

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes of August 31, 2015

3 p.m., AL315

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Coller, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Freeman, Goldenberg, Gordon, Howell, Isabel, Hunt, Jaffee, Klonoski (for Birberick), Kaplan, Li, Mogren, Molnar, Subramony, Winkler

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

The APC committee was welcomed and introductions were made by all members. Vice-Provost Douglass then gave a brief overview of the agenda for the afternoon. Provost Freeman started out by describing some of the differences between program prioritization and program review. Both processes have some common elements in terms of the type of data that might be considered, however, the comparison group and the desired outcomes are different. Everyone is aware of the program prioritization process that the university is embarking on. Further, there is additional information on the NIU program prioritization website (<http://www.niu.edu/program-prioritization/>), which continues to be updated on a regular basis. Overall, program prioritization will compare academic programs to academic programs on this campus and administrative programs to administrative programs on this campus. This will be done with the end focus being resource allocation within our campus. Program review compares like programs at different institutions. The focus historically has been within public higher education within the State of Illinois, but can also be like programs at any institution considered a peer or an aspirational peer program. This is done with the end focus being on program quality within the context of similar programs with similar goals and learning outcomes. The type of data for both have historically been the same. Previously, there have been questions asked about a link between program review and resource allocation, but in the past, there has never been a bridge between the two. This has caused some frustration for individuals being reviewed given the level of effort that goes into these reports without any potential monetary benefit to the program. Additionally, there was previous concerns surrounding the lack of alignment between program review and the accreditation process. This second issue has now been addressed and a schedule has been created to link these processes over the coming years. Additionally, there has been an effort towards continuous improvement. Information and feedback have both been collected through surveys to determine what portions of the program review process are valued, what are less useful, and suggestions for what could be done differently to improve the process. As a result, changes have and will continue to be made to ensure that the information is as usable as possible, and the process is as easy as it can be.

This information then led to the history of APC, which was shared by Anne Kaplan. Her discussion was as follows:

Academic program review has a long history at NIU, dating back to the Monat/LaTourette administration. There was no such process when LaTourette arrived, but there was significant interest on campus in becoming a more comprehensive university. Those aspirations (NIU's as well as those of other public universities) and the state's concern that programmatic expansion in public

higher education needed to be controlled led to the process we have today. The 1950s and 1960s were a period of significant expansion in American higher education. NIU's student population, which had been about 2000 in 1950, reached 7000 by 1960 and 25,000 by 1975. NIU, along with Western and Eastern, was granted university status in 1957, and graduate enrollment went from 1,300 to 5,000 in the following decade. This kind of enrollment growth was accompanied across the state by an associated growth in institutional aspirations, causing the General Assembly to create in 1961 a coordinating authority for public higher education. By statute, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was to approve all new academic units and programs at the state's public institutions, recommend operation and capital budgets, and develop higher education "master plans" for development, expansion, integration, coordination, and the efficient utilization of the state's public institutions. This gave the IBHE substantial influence over institutional missions and program initiatives, just at the time when the university was trying to move beyond its historic role in the preparation of teachers. By the mid-1970s, the population increases which had driven the expansion of the '50s and '60s seemed to be over. An IBHE publication, "The End of Growth," (1977) signified a belief that the decline in the number of people in the 18-24 year old age group would mean a decline in higher ed enrollments. Coordinating boards across the country became concerned about controlling higher ed costs and aspirations, avoiding duplication and limiting expansion. The end of growth prediction turned out to be faulty, having overlooked the expansion of part-time and adult students and the growing importance of higher education in the labor market, but its immediate effect was to strengthen state coordinating boards. I (Anne Kaplan) joined the staff in the Provost's office in 1978, the year Provost Monat became acting president. John La Tourette arrived as provost in 1979 and was immediately faced with an IBHE demand that NIU justify its doctoral mission before the board would consider the university's proposal for a doctoral degree in Geology. This was a new kind of directive, and its immediate ramification was the development of the program review process. It was obvious that we would not make any headway with the IBHE without program specific information, data-driven evaluation, and a way to link programs to budget. LaTourette, with an academic background in developmental economics, was pretty comfortable with this approach. Associate Provost, Wilma Strickland, previously chair of the Management department, told me that if I wanted a career in academic administration, I'd better learn how to do this. I followed Wilma around for a couple years and in 1983 became the university's first Assistant Provost for Academic Planning. At about the same time, Richard Wagner was appointed executive director of the IBHE. Often referenced in the press as "the powerful executive director," Wagner held that position from 1980 to 1998. He built the board's agenda around important public goals such as affordability, minority student achievement, workforce preparation, economic development, and improved undergraduate education. Within that broad context, the IBHE attitude toward specific programs reflected the "end of growth" premises and was fairly restrictive. On campus, program review became a vehicle for indicating NIU's programmatic quality and justifying programmatic expansion. Doctoral programs were approved in Geology in 1979, Biology in 1982, and Mathematics in 1984. The College of Engineering was approved in 1985. Each of the doctoral proposals was denied or deferred on several occasions; each brought questions from IBHE staff about the possibility of trading in an existing doctoral program in the humanities (these had been approved before the IBHE was created); and each raised questions about the university's mission. These discussions were frequently heated, featuring data duels between Monat and LaTourette at one end of the table and Wagner and his chief academic officer Bob Walhaus at the other. The review process took on increased importance in 1991 when the IBHE launched its Priorities, Quality and Productivity initiative (PQP). PQP was an attempt to examine all academic programs in the state for efficiency, productivity, quality and need - with a view to eliminating duplicative and low quality programs.

