

# **Academic Plan and Program Review April 2013**

## **I. Academic Plan**

Developing academic plans and engaging in program review are continuous improvement processes designed to promote strong academic programs that meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners aligned with the vision and mission of the University. The Academic plan is informed by the Program Review Process.

### **A. What is an Academic Plan?**

Each Department/COBA is expected to have a 5-year Academic Plan that is reviewed and revised annually by the Department/COBA. It is the Department/COBA chair's responsibility to ensure that this process happens. It is essential to consider graduate and undergraduate planning (including Frost School) and to ensure that graduate coordinators have been part of the process of plan development.

### **B. The Academic Plan includes:**

- 1) Department/COBA **mission**
- 2) Department/COBA **goals** that are aligned with institutional mission and strategic plan initiatives such as recruitment, retention, course redesign, technology integration and online learning, and program development.
- 3) An **assessment process** that is a means for evaluating student learning outcomes and Department/COBA goals. The assessment process informs program and curricular development.
  - (a) Each Department/COBA is responsible for determining the learning outcomes: the knowledge, skills, and dispositions important for success that students completing their programs will acquire and demonstrate.
  - (b) The Department/COBA has the responsibility for maintaining an assessment system that includes collecting information/data and artifacts about how well students are attaining these important learning outcomes, and to use this information to make decisions to maintain and improve quality.
  - (c) Faculty will take the lead in analyzing and using this information/data to select and implement program improvement strategies that will lead to increased attainment of learning, or to confirm that quality learning outcomes are being attained.
  - (d) Administrators (such as the various Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, and Registrar) can provide Institutional Research Data for Department/COBA program reviews and assist with implementation. Students, in addition to providing artifacts or examples of their learning and attitudes towards programs, will be involved with providing feedback that will inform continuous program improvements.
  - (e) Chairs and COBA Directors will work with faculty to use assessment information/data as part of the annual review, revision, and/or update of unit academic planning and to identify **needed resources** that will inform annual budget requests.

- 4) **Department/COBA Actions:** Units will articulate needs, initiatives, and actions that have been undertaken that support the Mission and achievement of Goals of the Department/COBA/Division.

## **II. Program Review**

Program review is a continuous and systematic process that guides the academic and administrative activities of a Department/COBA. Program Reviews are undertaken every 5 years.

### **A. Program review entails the following components:**

- 1) A self study that includes the Academic Plan,
- 2) External review and report,
- 3) Analysis and review of self-study and external review resulting in updated Academic Plan

### **B. What is the Rationale for Program Review?**

- 1) Two priorities in PSU's Strategic Plan (See <http://www.plymouth.edu/strategic-plan/plan-2012/>), focus attention **on excellence in quality** embracing "Improve [ment in ] programs through appropriate assessment and through development of a culture of evidence" and **student-centeredness** which includes developing students' skills and knowledge.
- 2) The purposes of program review are to:
  - (a) ensure that Department/COBA degrees and programs carry out the mission of the University, College, and the Department/COBA.
  - (b) engage the Department/COBA in continuous improvement that ensures the excellent quality of our General Education courses, degrees, and other program offerings.
  - (c) ensure that information presented to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution and its programs.
  - (d) aid the Curriculum Committee ongoing assessment and evaluation of the University curriculum by receiving, reviewing, and responding to periodic Department/COBA reviews, external reviews, and professional accreditation reviews. The Committee may, by its own initiative, also develop and implement other curriculum review processes
  - (e) aid the General Education Committee in carrying out its charge to regularly evaluate the General Education program and make recommendations for improvement
  - (f) fulfill the USNH Board of Trustees requirement that program review be done regularly on each campus (See: <http://www.usnh.edu/olpm/USY/II.Acad/G.htm> ).
  - (g) comply with the requirement of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) that all accredited institutions create and use specific standards both to assure that programs meet threshold expectations of quality and to assure that they improve over time. NEASC stipulates that academic standards address key areas such as faculty, curricula, and student learning outcomes (See the following web site for reference, paying particular attention Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation and Standard Four: The Academic Program. [http://cihe.neasc.org/standards\\_policies/standards/standards\\_html\\_version](http://cihe.neasc.org/standards_policies/standards/standards_html_version))
  - (h) comply with required accreditation standards of program specific accreditation organizations for Department/COBA and programs undertaking program specific accreditation.

### **C. Who does Program Review?**

- 1) **Academic units** of the University that offer academic programs will conduct the program reviews. In this document, "Department/COBA" is used for any entity which is responsible for an academic program.

- 2) **Unit Review team:** Students, faculty members, Department/COBA chairs, division leaders, and administrators will all be part of the review process.

**D. Timetable**

- 1) All programs must undergo the program review process every 5 years. Programs with external accreditation may substitute the external accreditation documents and process and follow the external accreditation cycle. The timeline for each program is available on the Academic Affairs Website.

