Academic Program Assessment

Overview

The Office of the Provost in coordination with the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) is planning an Academic Program Assessment (APA) over the course of the 2011-2012 academic year. The purpose, scope, process, tools and timeline are outlined below.

**Purpose:** The APA process is intended to contribute to enhancing the value of a Purdue degree to our students and alumni, and the value of Purdue University (Main Campus) to the state in its educational, discovery and engagement missions. Periodic assessment of academic programs is necessary for enhancing excellence while maintaining access in an era of constrained resources, shifting stakeholder interests and an evolving mission. Given limited resources, how should those resources be distributed among programs? If new resources are identified, where should they be invested? If resources are diminished, how should current programs be modified? What new programs are needed to meet demand or respond to an emerging opportunity? The APA is designed to inform resource allocation and organizational decisions made at the levels of department heads, deans, the vice president for research and the provost.

Academic program reviews have been conducted recently or are underway at nearly every peer institution. The results of these reviews have yielded insights on approaches that are effective and approaches that are counterproductive. If the desired outcome is simply a list of programs, majors, and departments to be eliminated, the result will not save resources in the short run, and there is no guarantee that any resources made available in the longer term will be directed to programs with the greatest potential to enhance the institution. Although the proposed APA may indeed contribute to an informed decisions to sunset a program using established university procedures, it will also inform investment decisions in programs that can be expected to show substantial return on that investment and are either central to Purdue’s mission or a critical component of the breadth that makes Purdue a University.

**Scope:** Degree-granting academic programs are a central focus of the APA. A parallel process is under development for research centers and institutes that are supported by the general fund. The OVPR will organize the APA thrust for centers and institutes. The Office of the Provost will manage the assessment of degree programs (graduate, professional, undergraduate) and select certificate programs. Data will be collected and managed by the OIR.

The APA is not intended to replace or reproduce the periodic external reviews of graduate programs, departments, schools, centers and institutes, nor is the APA expected to play a role in accreditation processes that may be mandated for certain programs by external agencies. These in-depth external reviews, do not generally offer information that is specifically designed to help direct internal investments, the focus of the APA.
Timeline (tentative)

May-September 2011: Provost develops purpose, scope, tools and timeline for APA with input from trustees, president, university senate leadership, deans and heads.

October-December 2011: Provost and OIR refine tools (including OIR Program Data and Preliminary Survey of Program Leaders); provost drafts a charge for the APA validation committee; provost engages the Educational Policy Committee of the University Senate; provost surveys deans for report on college level program review and resulting actions to date (to be presented at the Annual Unit Budget Review); provost invites regional campuses to pursue a parallel but coordinated process.

December 2011 – January 2012: Provost appoints APA validation committee (see composition below); OIR assembles program data using input from deans as to the definition of a “program” (e.g., granularity; groupings of majors and minors; interdisciplinary programs) within the college or school; OIR distributes Program Data and surveys to deans during the Annual Unit Budget Review; deans manage the process internally, distributing data and surveys to program leaders.

February 2012: Deans collect and review surveys; transmit to the APA validation committee.

March-April 2012: APA validation committee validates survey input with assistance from OIR; committee interviews deans, heads and/or program leaders when necessary; APA validation committee submits draft report to deans and provost for comment; final report submitted to deans and provost.

May 2012: Deans develop draft action plans with input from key stakeholders, including faculty and students, and report those draft plans to the provost; action plans finalized in consultation with the provost; provost prepares action plan for the West Lafayette campus; provost meets with deans and vice provosts to review the action plan.

Summer 2012: Provost presents results, report and action plan to the Board of Trustees.

Composition of the APA Validation Committee:
- One member from each academic college, to be selected by a process determined by the dean
- Nancy Bulger, Assistant Provost
- Diane Beaudoin, Director of Assessment
- OIR representative(s)
- University Senate representative (to be selected by the Nomination Committee)
- Undergraduate student representative (to be selected by PSG)
- Graduate or professional student representative (to be selected by PGSG)
- Graduate School representative
- Diversity advocate
- Regional campus liaisons (PUC and PNC)