That process did result in the elimination or reduction of about 300 university programs around the state and, according to the IBHE, a savings of \$400 million, some of which was reinvested in new programs. The board claimed that the process re-established public confidence in higher education management and led to increased political support and investment at a level which exceeded the national average. From the campus perspective, it was stressful and exhausting, but not as exhausting as it would have been had we not had an extensive program review process already in place. Most of the members of today's APC will probably not have experienced NIU as part of the Regency System. We were, until 1995, one of three institutions in a system which included ISU and Sangamon State (now the University of Illinois, Springfield). This meant that our program reviews, new program proposals, requests for authority to offer existing programs off campus and even changes to existing programs went first to staff at the Board of Regents and only then to staff at the IBHE. This "double scrub," as we saw it, was time consuming and, again from our perspective, particularly disadvantageous to NIU because the role and potential development of a university located in northern Illinois did not seem to us to be comparable to the role of a 2-year institution in Springfield or an institution focused on undergraduate education in Bloomington/Normal. Because of these concerns, every NIU president since Rhoten Smith had tried, quietly and diplomatically, to get his own institutional board, but no one had been able to get both sides of the legislature lined up behind him until 1995 when the stars aligned and NIU and 6 other regional institutions got their own governing boards. That reorganization of public higher ed left the IBHE in its coordinating role but significantly reduced its capacity for programmatic oversight. Absent the staff at the governing board level, the IBHE did not have enough staff of its own to provide the kind of detailed analysis which had been part of the program review and approval process under Wagner. Additionally, there was (and I think continues to be) a growing recognition of the demographic changes which justify programmatic expansion in some areas of the state but not in others. Moreover, given a decade of continued reductions in funding, it is hard to argue that higher education needs a state agency to keep individual institutions from excessive expansion. As a result, the IBHE, in the post-Wagner years (and under 6 subsequent executive directors), has been less focused on regulation at the program level and more on implementation strategies to meet broad educational goals. The 1998 IBHE, under newly appointed executive director, Keith Sanders, proposed eight primary goals under what was called the "Citizens Agenda." The goals included increasing educational attainment; extending access to higher education; assuring affordability; enhancing access and success for underrepresented groups; improving quality; enhancing responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state; strengthening school/college partnerships; and improving productivity. These were not particularly controversial goals, but the need for implementation strategies, performance indicators and benchmarks for success added new components to the way institutions think about and defend their programs. They also allow for much greater variation and more institutional choice in the identification of peer programs and relevant outcomes.

Provost Freeman interjected here to discuss the current situation that we find ourselves in with the State of Illinois. She mentioned that the topics just covered by Vice President Kaplan were also topics at a recent IBHE meeting where Provost Freeman had sat on a panel which discussed access and affordability in higher education. The IBHE agenda is to increase access, affordability, college completion, educational attainment, link education and regional means and NIU is well positioned in these areas. We now have an IBHE board and a legislature that has a PQP mentality of reducing redundancy and deficiency. They would like to do this without allowing institutions to look at their strengths and weaknesses and decide what the institution wants to be and where the institution has

the opportunity to grow and to spread the resources around as well as speaking to that institution's mission. The IBHE is also getting requests from the legislature regarding cutting programs and about how we do things on a system level to reduce redundancy when it has been shown repeatedly, that this approach on a system level, instead of an institutional level, doesn't work. This doesn't work because you then don't get ownership of the process or individuals with the appropriate amount of knowledge required to make effective decisions. We now get numerous requests from many administrators within the State of Illinois for data that will justify everything that we are doing. This means that if we didn't have program review or were not in the process of setting up program prioritization, we would be in a much more awkward situation having to defend why we are not cutting various programs with lower enrollments and why we can justify, based on what we know about the workforce in our region, our proximity to Chicago, the vibrancy of the performing arts community, the necessity of small and medium manufacturers to use the type of Engineering degrees that we provide, we would be in a much more difficult spot to defend ourselves. The fact that we have that data and the background to defend against the legislature is grounded in program review.

Vice President Kaplan then continued her talk by saying that at times, it is hard for a program to understand what possible good could come out of program review and comprehend the importance of the information provided. Additionally, they may not recognize the necessity of having the ammunition needed to defend their programs. Kaplan went on to discuss the following: The IBHE's accompanying action plan, "The Illinois Commitment" included quantitative benchmarks and attempted to define common institutional indicators. It was, the board said, "a roadmap to guide the higher education community in addressing statewide priorities within an increasingly dynamic and fluid environment," "a policy framework,...designed to be a 'living,' dynamic document that will foster proactive and collaborative efforts from the higher education community and other interested stakeholders to address the challenges facing the state." This is a fairly broad lens, subject to review and revision. Over time, the Citizen's Agenda became the "Public Agenda," and then "The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success." The eight goals from 1998 have been collapsed into four: increase educational attainment, improve college affordability, strengthen workforce development, and link research and innovation to economic growth. As a context for program review, this is a long way from the mission-defined statewide program comparisons of the 1970s and '80s. Its focus on outcomes gives the campus more flexibility in evaluating inputs (number and quality of faculty, number and quality of students, budgetary support, comparisons to locally-identified peer programs), and it allows for much more flexibility in aligning review requirements with institutional priorities and with the accreditation guidelines associated with specific programs. In summary then, the program review process, created to serve institutional purposes (largely defensive), was co-opted by governing and coordinating boards to serve state-wide purposes as those boards (and board staff) defined them. The process is still being used for some statewide purposes but is, I think, now being re-claimed for institutional purposes as well.

The question was asked: With the state funding dwindling to higher education institutions, why are they allowed to still retain so much power over what we do as an institution and has this idea ever been brought up to those bodies? Provost Freeman stated that the university is aggressively working on this and that they are certainly aware that state funds are decreasing. The university is currently seeking to be released from some of the unfunded mandates that are currently imposed upon NIU.

Marc Falkoff then discussed the purpose and importance of APC. He posed the question of, "What are we all doing here?" APC is officially tasked with doing several things including developing and

implementing procedures for the periodic review of academic programs, advising the Provost on priorities in budgeting, and making recommendations to colleges and departments. APC is meant to be there as collaborators and allies, but also as an outside set of eyes to help the programs to become better quality programs. Additionally, these programs are writing reports that ultimately will be going to and will be evaluated to some degree by, the Board of Trustees and the Illinois Board of Higher Education. This means that it is also important for APC to help these reports be the best that they can.

