

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of February 22, 2015
3 p.m., Altgeld 315

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Coller, Cordell (for Olson), Douglass, Falkoff, Goldenberg, Gordon, Howell, Hunt, Isabel, Jaffee, O'Brien, Parker, Reynolds, Shortridge, and Winkler

Guests: Sarah Leis- Academic Analysis and Reporting

The meeting was called to order at 3:00p.m

There were no announcements.

The consent agenda to accept the follow up reports for:

B.S. in Chemistry (2008-2009)

B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in Physics (2008-2009)

It was moved to accept the reports, seconded and passed unanimously.

Committee members broke up into smaller groups to discuss program review improvement. The results of those group discussions are as follows:

Small Group on Process Report Out:

The way that we approached it was to set a few goals for the process to help to guide us. One of them was to a) shorten the process, b) increase efficiencies, and c) make sure we are looking at appropriate data.

Suggestions related to the process:

One suggestion was to eliminate the different versions which include the initial draft, the second draft and the final. Maybe we can actually pull out one of those. This addresses goals A and B. We would also like to reduce the number of committees the programs have to appear before. Currently, there is a subcommittee and then the full APC committee. Maybe since much of the work is done in the subcommittee, that's where they should focus. And then subcommittees can report out to the full APC. This way, the programs don't have to appear twice and get asked the same questions.

Another suggestion had to do with clarifying the intent and focusing in on the quality of the kick-off orientation. Two things that came to mind were: is the timing of the orientation kick-off meeting relative to when the first version draft is due and is that enough time to actually do all of it (from November to March)? If there is external benchmarking that needs to be included, how does that affect the timeline? The second piece is about clarifying what is the intended outcome of the orientation? In this case, it seems like developing high quality reports is the intended outcome. Some of the suggestions down here will help with that.

There was the mention of an ongoing annual dashboard of data that one can be reacting to, but that is also available to help feed into the departmental context piece as well as the

individual degree programs. And that would address goals B and C, efficiencies and appropriate data. The other is the use of templates or looking for opportunities relative to the alumni survey and external benchmarking. Some aren't aware, for example, that the Office of Assessment Services carries out an annual assessment and an alumni survey. And you can tailor degree program, student learning outcomes in a supplemental survey and that can be attached right to the main survey. Our office would be willing to collaborate and work with that.

External benchmarking needs to be left in the process because of the great value that is gained by it. Having the internal peer feedback during subcommittees and external peer feedback during external reviews is very, very valuable. This was in terms of looking at improving the program, but also putting together the report itself. For example, the administrative meetings, where there is feedback from the Office of the Provost staff and other administrators is very powerful.

In terms of the data needed, it is important to have data provided up front or ahead of time, most of which is, and to clarify the data as it supports the programs' connection to the NIU mission. Also, having examples of what completed templates would be helpful.

Overall, we discussed what can be gained from program review? What were some of the lessons learned and what have programs been able to do? And we discussed the need for having summative and formative data that, along the way, includes data or measurement of ongoing processes. The example that came up, there's the mid-cycle status report and assessment plan in the assessment cycle, well maybe something similar could be used for program review, for continuous improvement processes. Well one thing that you can do is to reflect on, so four years ago, you had the mid-cycle status review. What have you done since? Did you act on the data and feedback that was provided to you? Likewise, one could do the same thing even with the full program review itself.

I think tailoring the part A of the template had to do with actually with some of the language in this report that Carolinda gave us that talked about ways in which degree programs might contribute to the university, that are in addition to excellence in their own area. There is also this issue of general education, some programs have limited admission and some are not. There are ways in which programs contribute to the overall university. If some of those options were provided in part A, I think it would help programs to understand the different types of contributions they make so that could be reported

For example, my program provides a great deal of general education, is that what you are thinking?

