU plan ought to be reviewed with this objective in mind.

Finally, Dickeson stresses the need for an institutional "gut check". Does the leadership of the institution have the will to see the process of program review through to its conclusion even if that means consolidating, reducing or eliminating programs and faculty. Again this assessment is beyond the scope of our committee but we would urge that it be done, to the level of the Curators, prior to launching the review process.

If we follow the approach suggested by Dickeson, one other caveat needs to be mentioned. The process, as he outlines it, is lengthy and involves various constituent groups at every phase. As we approach the task of suggesting criteria, Dickeson notes that these need to be totally transparent. They should be shared with all groups (e.g. faculty, departments etc) and comments solicited. Fairness and equity and the APPEARANCE of same will be crucial for the process to have legitimacy. All this will take considerable time and therefore the prioritization process is not a "quick fix" for immediate budget challenges. Ultimately, it supports the strategic plan's goals (and institutional quality) by investing in high priority programs and by disinvesting in lower priority programs. While the long-term rewards to this effort are significant, there are considerable risks and short-term costs. Further, our institutional track record in this arena is anything but stellar. Ultimately, what is envisioned is a wholesale change in institutional culture – a difficult challenge in any respect but especially so when programs and careers are potentially at risk.

Crafting criteria for evaluating (with the goal of prioritizing) academic programs is not a difficult task. There is a literature on this topic and one can identify a number of case studies to use as examples. The real challenge lies in operationalizing the criteria and defining what is meant by "program." At various times the term "program" is used to mean department, degree program, emphasis areas within a degree program (both formal and informal), curriculum designator, cluster of activities within a department (e.g. alternative dispute resolution in the School of Law) and other things we probably haven't thought of. The problem is that "data," to the extent any are available at all, rarely exist in a standard format for all these different definitions. For example, the campus can produce SCH data for curriculum designator but those are not necessarily synonymous with either degree program or department.

While we were drawn to trying to use Dickeson's approach to defining programs and then conducting reviews from that list, we doubt that it is practical because of the data problem. Dickeson defines a "program" as anything that consumes resources. In a "sample" Department of Biology, he identifies 12 distinct "programs. These included, besides the BS, MS and PhD degrees, a minor, service to general education, research thrusts, emphasis areas etc. While the data problem is serious some on the committee feel

it would be instructive for the campus to request from Deans and departments an inventory of “programs” in their units along with a self assessment of the value or productivity of each. If nothing else this would serve to educate both Chairs and Deans as to the mix of programs in their respective units and should lead to some questions about whether everything in the portfolio is needed.

ESTABLISHING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PROGRAMS

With the assistance of Dr Robert Shirley, we examined a number of models for setting program priorities and the process of doing this led us to several conclusions.

1. Whatever the process or criteria, both must be transparent or implementation will be even more problematic than it is likely to be under the best of circumstances.
2. While we would like to be able to use Dickeson’s broad interpretation of “program” (e.g. he identified 12 distinct programs in a “case” of a biological sciences department and each of those would be subjected to a review), the reality of available data, time and resources means that “programs” are likely to have to be assessed at either the level of department, degree or curriculum designator – as these are the lowest levels of aggregation for which institutional data can be obtained. Other types of programs (academic and nonacademic) will be the subject of a later phase of assessment.
3. We need to be very cognizant of the workload required of “programs” in the process of implementing an evaluation process. Since it is likely that less than 10-20% of programs will be impacted by the process, one way or the other, requiring all to be subjected to a massive data collection process is likely not in MU’s best interest. The three department chairs on the subcommittee are especially aware of this issue. However, if the process is linked to the required five year CBHE Review, then the workload demands would not be increased significantly.
4. At the end of the day any program review process is largely subjective and judgmental and thus the criteria and measures used need to reflect this. For most criteria a 3-5 point rating scale will provide as much information as a more complex metric, which will require more resources to construct and implement. Ultimately, those empowered to make decisions will have to decide what programs are enhanced, maintained, modified, reduced or eliminated as a result of the process. However a broad array of reviewers ought to be employed prior to the point where a final decision needs to be made.

