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Academic Program Review

Purpose: The purpose of the systematic, internal review of academic programs at The University of Mississippi is to improve programs. The reviews are to assure that each academic program or academic unit

- is adequately productive, in terms of degrees produced, credit hours produced, and/or scholarly output,
- provides students with the opportunity for a high quality education, and
- meets the educational needs of the state and collateral academic programs.

The review process is intended to be formative in nature and to relate to the 5-year planning process for each academic unit. This Academic Program Review process is separate from the Academic Productivity Review process mandated by the IHL Board.

Process: Academic programs will be reviewed in a cyclical manner based on a five-year period. All doctoral programs will be reviewed one year, followed by all masters and specialists degrees, followed by all undergraduate programs.

The review process will involve the following main components:

1. data related to student enrollment and graduation rate, faculty teaching and research productivity, etc.,
2. results from a biennial survey of graduates from the program,
3. a self-study of the academic program, and
4. an analysis of the above data and documents by a combination of administrators and faculty.

The student and faculty productivity data (see example) will be provided by the Graduate School and Provost's Office for each academic department in early fall of each year. The alumni survey will be performed by the Office of University Planning and Institutional Research and results will be distributed by the Provost's Office. The schedule for the review process will be maintained by the Provost's Office.

The questions to be addressed in the self-study are given in the attachment (example is a list of questions for the review of doctoral programs-note that deans may add additional questions). The analysis of the self-study report will be described below. How each academic unit prepares its self-study (e.g., done by a committee or by an individual) is not prescribed, though broad participation by faculty is important for a successful self-study. When complete, the academic units will forward copies of their program self-study (along with copies of student and faculty data and results of alumni survey data) to the Provost's Office and the school/college Dean.

Schedule:

September -- Student and faculty data spreadsheets made available to departments undergoing program review.

September - January - Departments prepare self-study documents, using questions as a guide, along with any additional questions provided by their dean.

February - May - Program Review Committee and deans review the self-study documents and provide separate written responses to the academic departments. This is followed by meetings

with the Provost, as described below.

Doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degree programs will be reviewed on a five-year cycle. For example, doctoral programs will be reviewed during academic year 2001-02, masters programs during 2002-03, and bachelors programs during 2003-04, with the cycle renewing with doctoral programs in 2006-07, etc.

The academic program self-studies will be evaluated by the respective school/college Dean, the Graduate Dean (in the case of graduate programs), and the following faculty committee.

Program Review Committee: The PRC will consist of approximately 18 faculty members appointed by the Provost, plus liaisons from the Provost's Office. The role of the PRC is to provide an independent analysis of the self-study documents and program data and to advise the Provost regarding actions to improve the academic programs under review.

The members of the PRC are appointed as follows. There will be two representatives from each of the following areas: Schools of Accountancy, Applied Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Pharmacy, and Liberal Arts area I, area II, and area III. (The Law School will not participate in the Academic Program Review process.) The respective Deans and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will be asked by the Provost to recommend two candidates for each of these 18 positions. Each nominee must be an Associate or Full Professor (e.g., must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty). From among these nominees, the Provost will appoint two members from each area, taking into account a desire to have at least three members with recent experience (or current membership) on the Undergraduate Council and at least three members with experience (or current membership) on the Graduate Council. The members of the PRC will be asked to serve a five-year term (with recognition that the review cycle may only require activity for three of these five years-see the Schedule section-unless follow-up reviews are necessary). A new PRC will be selected for each five-year cycle. Vacancies on the committee will be filled by the Provost after seeking nominations from the Dean and the Faculty Senate. The chairs of the Graduate Council (the Graduate Dean) and Undergraduate Council (the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs) will serve as non-voting ex officio members of the PRC during the years that graduate and undergraduate programs are being reviewed, respectively. These administrative liaisons will provide logistical support and will be responsible for calling the committee into action and for prompting the academic units to prepare self-studies.

Each year the PRC will elect its own chair.

The chair of the PRC will appoint subcommittees to review individual academic programs. These subcommittees will comprise at least three faculty members, with no faculty member being assigned to review a program from his or her department. (Also, a faculty member should not be assigned to review a degree level, e.g., PhD, if his or her home department does have this degree level.) The subcommittee may perform the evaluation in unison or as individual reviewers. Subcommittee members may request additional information from the academic units, but should do so through the chair or the administrative liaison. The subcommittee reviews will be forwarded to the PRC chair who will work with the administrative liaison to put the reviews in a consistent format. When all subcommittees have prepared draft reviews, the entire PRC will meet to share opinions and to standardize criteria, before submitting final reviews.

The PRC's reviews may make a recommendation regarding whether to seek an external evaluation. (It is anticipated that the first round of program reviews will primarily be an internal process, with the process resulting in goals and plans for program improvement. In subsequent review cycles, external reviewers may be of more value to ascertain if progress toward goals has been demonstrated.)

The PRC is asked to make specific recommendations and constructive criticisms regarding each program. In particular, the PRC is asked to rate each program as not satisfactory or satisfactory. For the latter, the program can be further described as "needs improvement," "promising," or "superior." The three main criteria (i.e., productivity, quality, and need) listed in the Purpose section should guide these recommendations. Emphasis should be placed on recommending to the department and to the administration a set of actions to be taken, within reasonable budgetary constraints, to remedy deficiencies and to enhance the academic program. If an unsatisfactory rating is made, the PRC may make recommendations regarding whether to phase out, combine, or otherwise restructure a program.

Administrative-level reviews: The PRC reviews of the program self-studies (and program data and alumni survey) are sent to the academic unit chair/coordinator, the Provost, the school/college Dean, and the Graduate Dean (as appropriate). The departments are given an opportunity to correct any errors in the PRC reviews. The dean (along with the Graduate Dean, in the case of graduate programs) will meet to discuss the self-studies and PRC reviews, leading to administrative-level recommendations for each program. As appropriate, the chair of the academic department or coordinator of the academic program will meet with the Provost and/or Dean(s) to discuss the implementation of the recommendations.

The administrative-level reviews will take into account larger issues, such as program duplication within the state and the IHL Academic Productivity Review.

The Provost will determine whether a follow-up report from the academic unit, the PRC, or the Dean is needed before the next 5-year cycle. If an "unsatisfactory" or more than one "needs improvement" recommendation is made by the PRC or deans for academic programs from a particular department, this may prompt an ad hoc review of the entire department by the Provost.