In 2013, the Program Review Process Task Force came together to review the process and determine what ways it could be improved. They decided that the program review process needed to better align with institutional goals, IBHE requirements and their accreditors' guidelines. They suggested increased effectiveness through assuring the data is up to date and provided in a timely manner, making sure the data is used in a transparent manner and that APC was prepared to use data for program improvement and support. In the area of efficiency, their suggestions including optimizing the use of personnel and other NIU resources and streamlining all aspects of the review process to make it easier. Falkoff then discussed some of the core principles including meaningful reflection, continuous improvement, accountability, alignment, meeting IBHE and HLC minimum requirements and aligning with disciplinary accreditors' guidelines. Additionally, they determined that reports needed to include high-quality data, have analysis and reflections on data and have some external review as well as being timely, clear and faculty-friendly. The task force also developed short-term and mid-term goals. These goals included: revised guidelines, improving alignment of review with institutional goals, delineate data metrics, permission from IBHE for alignment, role of APC in review and planning, web-based program for timely access of data (this is in the works still with a current projected implementation date of approx.. 2 years), initiation of reduction in process length and basic cost analysis of direct costs. Mid-term goals include annual institutional data metrics (by program), annual formative report, web-based portfolio and adding the external review component where none exists. There were also long-term goals that were established, but not discussed here (they are in the APC manual and on the website.)

The overall goal of APC was summed up as: Setting up of a process for the programs to provide meaningful self-evaluation with the goal of continuously improving and APC is there to help them to realize that goal.

Vice-Provost Douglass reviewed the contents of the APC manual including discussing: duties of APC members, membership list including subcommittee assignment, review schedule, spring schedule, background information, task force recommendations, follow-reports, and examples. Also covered were locations of documents in Blackboard, resources including copy of manual and examples and location of program review documents (including reviews, agendas, minutes, background data and meeting materials).

Sub-committee co-chair Gordon suggested that importance of doing work on reviews 2 weeks early and submitting them to the sub-committee chair. He encouraged members to come to meetings prepared and to not be afraid to ask questions. Even if you are not on the subcommittee that has been assigned to a particular review, still review the report and come to the meeting ready to discuss it. Make sure that your comments are submitted to the subcommittee chair prior to the deadline that is given. Organize the comments by reporting requirements, and 1-2 (preferably 3-5) ideas for each sub-area.

Ritu Subramony, director of academic accreditation, then discussed accreditation. Accreditation is an external review of programs and is vital when trying to access any title IV funds. Subramony discussed the types of accreditation and purposes of accreditation which include: assuring quality, access to federal funds, ease of transfer of programs among colleges and universities, engendering employer confidence, requirements for licensure and internally allowing opportunities for self-evaluation. Further, she talked about the pathway and timeline to reaffirmation of institutional accreditation. In the second portion of her presentation, she reviewed APC's charge including alignment, effectiveness and efficiency. Process steps and components of alignment and guidelines were additional topics. Last, a review and explanation of the aligned schedule was also covered.

Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Chris Parker, then covered assessment in connection with APC. Annual assessment updates to the Office of Assessment Services link to Assessment Status Reports reviewed by the University Assessment Panel mid-way through the program review cycle, and the APC also focuses, in part, on student learning outcomes in their review of program health. Parker reviewed some of the assessment data that will be useful when reviewing programs and discussed what a program might choose to include during the review process. Alumni survey data, including satisfaction surveys can be useful and important. Copies of all information will be posted on Blackboard for convenience.

Nominations for subcommittee chairs. Steven Howell was nominated by Geoff Gordon for subcommittee B chair in training and the motioned was seconded and the vote passed unanimously. No nominations were made for subcommittee A chair in training. This will be revisited at the next meeting.

Nominations for UAP committee member. Marc Falkoff volunteered. Motioned was seconded and the vote passed unanimously.

Nominations for Vice-Chair of APC. With no other nominations, Marc Falkoff agreed to continue in the position for the coming year. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Essex