In light of all this, we feel that any list of criteria can be grouped into four broad categories:

1. Cost/Revenue Relationship – the question to be addressed here is how does the program contribute to, and help to pay, the institution’s bill? The work done in developing the RAC model can contribute a lot to operationalizing this category

although sources of revenue (apart from state appropriations) attributable to academic units are relatively few--SCH's, student numbers, F&A, and gifts/endowments.

2. Program Quality – Does the program bring “glory” to MU? Does it contribute to maintaining or enhancing AAU membership? “Quality,” like many of the other criteria, lies largely in the eye of the beholder. However, at a minimum an assessment of collective faculty strengths (e.g. publications, grants etc) and program strengths (e.g. rankings; success of graduates etc) should be done as a part of this category of assessment.
3. Centrality – is the program “central” to MU’s mission as THE land grant and public research institution serving the needs of all of the people of Missouri.
4. Need – here an assessment needs to be made of the “demand” for the program for majors and graduates, service to non-majors, and community impact. Also, does the program have comparative and/or locational advantage in the state?

NOTE: It will be obvious to all that there are interrelationships and links between the four criteria. This is inevitable and it will be the task of the review panels to minimize the impact of redundant indicators.

THE CRITERIA DEFINED

We felt that rather than recreating the “wheel” that a matrix similar to what has been employed at SUNY-Albany could be adapted to work for MU academic programs. Envision a table the left hand side of which are all MU departments and their degrees. A separate list of nondegree/noncredit awarding programs (e.g. Campus Writing Program) could also be developed although not all criteria could be applied to their evaluation.

Across the top of the table would be the evaluation criteria. Most of these ratings will be “informed” judgments based on the information at hand but recognizing perfect information is not available. We would envision placing programs into broad categories along the following lines:

Cost/Revenue Relationship (Excellent, Adequate, Poor) – To be assigned a rating of “excellent” a program must have the potential for generating an excess of revenue over costs. An “adequate” rating would imply that revenues earned would be approximately equal to costs, while a “poor” relationship means that costs are projected to exceed income in the future. All sources of cost and revenue should be considered including an assessment of the adequacy of physical facilities and library holdings. It is also suggested that anytime a negative is given in a particular category a determination should be made as to what is required to correct the problem and what the repair would cost. NOTE: A program rated “Poor” may be ultimately deemed as a cost the institution must bear.

Program Quality (Excellent, Strong, Adequate, Weak) (Appendix A)

Centrality (High, Medium, Low) (Appendix B)

Need (Appendix C)

Service to Non-Majors (High, Medium, Low)

Demand by Majors (High, Medium, Low; Growing, Stable, Decreasing)

Demand for Graduates (High, Medium, Low; Growing, Stable, Decreasing)

Community Impact (High, Medium, Low)

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

In the implementation of an institutional program evaluation strategy “process” is probably as important as “product”. We offer the following suggestions, along with a brief rationale for each, with this in mind.

A. What Programs Should be Included?

The Subcommittee was split on this issue. We discussed three alternatives:

1. For the first effort, and perhaps every 8-10 years thereafter, include all “programs” in the process. Both Dickeson and Shirley favor this approach.
2. Cluster programs (e.g. biological/life sciences) and review all programs in a cluster in a given year rotating through all clusters over a five year period.
3. Use the current five-year program review cycle and incorporate the prioritization criteria and process into it.

Recommendation – Begin the process in Spring, 2005 with the programs (approximately 20% of total) scheduled for five year (CBHE) program reviews in 2005-2006. Do the remaining 80% of programs in 2007-2008.

B. Suggested Procedures for Program Evaluation

1. Announce the program criteria in advance. (March)
2. Conduct workshops on campus about the criteria to discuss ways in which the criteria might be measured and solicit suggestions for how to better articulate the relationship between a criterion and a program. (March-April)

Rationale: Dickeson argues that these workshops produce creative ideas about ways to measure programs and allow stakeholders to participate in the development of the program evaluation process.

3. Programs are provided appropriate information by Institutional Research (IR) by May 1. Programs then submit information relevant to the criteria. Programs should be given a deadline for submitting this information and a page limit (8 pages, double spaced, 12 font). (October 1).

NOTE – For practical purposes the operational definition of a “program” will be the same as “department.” Departments will be subject to the page limit and will need to provide information on all their degrees. Degree programs not tied to a department will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Rationale: There should be a limited but reasonable time frame. The page limit should allow programs to make their case but not create information overload for panels.

4. Program Review Committee structure. (October-December)
 1. Under the auspices of SPRAC, a Program Review Committee and Chair would be appointed by the Chancellor.
 2. This Committee would be structured into independent panels that would evaluate the information submitted by programs. Each panel would have a chair to direct its work. The number of panels would be determined by the number of programs to be evaluated.
 3. The Chair of the Review Committee and the panel chairs would form an Executive Committee.
 4. Each panel would have 5-7 members who would represent diverse populations (Faculty members, Chairs, Staff, etc.).
 5. Each panel would use the criteria to evaluate a set of programs and make a recommendation to maintain, enhance, reduce, eliminate, or modify a program. Reports from panels should reflect the degree of agreement reached and the views of panel members.
 6. A panel could request additional information from a program if absolutely necessary.
 7. Each program would be reviewed by 2 of the panels. If the panels disagreed, The Executive Committee would review the reports and determine if a third panel should review the program. Panels would be formed to avoid obvious conflicts of interest. Panel members could not review programs from their department/unit. Panel Chairs would have the authority to address conflict of interest issues as they felt necessary.
 8. The Executive committee would assign programs to the panels and compile the results of the panel recommendations.

Rationale: Two (or more) panels examining the same program allows more people to participate in the review process and may reduce the politics of the decision making process. It certainly increases the time involved in making the decision but these panels can be working simultaneously.

5. A recommendation is made thru SPRAC to the Chancellor to maintain, enhance, reduce, eliminate, or modify a program. This recommendation includes a brief report of the deliberations of the panel about each program. (December) NOTE: We do not feel that SPRAC should debate or act on these reports but the members of SPRAC should be provided them for information purposes.
6. Each program receives feedback from the panels.
7. Hearings. Programs may submit additional information and stakeholders are allowed to present a case to the Executive Committee. The Chair of SPRAC and the Chair of the Executive Committee would be responsible for these hearings. The Executive Committee will develop and publicize procedures/groudrules for conducting hearings. Committee hearings would be open. Recommendations are reviewed by the Executive Committee and Chair of SPRAC and maintained or revised. (February)
8. Recommendations are forwarded to the Chancellor. (March).
9. In parallel with the above, Deans of the Divisions in which programs are being reviewed will submit evaluations of those programs using the same criteria being employed by the Review Committees. These would be delivered to the Provost for transmission to the Chancellor no later than January 1.
10. The Chancellor makes decisions regarding whether a program is maintained, enhanced, reduced, modified or eliminated. (March-May)

ISSUES FOR PHASE 2

We recommend conducting reviews of academic support programs (e.g. Student Success Center; ASC; Campus Writing; International Center, etc.) and designated research programs (F21C; AES; Molecular Biology; Dalton; Reactor; etc) in a later phase of the project. This would also be an opportunity to tackle Extension/Continuing Education programs funded by GO sources. We feel the general criteria we are proposing can be used for programs such as these. However, we need to develop some examples of specific indicators more appropriate for these activity areas.

APPENDIX A

Academic Program Quality (Quality of Outcomes)

A program is expected to submit objective, external, or comparative evidence of quality in the following three categories. Programs should consider the areas under each category as *guidelines* for developing a report. These areas are not listed in priority order.

