2013 Program Review Process Task Force Charge

Background
The process of program review at Northern Illinois University (NIU) for academic programs and centers is well established and long-standing. It has served us well over time for both our internal and external needs. However, at this time, it is important that this process be reviewed to ensure that it is as effective and efficient as it needs to be as we move into an increasingly fluid and competitive environment in higher education. A number of innovative practices are emerging at campuses across the country designed to invigorate the program review processes and enable these processes to be more effective, efficient, and better aligned with institutional goals and external demands. Background materials on some of these innovations and best practices will be distributed to the members of this task force to aid them in creating a set of comprehensive recommendations for the Academic Planning Council (APC) to consider for implementation at NIU.

Issues to be Addressed
1. Effectiveness: including, but not limited to
   a) Timeliness of program data and its uses
   b) Transparency of program data and its uses
   c) APC use of data for program improvement, support, and/or possible elimination
2. Efficiency: including, but not limited to
   a) Optimum use of personnel and other NIU resources
   b) Ease of process for academic programs and members of the APC
3. Alignment: including but not limited to
   a) Alignment with institutional goals
   b) Alignment with IBHE requirements
   c) Alignment with guidelines/requirements of our regional, college, and disciplinary accreditors

Expected Outcomes
1. Review of best practices for program review processes
2. Evaluation of our current program review process at NIU (i.e., what’s working and what needs improvement)
3. Compilation of a set of recommendations for the APC to consider for implementation beginning in fall 2013. (Note: The task force is being charged with compiling a set of recommendations for the APC to review, and, once approved, the APC and the Office of the Provost will design an implementation plan to be phased in over time.

Timeline
The task force will meet 4-5 times during spring 2013 to complete its work and 1-2 times in fall 2013 to finalize and present a set of recommendations to the APC.
2013 Program Review Process Task Force Recommendations  
April 15, 2013

**Short-term (by October 2013)**
1. Rewrite program review guidelines to reduce page length, reduce repetition across sections, provide better explanations of how to write the reports, and provide exemplary models of report sections; while still maintaining minimum requirements for IBHE and HLC.

2. Align program review guidelines to better reflect institutional goals and priorities.

3. Solidify with the Council of Deans the institutional performance metrics that will be used to evaluate colleges and programs. Be sure to include assessment of student learning outcomes in these performance metrics.

4. Begin discussion with the APC as to their future role in program review and academic planning, more generally.

5. Begin development of a web-based program review portfolio. Consult with others on campus to find a data mechanism that can be used to share data across units.

6. Begin planning to reduce the length of the program review process for the culminating review (now every eight years) from its current duration of approximately 24 months to approximately 12 months.

7. Complete a basic cost analysis of program review direct costs in its current form.

**Mid-term (phased in over next three years)**
1. Provide annual institutional data on performance metrics that will be used to evaluate colleges and programs. These should be quality data provided at the program level, if possible.

2. Require programs to submit annual data on key performance metrics and to reflect on one or more metric each year. Coordinate these annual formative reports so that they form the foundation of the culminating summative eight year program review. Further, the annual reviews of performance metrics may trigger ad hoc program reviews where programs exhibit issues and/or areas for improvement that need to be addressed sooner than on the eight year cycle.

3. Continue to align program review guidelines to better reflect institutional goals and priorities as they evolve.

4. Complete development and implementation of a web-based program review portfolio. Use portfolio to input data from multiple sources and to allow reports to be generated for multiple purposes.
5. Move program review in the direction of planning that is informed by recent data trends. Require action plans from programs for each key performance metric with specified targets.

6. Begin to align program review with disciplinary accreditors using subcommittees of APC members and individuals from specific disciplines. Start with larger accreditors (e.g., AACSB, ABET, NCATE, etc.). As this is occurring, some programs may decide to undergo program review more frequently than every eight years to better align with their accreditation cycles.

7. Add external component to program review for those departments that do not currently have external review or accreditation.

8. Implement the reduction of the length of the program review process for the culminating review from its current duration of approximately 24 months to approximately 12 months.

9. Complete a cost analysis of program review direct costs in its current and new form.

Long-term (phased in over next eight years)
1. Monitor and evaluate program review process on ongoing basis for continual improvements in web-based portfolio (or other technologies), quality of performance metrics, and ease of use for all key constituents.

2. Continue to align program review guidelines to better reflect institutional goals and priorities and provide data for program prioritization.

3. Evaluate program action plans and specified targets for each key performance metric for purposes of accountability.

4. Use the program review process to provide data which may inform resource allocation decisions at the institutional, college, and departmental levels.

5. Continue alignment of program review with disciplinary accreditors using subcommittees of APC members and individuals from specific disciplines.

6. Complete thorough cost analysis of direct and indirect costs of program review in its new form.
### 2013 Program Review Process Task Force Recommendations - Update

**April 15, 2013**

#### Short-term (by Fall 2013)

1. **Revise guidelines**
   a) Rewrite program review guidelines to reduce page length, reduce repetition across sections, and provide better explanations of how to write the reports; while still maintaining minimum requirements for IBHE and HLC. (October 2013)
   b) Provide exemplary models of report sections.

2. Receive permission from the IBHE to align program review with accreditation for programs that have accreditation. (July 2013)

3. Align program review guidelines to better reflect institutional goals and priorities.

4. **Institutional performance metrics**
   a) Solidify with the Council of Deans the institutional performance metrics that will be used to evaluate colleges and programs. (July 2013)
   b) Be sure to include assessment of student learning outcomes in these performance metrics.

5. Begin discussion with the APC as to their future role in program review and academic planning, more generally.

6. **Web-based program review portfolio**
   a) Begin development of a web-based program review portfolio. (September 2013)
   b) Consult with others on campus to find a data mechanism that can be used to share data across units. (October 2013)

7. Begin planning to reduce the length of the program review process for the culminating review (now every eight years) from its current duration of approximately 24 months to approximately 12 months.
   a) Establish a Program Review Process Implementation Group. (November 2013)

8. Complete a basic cost analysis of program review direct costs in its current form.
Mid-term (phased in over next three years)

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2. Require programs to submit annual data on key performance metrics and to reflect on one or more metric each year. Coordinate these annual formative reports so that they form the foundation of the culminating summative eight year program review. Further, the annual reviews of performance metrics may trigger ad hoc program reviews where programs exhibit issues and/or areas for improvement that need to be addressed sooner than on the eight year cycle.

3. Continue to align program review guidelines to better reflect institutional goals and priorities as they evolve.

4. Complete development and implementation of a web-based program review portfolio. Use portfolio to input data from multiple sources and to allow reports to be generated for multiple purposes.

5. Move program review in the direction of planning that is informed by recent data trends. Require action plans from programs for each key performance metric with specified targets.

6. Begin to align program review with disciplinary accreditors using subcommittees of APC members and individuals from specific disciplines. Start with larger accreditors (e.g., AACSB, ABET, NCATE, etc.). As this is occurring, some programs may decide to undergo program review more frequently than every eight years to better align with their accreditation cycles.

7. Add external component to program review for those departments that do not currently have external review or accreditation.

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Long-term (phased in over next eight years)

1. Monitor and evaluate program review process on ongoing basis for continual improvements in web-based portfolio (or other technologies), quality of performance metrics, and ease of use for all key constituents.

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3. Evaluate program action plans and specified targets for each key performance metric for purposes of accountability.
4. Use the program review process to provide data which may inform resource allocation decisions at the institutional, college, and departmental levels.

5. Continue alignment of program review with disciplinary accreditors using subcommittees of APC members and individuals from specific disciplines.

6. Complete thorough cost analysis of direct and indirect costs of program review in its new form.