Yes, my program provides an avenue for students who are not able to succeed in a limited retention program, is one example. My program contributes to general education. The example I gave had to do with Theater. One of the things that they didn't put in their review was how they are part of their own mission is to build audiences for theater in the future in the State of Illinois. But, if there were options in a form that gave people ways to think about their real contributions or some of the contributions that aren't immediately obvious to them, I think it would lead to a more successful process and one that people felt they were also getting more out of.

Anyone else from the process group have anything to add?

Small Group on Center Template Report Out:

We need to limit them to a total number of words. And then I think to myself and going off what others said, I would love for the university to tell us, for centers and academic programs, to say, hey, these are ten very important metrics. But I'm going to also leave space perhaps for five more that would be self-determined. Metrics that you feel are very important and unique to your program. These come far enough in advance and on a regular basis between cycles that this can be done. I think for me, writing our report for the first time and being on this committee, some of the measures that I see, it took me four years to figure out what that figure meant. It's just things like that, where it would be helpful.

So just to summarize ten metrics and maybe five unique ones?

Yes. Ten university or college or whatever.

But limiting that to what is really important. Do you want to move on? Or do you have anything that you would like to add?

Are you saying the entire report is a response to the metrics?

No, the report will always be more than just quantitative metrics but they provide a baseline.

Yes, I am saying to a large degree, yes, measure by and the university has to decide what would work well. Like we talked about over here, with centers, you cannot penalize a program for going down in numbers ten percent if the whole university went down twenty percent. Then that department is looking pretty good. I think those metrics are there but, how do you interpret them? Again we will need guidelines for it.

Another reflection was that it would be much better if we simplify the presentation of data table, with data prepopulated by the university with whatever metrics are appropriate. And specify what we expect from the program authors, much like in prioritization, commentary, reflection on the data, what does this reveal to you, what are the limits of the data, what you would supplement to tell a fuller picture and the story will either tell itself for the program or tell us more. This would be rather than a series of, talk about this and how do you do that. The big picture I think is very similar.

It seems like we are talking about similar things to the other groups. We discussed the notion of streamlining the process to make it more efficient. What we found as we were going through, is a lot of redundancy in the questions asked. Also, a lot of copying and pasting, from section one to section two and section three. There seemed to be some main overarching questions which include: what is the overall purpose of the center, what are the goals and objectives that the center has established, what has the center accomplished since their last review, and then comes to review in the form of internal and external metrics, surveys, data provided by the university and so on. What are the goals both in the short term and the long term. Again, years covered will be predetermined by whoever establishes those. These reviews are going to be over five years, eight years, ten years. And finally, what resources are needed to accomplish these objectives and these goals. I think that in and of itself can be kind of an amalgamate all of these additional questions. Putting a word

cap on it certainly would make the process more efficient. We might want to keep the limit to under five hundred words per question. And that is pretty much what we came up with. We thought that some of the questions could be answered in more of a general way where there is currently redundancy.

Carolinda could you comment on the “Deans overriding” item on the group’s list?

So, one of the discussions, when I was sitting here with this group, was that people write something for program review but sometimes a Dean overrides what is written and asks that it be written to put the program in a better light. This group was concerned that the APC receive an honest appraisal of what people are doing so they can truly help with continuous improvement. I think if the Deans understood that we are really trying to provide recommendations on resource allocation, they would be supportive of saying, “hey, this isn’t working and we need more money here.”

If we could have IR data in a tabular form it would be much easier to work with. Also, a lot of the tables we are getting, it seems like could work as charts.

Like bar charts?

Yes, something in a chart.

I prefer narrative, so there you go.

Other comments for this group?

The last group had the biggest task and I don’t think they quite finished, but they can tell us about the progress they made.

Small Group on Academic Program Template Report Out:

We started going through the template. It is a pretty massive document. We do think that a lot of the information can be presented as in program prioritization, in table form. Or we can get data and just invite comment and reflection on the data. We think that would be useful in that simply asking for information without data to ask the reviewer to be brief. Let’s just hone in on what information we want to know, ask them and then give us an answer instead of a long list of things to respond to as that would only breed more and more and more responses. Obviously, we think we should nix some questions all together. One small thing, that might be very nice, would be to encourage programs that are closely related to cross-reference. For instance, a B.A. in English, a M.A. in English or a Ph.D. in English. So instead of generating three fifty-page documents, almost all of which is word for word cut and pasted, to promote the use of cross-references when appropriate. We think it would be a lot easier to distinguish the new information and would save some paper.