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement

1. Scholarly books per full-time, tenure-line FTE
2. Peer reviewed journal articles or commensurate creative achievement per full-time, tenure-line FTE
3. Other peer-reviewed scholarly works or commensurate creative achievement per full-time, tenure-line FTE
4. External funding awarded vs. opportunities available
5. Other (e.g., rankings, recognitions, etc.)

Teaching

1. Undergraduate instruction and advisement
2. Graduate instruction and advisement
3. Extension
4. Student engagement (e.g., mentored undergraduate research projects completed, courses taught writing intensive, FIG participation, supervision of departmental honors theses, etc.)
5. Initiatives and use of technology
6. Student performance on appropriate outcome measures
7. Success of graduates
8. Other (e.g., rankings, recognitions, etc.)

Service

1. Contribution to the profession
2. Contribution to the university community
3. Outreach contributions
4. Other (e.g., rankings, recognitions, etc.)

APPENDIX B

The Criterion “Centrality”

We believe that many persons have clear and perhaps simple definitions of centrality and the various measures of this criterion, but these definitions and measures probably differ from person to person. For this reason, it may difficult to capture a single definition on paper and to write directions for measurement that will be easily understood by all participants. But, centrality should be the first and foremost criterion.

We focused our discussions on the following three topics.

1. Is the criterion “Centrality” redundant to or part of the “Need” criterion?

Dickeson (pages 72 & 73) does not specify centrality as a criterion. His 9th (impact, justification, and overall essentiality) criterion comes closest to our understanding of the meaning of centrality. He uses the term centrality in his discussion, primarily as a synonym for essentiality. Shirley (page 480) includes centrality within his “need for a program” criterion and essentially limits the response to “yes” or “no”.

We feel that Shirley’s concept is too limited and that centrality should be a separate criterion over and above need. Although not exclusively, need may be viewed as primarily externally driven (public demand), whereas, centrality is internally driven, i.e. does the program help us fulfill our mission/vision/strategic intents.

2. Centrality in respect to what? What is at the center?

It is impossible to define centrality unless we understand what is at the center. Shirley (page 480) clearly puts the campus mission at the center and does not allow for other possibilities. Dickeson takes, perhaps, a marginally broader view. He uses the term “academic centrality”. This concept may come closer to putting well-rounded education at the center. Neither author discussed need/centrality in terms of the state or taxpayers, possibility because their foci were not limited to publicly funded (assisted) universities.

We believe that it is the MU mission/vision/strategic intents statement that should be placed at the center. That mission/vision/strategic intents statement will incorporate the requirements of a well-rounded education and needs of the state/taxpayer.

Because the mission/vision/strategic intents statement will be the rule by which all programs will be judged, it is essential that the mission/vision/strategic intents statement is written as clearly as possible and with clearly defined boundaries. Otherwise, every present and conceivable program will be able to find centrality.

3. How should we assess or measure “centrality”?

It is difficult to develop measures that are discrete, easy to find, and easy to quantify. So, descriptive text is probably appropriate rather than some internally or externally collected numeric data. The following are possible measures to consider:

- a. Programs should describe how they intersect with the MU mission/vision/strategic intents statement. In this description, they should include references to specific passages in the MU mission/vision/strategic intents statement.
- b. Programs should describe how they interact with other programs and how these interactions enhance or improve the other programs.
- c. Programs should describe how their absence would necessitate alterations to the MU mission/vision/strategic intents statement.

DRAFT

APPENDIX C
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE “NEED” CRITERION

Instructional Need

Service to Non-Majors (from Delaware data)

Undergraduate (SCH and courses)

Graduate (SCH and courses)

Minors/Certificates Awarded

Trend in SCH

Demand by

First Majors

Second Majors

Trend in number of majors

Masters programs (applicants/enrolled)

PhD programs (applicants/enrolled)

Nontraditional students (distance learning, non-credit, etc.)