**III. Program Review Process**

A. **The Self-Study:** A Department/COBA should prepare for a program review by completing a self-study. During the self-study a Department/COBA reviews its Department/COBA goals, its student learning outcomes, and articulates its ongoing assessment system and how assessment activities are used to make decisions for meeting Department/COBA and program goals, learning outcomes and inform strategic outcomes. The Self Study includes the following:

- 1) Vision/Mission and Goals
  - (a) Vision/Mission of the Department/COBA and its role in the overall mission of the University and College.
  - (b) Articulate Department/COBA goals and how they address the mission and vision of the university and Department/COBA.
  - (c) Describe the role that Department/COBA majors and minors play in achieving the University's mission.
- 2) Evidence of Program Quality
  - (a) Curriculum and Learning Environment:
    - (i) Identify student learning outcomes as students progress through the program and curriculum. Provide a curriculum map or matrix identifying learning outcomes at the end of each year and the courses that correlate to these outcomes. ( note: end of program outcomes are now published on Department/COBA websites)
    - (ii) Compare program's curriculum with curricula with four-six similar institutions and/or with accreditation standards, and/or discipline or professional standards. Compare number of required credits/courses, content, program goals and learning outcomes.
    - (iii) Describe other learning experiences relevant to program goals (e.g., internships, study abroad, service learning).
  - (b) Reflection on Program Quality:
    - i. What are your program's strengths with regard to curriculum and learning environment?
    - ii. What are your concerns about the program's curriculum and learning environment? What have you identified as areas in need of improvement?
    - iii. What are your aspirations for the program with regard to curriculum and learning environment?
    - iv. What is needed to bring about positive change with regard to curriculum and learning environment?
- 3) Student Learning and Success:
  - (a) Describe how your Department/COBA cultivates a positive, respectful, and engaged learning community for students and faculty.
  - (b) Describe how your Department/COBA welcomes and orients new students.
  - (c) Describe how the Department/COBA and the faculty's approaches to pedagogy ensures that the needs of diverse learners are met.

- (d) Describe Department/COBA initiatives to increase use of learning technologies and course management system.
  - (e) Describe your Department/COBA assessment system. How are you assessing student learning outcomes?
  - (f) Present summaries of how the Assessment System informed curricular decisions (for example where data or documentation led to revision of courses and curricula for majors, minors, and general education courses provided by the Department/COBA.)
  - (g) Describe how your Department/COBA mentors students including providing high quality academic and career advising. How do you know if you are successful in this?
  - (h) Report student job and graduate school placements.
  - (i) Report student and alumni achievements (e.g., research and publications, awards and recognition, professional accomplishments, etc.).
  - (j) Reflection on Student Learning and Success:
    - i. What are your program's strengths with regard to student learning and success?
    - ii. What are your concerns about the program's support of student learning and success? What have you identified as areas in need of improvement?
    - iii. What are your aspirations for the program with regard to student learning and success?
    - iv. What is needed to bring about positive change with regard to student learning and success?
- 4) General Education and Contributions to the University:
- (a) Describe Department/COBA contributions to the General Education Program
    - (i) Provide Institutional Research data on number of courses and enrollments in general education courses provided by the Department/COBA over last five years.
    - (ii) Articulate how are learning outcomes in the General Education courses being assessed and evaluated? How is assessment being used to continually improve these offerings or to confirm course quality and integrity in regards to meeting Department/COBA standards and general education criteria?
  - (b) Contributions to University Programs and Initiatives:
    - (i) Summarize contributions to, interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary programs, service learning, research and scholarship, course provision to programs in other Department/COBA or Colleges, the liberal arts tradition, internationalization, new initiatives, emerging needs, and overall culture of the university.
    - (ii) Describe Department/COBA initiatives to increase access to academic programs such as development of online and hybrid courses and programs, graduate programs, etc.

- c) Reflection on Contributions to General Education and the University:
- i. What are your program's strengths with regard to contributions to general education and University programs and initiatives?
  - ii. What are your concerns about the program's contributions to general education and the University? What have you identified as areas in need of improvement?
  - iii. What are your aspirations for the program with regard to contributions to general education and the University?
  - iv. What is needed to bring about positive change with regard to contributions to general education and the University?

