

Academic Program Review: Revision of Process and Guidelines
Proposal to Faculty Senate
October 11, 2004

Background

The current process for conducting academic program reviews at NAU is widely regarded as cumbersome and does not most effectively serve the interests of faculty, academic programs, Chairs, Deans or the Provost. The Provost's office is revising the policy and procedures for academic program review in order to strengthen the program review process and its impact on planning and decision making.

The specific objectives of the proposed changes are:

- Increase the utility/meaningfulness of program reviews for academic units, deans and provost
- Diminish the burden on chairs/directors and faculty of preparation of the self-study report
- Increase faculty participation in preparation of self-study
- Increase effectiveness of university-wide faculty involvement in program review
- Standardize data reported in program self-study reports
- Sharpen focus of self-study
- Streamline the process
- Ensure follow-through on outcomes of program review and facilitate academic unit strategic planning

Discussion

One facet of the program review process that has been viewed as problematic is the vehicle for university faculty input: the University Program Review Committee (UPRC). The UPRC is intended to ensure that faculty are represented in the program review process. However, the committee structure for faculty involvement in program review has not been very effective in practice. The problems with the current structure for faculty input center on three areas: limited engagement in the review process, high workload burden for faculty, and the cumbersome communication/reporting process associated with the UPRC:

- 1) The UPRC subcommittees have limited involvement in the program review, yet are expected to produce independent reports. Given that the UPRC sub-committee members are only involved in entrance/exit interviews and one meeting with the site review team, their reports are often necessarily reliant on the self-study report and the site review report, rendering them largely redundant.
- 2) The faculty on the UPRC are expected to participate in multiple program reviews through membership on sub-committees assigned to programs. This is a substantial workload for those faculty, who must read multiple self-study and site review reports, as well as author UPRC reports during the course of the academic year.
- 3) The communication and reporting requirements of the current system is cumbersome and extends considerably the time required for the program review process to be completed. In some instances, the UPRC has not been able to keep up with its scheduled internal and external reporting and has, consequently, not provided input for program reviews.

Discussions about the effectiveness of the UPRC date back to the last revision of the Senate by-laws. The minutes of the January 2004 UPRC meeting document the more recent discussion of the issue among the committee members. The minutes record that the membership of the committee did not feel that the efforts of the UPRC were effective. The discussion pointed to a number of factors that diminished the value of the UPRC in program review including, limited engagement with academic units and a lack of clarity about the charge/function of the committee. Later that semester Pamela Eibeck, then Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, presented a proposal to the Senate to disband the UPRC and shift to having one faculty member serve on the site review team for each program review. This proposal was tabled by the senate during its May 3 meeting.

In July and August of 2004 the Provost and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies developed a comprehensive proposal to improve the effectiveness of academic program review at NAU. One component of the proposed modifications to policy and procedures is to change the structure of faculty representation and input in the program review process.

Proposed Changes to Academic Program Review Policy and Process

1) Modify Site Review Team:

- 2 disciplinary experts from other academic institutions (no change)
- 1 alumnus/community member (or 1 of each) – per current ABOR policy; *may be eliminated*

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- 1 NAU faculty member

Change process for faculty input/governance:

- shift faculty representation to Site Review Team and limit any one faculty member to **one** program review per year
- opportunity for more meaningful input from faculty through deeper engagement in the program review process
- clarify purpose of faculty input to the program review process
- provide better orientation and preparation of faculty reviewers
- reduce workload burden on faculty (UCC, UGC & UAC are other structures for faculty oversight of programs—these are all involved in evaluation of the quality of academic programs)
- streamline process so that reviews can be completed in 1 year

2) Create standardized data report for programs:

- PAIR will compile report for inclusion in self-study document (VPUGS will notify PAIR of programs scheduled for review in advance)
- PAIR will also prepare ABOR report on program productivity (VPUGS will work with unit if below threshold)
- Chairs/Directors and faculty will no longer have to gather data for self-study
- Data presented for program reviews will be standard
- Unit concerns about data quality/accuracy resolved with PAIR
- Proposed comprehensive data report may be supplemented by qualitative or contextual data provided by unit

- Will need to start with data that are available and accurate → over time include more data as infrastructure is developed
- VPUGS office will notify library of programs to be reviewed and request reports to be sent to Chairs/Directors

3) Edit Guidelines for Self-study Report:

- Focus on mission, assessment, and strategic plan for future program development:
 - Mission and goals of program; relationship to university mission and goals
 - Assessment of program strengths and weaknesses
 - Short term and long term strategic plans
- Shorten list of central questions that the self-study should address
 - How does the program contribute to NAU's mission and strategic goals?
 - What is the quality of the program?
 - Evidence of teaching effectiveness and innovation
 - Faculty contributions to discipline or profession through scholarly, creative or professional activity
 - Assessment of student learning/success
 - Student/Alumni evaluations of program
 - What does the program contribute to the region, state or local community?
 - What are the program's strategic plans for the future?
- Provide more direction for preparation of self-study report
 - Emphasize that the self study is not a data analysis document, but is interpretive, evaluative and projective; drawing on data as relevant
 - Focus on how well the unit utilizes *current* resources
 - Fold in academic program assessment outcomes (Append Assessment Plans & Reports)
- Suggest outline for self-study reports
 - Executive Summary
 - Brief history of unit
 - Brief summary of findings, recommendations, and actions resulting from previous program review
 - Brief description of program(s) (Append catalog copy of programs)
 - Assessment of student learning and curricular effectiveness (Append Assessment Plans & Reports)
 - Program/Course Enrollment and Degrees Granted
 - Contribution of program and faculty to liberal studies, interdisciplinary programs, and distance learning (as appropriate)

- Faculty & Faculty Efforts (faculty workload patterns; teaching effectiveness of program faculty; faculty engagement in advising; research, creative and professional activity of program faculty; sponsored research; university, professional and community service activity)
- Community, state and regional engagement
- Resources & Facilities
- Future Plans (in light of findings of self-study, what is the strategic plan within existing resources; programmatic initiatives the unit would like to pursue that would require additional resources)

4) Add Institutional Program review supplement to Accreditation Reviews:

- Accreditation reviews may not address all institutional questions
- Allow for Provost, Dean and Chair/Director to negotiate agreement for a supplement to the accreditation review process as appropriate

5) Modify and shorten timeline:

- April-May of year prior- Notification
Formulation of APR Committee
- July- Program data report and library report to Department Chair/Director
- August – Workshop for APR Committee (VPUGS)
APR Committee begins preparation of self-study report
- November— list of potential reviewers to Provost’s Office
- November 15 — Draft of self-study report to Chair/Director
- December 15 —draft of self-study report to Dean
- January 15— Final report to Provost (copy to VPRGS if graduate program)
- February-March– Site visits
- April –May 15– Site reviewer report to unit
Chair/Director and Dean develop joint response
- May-June – Action Plan Meeting (Provost, Dean, Chair/Director)
- July-August— Action Plan to Provost (Chair/Director and Dean)
- September – Report of Action Plan to Program/Department Faculty

Proposal to Senate for Action

The proposed change in faculty representation is to disband the UPRC and shift faculty representation to the site review team. The site review team for program reviews would consist of:

- 2 disciplinary experts from other academic institutions (no change)
- 1 alumnus/community member (or 1 of each) – per current ABOR policy
- 1 faculty from unit other than that in which the program is located

This change would enable more meaningful input from faculty through deeper engagement in the program review process. Under this model faculty reviewers would participate in the site review process with the external disciplinary/professional consultants. This would afford the faculty representatives the opportunity to have more direct engagement with the faculty and students in the academic unit and to collaborate with the external reviewers in the development of the site review report. The change would also reduce the workload burden on faculty, who would be limited to working on one program review per year. The elimination of the UPRC and integration

of faculty reviewers into the site review team will also streamline the process so that reviews can be completed within one year.

Recommended Action

- Disband the UPRC and shift to the proposed model of faculty representation on site review teams for program review
- Senate Executive Committee will identify a pool of 15 potential faculty reviewers every other year in the Spring semester. Faculty reviewers will be tenure-stream faculty or full-time instructors with at least 3 years of NAU service. Potential reviewers who have not served on program reviews may continue in the pool for the next two year cycle. The remainder of the pool will be replaced.
- Reviewers will be assigned to program reviews by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies in consultation with the Provost. In the case of units with graduate programs, the faculty reviewer will have an appointment in a unit granting graduate degrees at the same level.
- Each Fall the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies will notify the Senate of program reviews scheduled for that academic year and the assigned faculty reviewers.