Demand for Graduates

% reporting area related employment in EM destination survey

% undergraduates attending graduate school

Graduate program placement information

Stakeholders supporting programs (type and amount of support)

Internships

Placement activity

Substitutability

If this program did not exist who would meet the need?

Research Need

Funding generated from competitive external sources valuing expertise

Research products created benefiting society (inventions, patents, new processes, applications.)

Indicators of external value of research/scholarship

Services Need

Community/State Impact (hrs/number served)

Programs Offered (number attending/impact)

Services Offered (clients served/impact)

Availability of substitute expertise

APPENDIX D

CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING FUNDED RESEARCH PROGRAMS

November 3, 2003

The subgroup (Nolan, Miller, Wilson) held discussions with Jim Coleman (Vice Provost for Research) and John Gardner (CAFNR Associate Dean for Research and Outreach).

There are five programs that receive GO funds which are of interest:

- Food for the 21st Century
- Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station
- Molecular Biology Program
- Dalton Cardiovascular Research Center
- MU Research Reactor

Three other programs also qualify but we suggest postponing reviews of them.

- Life Sciences Center – should delay due to the fact the program is just beginning
- Museum of Art and Archaeology – quite different and need to determine appropriateness of criteria
- Center for Arts and Humanities – receives very small amount of GO funding

Both Dr. Coleman and Dr Gardner were familiar with the draft program review document and prior to our meeting Dr Coleman had reviewed the criteria with his center directors. There was agreement that, in general, the four criteria worked for these programs as long as we allowed the programs to craft appropriate indicators consistent with their mission.

For example, the Need criteria need to be redefined to emphasize the importance of the program to the state, nation and/or its importance to other programs on the campus. In addition we would have to take a broad view of Cost/revenue relationships and not look at simple ratios such as the relationship of GO funding to amount of F&A generated.

Both Dr. Coleman and Dr. Gardner felt that it was reasonable for funded research programs to respond to a program review request and tell their story based on the framework we have adopted for academic program reviews. In some cases it may be more valuable to break down programs into components (e.g. F21C has four distinct clusters) and review each separately. Discretion to do this ought to be left to the program director.

Conclusion – use the four review criteria but encourage modification of them to fit the unique nature of research programs as contrasted to academic programs which have students, courses and majors.

APPENDIX E
REVIEW CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS
(Discussion Notes)

Academic Support Programs-GO supported programs with a mission that includes providing support for academic programs.

Student Success Center (The Learning Center, Advising, The Career Center, Academic Retention Services)

The Honors College

The International Center

PET

Academic Support Center

Campus Wide Advising

The Campus Writing Program

Service Learning Program

Disability Services

Library

English Language Support Program

Undergraduate Research Office

Space Planning and Management

University Concert Services/KBIA

IATS

Criteria for Academic Support Programs

Quality

- How do you measure success in achieving the objectives of your program? What evidence do you have that your program has been successful?
- What internal and external assessment data do you have that measure the success of your program?
- What does independent evaluation data indicate about the success of your program? (from key stakeholders and relevant groups)
- How do quality measures of this program compare to other comparable programs at other institutions?
- What recognitions has your program received?
- What challenges do you face that impede your ability meet the objectives of your program?
- What opportunities do you anticipate that will enhance your ability to meet the objectives of your program?

Centrality

- Is this program critical to the mission of the university?

- Describe how this program intersects with the MU mission.vision/strategic intents statement.
- Describe how this program interacts with other programs and how these interactions enhance or improve the other programs.
- Describe how the absence of this program would necessitate alterations to the MU mission/vision/strategic intents statement.

Need

- What are the main objectives of your program?
- Who is served by your program? How many individuals are served by your program?
- In what way does your program relate to other programs of the university, academic and nonacademic? What services do you provide to other programs? On what tasks do you collaborate with other programs?

Cost/Revenue Relationship

- What revenue is generated by your program?
- What costs are associated with your program?
- What resources are needed for your program? In what ways can you make better use of your resources?
- Describe how your efforts to improve efficiency have enhanced your ability to meet the objectives of your program.