

SPRAC SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM REVIEWS

PREFACE TO THE REPORT ON REVIEWS OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

December 1, 2004

The Subcommittee's report dated December 1, 2004 represents our lengthy deliberations re how to improve the academic program review process at MU. If endorsed by SPRAC, we offer it to the MU campus leadership as suggestions for incorporation into the current review process.

The initial charge to the committee was to establish a review framework that could be used to periodically review all academic programs with the goal of establishing priorities for resource allocation purposes. However, as discussions evolved, it became clear that there are at least three purposes for program reviews.

1. Program Prioritization for budget allocation (reallocation) purposes.
2. Program Improvement/Strengthening
3. Program Visibility Enhancement through the use of External Review Panels.

In addition, the UM System has been pursuing the topic through Program Viability Audits (PVA's -- now called simply Program Audits) which contain elements of both (1) and (2) above.

It is the Subcommittee's view that, although we started our discussions with "prioritization" as a goal, the framework we are proposing is applicable for any of the purposes above. In fact we used it to review seven programs identified through the PVA process and felt it worked quite well.

While the concept of "one size fits all" is probably flawed when considering the diversity of MU academic programs, we believe the core review concepts of Cost/Revenue Relationships (quantitative data), Quality, Centrality and Need (qualitative assessments) should allow all programs to adequately "tell their story." In addition we felt that the two panel framework we suggest for conducting reviews worked very well when put to the test in the PVA undertaking. Thus it is with confidence that we recommend this to the MU campus leadership as our suggestion for a framework for conduction a comprehensive review of all MU academic programs OR simply modifying the current five year CBHE review framework.

It needs to also be noted that this report represents only the first part of the charge to the Subcommittee. Recommendations on a framework for reviewing MU's non-academic programs still need to be developed.