- 5) Faculty:
- (a) List of current faculty (full and part-time) with indication of teaching specialties in discipline and general education curriculum.
  - (b) How does your Department/COBA assess teaching effectiveness?
  - (c) Describe level of engagement of faculty in research and service. Provide updated faculty vitae to document qualifications of faculty and their respective scholarship and service.
  - (d) Describe efforts to mentor and support faculty.
  - (e) Describe overall faculty workload and variations.
    - (a) Provide a description or listing of responsibilities for faculty who have annual course releases for service within the Department/COBA. Ex: Program Coordinators.
  - (f) Reflection on Faculty:
    - i. What are your program's strengths with regard to faculty?
    - ii. What are your concerns related to your program's faculty (e.g., the ability to recruit and retain faculty; support for enhancing the teaching effectiveness of the faculty; the sufficiency of current faculty loads to address program/student needs)? What have you identified as areas in need of improvement?
    - iii. What are your aspirations for the program with regard to the faculty?
    - iv. What is needed to bring about positive change with regard to faculty-related issues?
- 6) Evidence of Viability and Sustainability
- (a) Demand
    - (i) Describe developments in your disciplines or societal trends that might lead to modifications, additions or deletions in your programs.
    - (ii) Provide Institutional Research data on trends (numbers) of enrolled majors and minors over the last five years. Provide an analysis of the findings.
    - (iii) Report student enrollment (admissions), retention and graduation rates over the past five years. Describe Department/COBA efforts to improve or maintain each.
    - (iv) Describe caps and range of class sizes for general education, lower to level and upper level major, and minor courses. Identify contextual factors that influence caps.
  - (b) Adequacy of Department/COBA Resources
    - (i) Provide Department/COBA budget.
    - (ii) Describe state of budget and support: Does the Department/COBA have the equipment, supplies, and institutional support infrastructure necessary to carry out classroom teaching, research and engagement (internships, field work, or service learning) and provide for maintenance and technical support necessary to carry out programs.
    - (iii) Provide information regarding full-time to part-time faculty ratio, student to faculty ratio, and distribution of adjunct faculty within program and general education courses.
    - (iv) Provide examples of how Department/COBA is a wise steward of the Department/COBA budget and uses resources, including faculty resources efficiently.
    - (v). Describe facilities, equipment, and academic technologies; are classrooms, studios, research laboratories, technology resources, and office spaces adequate to support current program offerings? To support program growth and development? To support Department/COBA vision and academic plan?
  - (c) Reflection on Program Viability and Sustainability:
    - i. What are your program's strengths with regard to viability and sustainability?

- ii. What are your concerns about the program's viability and sustainability? What have you identified as areas in need of improvement?
  - iii. What are your aspirations for the program with regard to viability and sustainability?
  - iv. What is needed to bring about positive change with regard to viability and sustainability?
- 7) Summary: The Department/COBA shall summarize findings outlining strengths, weakness, and recommendations for possible future directions and initiatives.

#### **IV. External Review**

The Dean and Provost shall review the program self-study. Once approved, the Department/COBA may proceed with the steps outlined below to identify and schedule a visit with an external reviewer/accrediting organization.

##### **A. The Site Review**

- 1) An external site-visitor or accrediting organization will be retained to review the Department/COBA program. Every effort shall be made to retain a qualified review from within New England. The Department/COBA will have the option to submit a list of possible reviewers to the Dean who will determine the reviewers to be employed and the length of the visit. (Accrediting organizations will assign reviewers or have a required reviewer selection process). The Provost's Office will be responsible for reasonable expenses related to the external reviewers' visit.
- 2) Prior to the visit, the Dean, and the Department/COBA Chair/COBA directors will agree on a list of questions, answers to which will form the basis of the reviewers' written report. Reviewers will also receive copies of the Department/COBA self-study. Accrediting organizations will follow the organization's review procedures and process.
- 3) Develop agenda for site-visit (get on Dean and Provost Calendar early). Reviewers must have the opportunity to meet with the Dean and Provost, the Chair, all faculty members and with student representatives selected by the Department/COBA.
- 4) The external reviewer or accrediting organization will submit their final report to the Provost. Copies of the reviewers' report will be provided to the dean of the college and the Department/COBA Directors.

##### **B. Final Steps**

- 1) The reviewers' comments will be shared with the Department/COBA. Once the review is received, the Department/COBA shall meet to discuss findings and plans for making improvements, building on strengths, and addressing weaknesses. Department/COBA will address significant concerns that arose during the self-study, including issues around low enrolled courses or programs, and other concerns impacting the viability of the program(s). New majors or programs may be identified. In some cases, courses or degree programs or other Department/COBA activities may be altered, augmented or phased out; in others only minor adjustments maybe needed.
- 2) A follow-up meeting shall be held between the Dean and Department/COBA faculty to address the Program Review and proposed updates/revisions to Academic Plan.

**C. This will result in an updated and revised Department/COBA Academic Plan.** The revised and updated Academic Plan will be added to the Program Review. The Department/COBA will revise, and update their academic plan based on their findings from this self study and their review of recommendations from the accreditation organization, and/or outside reviewers. The comprehensive Program Review, External Reviewer's Report and Revised Academic Plan will be submitted within 6 months of the Program Review to the Provost, the Dean, the University's Curriculum Committee and to the General Education Committee.

- 1) Informed by this process, Department/COBA will make proposals (e.g., for curriculum changes, facilities and equipment, technological resources, faculty lines, staff, or budget alterations) through the usual University procedures.