You got about two-thirds of the way through the document?

Maybe, yes about two-thirds of the way. We focused on the big picture.

Comments? Other questions for this group?

I feel that the cross-referencing is good. But what about this line of questions (from the Center Template)? Would they work for the academic programs?

I think we have kind of the big picture observations but I really think that if we were to go through the whole document, cutting out things that are clearly repetitive and aren't necessary and then compare that with what the IBHE absolutely requires, that we would be at the point where we could say alright, now let's look at the structure of the whole thing. Are there seven or eight questions that we could ask along those lines that would capture all of this information? And can we ask those questions in a way where the baseline of the answer is, at least for some of the questions, data that we get from the university? And then invite comments. I like personally the way we asked the questions in program prioritization. They are kind of big questions. And they leave it to the author to identify what's important, allows them to make the case, use data and facts when you have them, and are word limited. And I think for the most part, we can do the same thing for program review, but I think that's not to say that we should be, at this point, merging prioritization and program review. I think that is a different question, but that approach seems like what this is, and I personally think we could probably do something like that.

I look at those two, and to me that looks like a process. Where you had the big questions and gave people a limited number of words to address them. But then also, opportunities to comment on data and interpret it from the tables or the charts, and to say what you think they mean. Together, you would have a report that would be useful.

Any other thoughts?

I hope this was useful to you. This was very useful to me. This allowed us to get some of your ideas out there. We do not have a meeting next week, the week after that we have Al and Lisa here to talk to us about metrics, so they are thinking about this as well. We won't use that whole meeting to talk to them about that. We could do more of this, maybe with the academic template and mix up the groups a bit to get more feedback. We could have people work in subgroups. What would be the next step that you would like to see?

I think the first thing at the next meeting, instead of Lisa and Al talking about the importance of metrics, because I think we are all aware of the importance, if they could come and talk about what they need for fund allocation so at least we know. Right now, a lot of us are looking for that kind of information.

Jeff and I have a meeting with Lisa and Al tomorrow to talk about that, so we will see if we can come with some of that information.

I think what I am really shooting for, and I received a budgeting book today, is some direction. What are the goals, what are the metrics, what are the most important things?

We could have that conversation and then we could do more of this. We have to get through the rest these documents, so I guess I'm looking in part, how we would like to do that? And also, if people want to comment in other areas, those of you that worked on the documents, you might want to talk more about process or vice versa, so we are trying to get a sense of how you might want to proceed with that.

It would be useful to do another one of these meetings and maybe invite more people into this group. It would probably be more efficient for a smaller group to get together and plow through this thing and then come up with a kind of red line version or proposal. That would require work.

It would.

That someone would have to volunteer for.

Well this is your committee's time, we can use our time here, we could actually have people look at what you have already done and we could, after Al and Lisa have spoken to us about metrics, we could use that to go through more of this if you don't want to work outside of these hours. Or we could hold APC again next week, but we had given you next week off.

We come back in two weeks, we have the presentations and maybe spend forty-five minutes doing more of this.

Sounds good.

And then small groups will focus on that. Or we can see what you have already done and comment on that and do more so we don't reproduce the work. So, somehow I can get the work that you have done here today, and then we can send that out. Everyone has a copy of the template, you could take a look at it yourselves, and think about what might be good to change.

Again, I don't want to rush the process too much, but there are people that are waiting to hear what they are supposed to be doing for next year. I really want to be able to tell them by the beginning of April what they will do for next year. Why don't we see if we can do a little bit more of the same type of work next time, when we meet in two weeks? And if that doesn't work, then we might need to figure out another process or a smaller group.

Any other comments?

Thank you very much and have a good evening.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Essex