APPROVED

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes of February 3, 2014
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Borneman, Boutin, Brantley, Chakraborty, Chandler, Damodaran, Douglass, Falkoff, Goldenberg, Gordon, House, Molnar, Shortridge

Guests: Chris Parker, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment; Jeff Reynolds, Director of Operational Analysis and Report Group; Ritu Subramony, Accreditation Researcher.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Assistant Chair Falkoff.

Jeff Reynolds and Ritu Subramony were introduced. These two individuals serve on the Program Review Process Implementation Group.

Typically in the spring we have a series of presentations provided to the APC members. At the agenda committee meeting it was suggested that the APC have an APC Spring Seminar Panel presentation this spring. This will be a good opportunity for us to talk about the program review process and how we can make it more meaningful.

Last year the Program Review Process Task Force was established. The task force was comprised of chairs who had recently written program reviews, members from the APC, college administrators, and central administrators. This group talked about ways to make the program review process more meaningful. The recommendations were broken down into short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented.

It is the APC’s responsibility to think about the program review process and revise it. The APC bylaws state that the duties of the APC include, among others, to:

- Develop and implement procedures for the periodic review of academic programs in terms of their quality and their consistency with the institution’s academic mission.
- Advise the executive vice president and provost on academic priorities and strategies for the achievement of those priorities, including the establishment of priorities in budgeting.

On March 17 we would like to have a panel discussion, and we need to create questions for the people who will serve on the panel. We were thinking about asking Lisa Freeman, Nancy Suttenfield, Anne Kaplan, Anne Birberick, Sue Mini, Lesley Rigg, and Eric Weldy (or their representatives) to be panel members. We are trying to have President Baker come to one of the last meetings this spring.

The APC should think about the role it wants to play going forward to optimize NIU’s programs. President Baker cut 38 programs at the University of Idaho. The APC also needs to look to make sure that the programs are the right size. It will do this by using data and advising the provost and president.
We might want to look at programs every year through an electronic dashboard and talk about how things are going at that time. One concern is if the APC can protect programs that need protecting. Another concern is about setting programs up to be closed. I don’t think we should be doing this, but if programs are closed, the APC should have a say. The reports are too long, and they take too long to write. The reports are also full of redundancies, and we want to reduce the redundancies in the reports. Doing a report every eight years doesn’t make sense. Maybe something smaller can be done every year. We want to align the program review reports with accreditation. Making more information available electronically was also discussed.

At the third meeting we might want to have work groups come up with recommendations and then present them to President Baker at the last meeting.

The critical principles for the task force were:

- Program review should provide opportunities for meaning, improvement, and accountability. (Effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment)
- Program review should be aligned with institutional mission and goals, including strategic planning. (Alignment)
- Program review should meet IBHE and HLC minimum requirements. (Alignment)
- Program review should be aligned with disciplinary accreditor reports. (Alignment)
- Program review should include high-quality data. (Effectiveness)
- Program review should include some external review. (Effectiveness)
- Program review should be timely, clear, and faculty-friendly. (Efficiency)
- Program review and the data collection for it should be linked to other data reporting to reduce faculty and staff time needed to complete reports. (Efficiency)

The recommendations include having data electronically and having a data dashboard.

The short-term recommendations were to:

1. Revise the 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 and ongoing)
   b. Provide exemplary models of report sections.
2. Review 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. Align with cycle and then align with components. Some of the things we have to do are standard across all programs.
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) Note: The Council of Deans agreed on the set of performance metrics, but this may change because of leadership changes.
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.

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

There should be a page limit for the reports.

This body will see some annual data on all programs. X, Y, and Z programs are doing fantastic, so they would just summarize their information. A, B, and C programs are having trouble, so let’s talk now and make improvements. We would also like to align the internal performance metrics with what the state is using. There will be some real changes in three years. We are also working on internal management and review of programs at the CIP level. The spring 2014 credit hour report is available to chairs for internal processes and so are enrollment, registration, and degrees conferred data. There are a variety of different types of measures for research, instructional staffing, enrollment, etc. and trends data. We would like to be more proactive by making plans and looking at how they worked out and then make adjustments. This council could give recommendations to the leadership.

The president is working to “unleash the Huskies” and to have us do our jobs in a more efficient and effective manner. This is an amazing opportunity to shape the role of the APC. A lot of these data are produced every year. Now we are talking about how frequently we look and reflect on the data. We should ask programs to create plans in response to the data and reflect on them the following year.

Because of the PQP process, program review has been written in a defensive style, and we don’t want this. One program has had six follow-up reports because they can’t write it down the way this council wants to see it. We need to be proactive, not defensive. What is the purpose of the process, to improve the programs or to have a list of programs on the chopping block? You would do things differently depending on the answer to this question.

We want to try to right size the programs to meet the needs of current and future students. We also want the process aligned with our mission and goals. There is no accountability in the current program review process. Some of the programs have seen a 50 percent decline in enrollment. How can these programs be realigned?

One of the reasons the recommendations may not go anywhere is that there is no tie to resources and how they are allocated even though the APC should advise the provost on academic priorities and strategies for the achievement of those priorities, including the establishment of priorities in budgeting. The APC is supposed to be making some of these recommendations. Not to cut programs, but to provide the best program portfolio we can.
We have three years of past data that could be looked at. NIU is among one of the lower public institutions on the state performance metrics, and the IBHE is looking at increasing the percentage assigned to these measures.

We want to move to a 12 month program review process. The number one thing that came out of the task force process was that program review should be meaningful and not just about where we are at, but where we want to be. Having external reviewers would add value to the whole process.

Think about what some of the questions will be for the panel. One question might be are you interested in where we want to go as well as where we have been. Think about what this would look like. How could centralized admission be changed? Can we develop our own metrics? Is there a systematic system where we can see the relationships to the other colleges? How can we increase enrollment across the university? The deans have agreed that they want to see all the colleges’ data not just to compare, but to look for opportunities for synergies. This council has an opportunity to redefine its role and how things are done.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck