Program Prioritization Academic Task Force “AcTF”

November 2013 Faculty Senate Progress Report

Listening and Responding to Feedback about Program Prioritization

Since the last Faculty Senate meeting AcTF has been focused on discussing the implications of faculty senate motions made and approved at the October 4th meeting. In addition, it has continued to seek and receive feedback from the faculty about the program prioritization process. The three Faculty Senate motions were:

* The Faculty Senate recommends that the quintile system be reconsidered.
* The Faculty Senate recommends to the Academic Task Force and administration that the program prioritization meetings be open to members of the university.
* The Faculty Senate recommends that the prioritization timeline be extended to December 2014 to complete the academic templates.

The AcTF chose not to wait to learn how the Provost would respond to these advisory motions of the senate, but instead began work immediately considering how it might respond in whole or in part to the spirit of these motions.

**Reconsidering the quintile system**. The AcTF had adapted a system of classifying academic programs into 5 categories. That system also included the provision of placing 20% of academic programs into each of the five categories.\* In each of the weekly meetings since October 4th the AcTF has discussed ways of revising the process. We have reconsidered the number of categories, the equal distribution of a fixed percent of programs across the categories, and we have discussed the concept of scoring of the criteria and subjecting those scores to a type of analysis that creates an as yet unknown and undefined number of “clusters”. In between meetings we have been advising the leadership of the Support Task Force of our deliberations as it may impact how the prioritization of academic support (administrative) functions is done. Several decisions have been made in regards to changing the quintile system and those decisions will be explained soon.

**Opening AcTF meetings to members of the University**. The AcTF has discussed the issue of having meetings open to the university community at several of its meetings since October 4. One of the first actions the AcTF took (at the first meeting after the senate motion) was to begin publishing summaries of the AcTF meetings. Three such meeting summaries have been published and we will continue to publish them throughout the process. The second action the group took was to establish a Academic Program Prioritization blog that will be have contributions from AcTF members about their experience of deliberating on issues at the AcTF meetings. The blog will also allow guest authors and for comments from anyone about the posts that are presented there. The blog URL will be posted on the chancellor’s program prioritization website in the near future. These actions have been taken in the spirit of making the AcTF meetings more transparent to the members of the university. The AcTF has not yet made any decision regarding fully open meetings.

**December 2014 Deadline for submitting Academic Templates**. The AcTF discussed the implications of extending the deadline for submitting academic templates to December 2014. There was a good deal of concern that such a deadline would draw the process out too long for both faculty in general and the faculty on the AcTF. In recognizing the intent of this motion was likely to be to distribute the workload of completing templates out over a more reasonable time frame than the first half of the fall semester 2014 (October 25th), the AcTF members discussed alternatives to December 2014 that might be a compromise. The decisions based on that discussion were announced to the campus recently in two phases. First, a template submission period from January 31st 2014 to March 7th 2014 was announced. Next, a schedule of minimum template submissions each week in the period was announced. The principle underlying this schedule was to provide more time to departments with a greater number of program templates more time to complete their work.

Other Progress

**Data from Facilitation Team.** The AcTF Leadership has worked with the leadership from the Facilitation Team to ensure that the data to be provided with the templates would be reliable, accurate, and presented in a way that would be readily understood by faculty completing the template. We also stressed the importance of that data being available as soon as possible. Recent progress on this has been indicated by a communication from the Facilitation Team Leadership

**Workload.** The AcTF has heard in many forms that completing the templates is a considerable amount of workload. We have also heard that some departments have considerably more (up to 20) templates to complete than others. The AcTF has discussed a variety of ways in which these issues might be addressed. Some actions that were taken to adjust the impact of workload included extending the deadline, staggering the deadlines to allow more time for departments for more programs, eliminating the requirement for submitting templates that would not be evaluated (new programs)**,** and allowing departments to choose not to submit templates for BS programs if they are wholly redundant with the BA.

**Template discussions.** The AcTF discussed how the template may impact workload issues and discussed the possibility of changing the template. After considerable deliberation and consideration that faculty may have already invested time in working on the template as released in September the group decided to keep the template as is.

**Post Review Process**. The AcTF leadership has worked with the Provost in developing a process for how he and others will use information in the final report authored by the AcTF. That process is currently being refined and will be released by the provost in the near future.

Projected Milestones in November

* Release and begin contributing to and commenting on Academic Program Prioritization blog.
* Communicate the specifics of how the Quintile system has been reconsidered and modified.
* Data from Facilitation team is released (Novermber 8, 2013).
* Develop a rubric for the template.
* Publish and Deliver a schedule of template trainings and program prioritization orientations.

Note re: **Reconsidering the quintile system**

\*This system was based on input from several sources including but not limited to: training received at Academic Impressions workshops, training with our consultant Mr. Goldstein, considering alternatives presented in the book Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services by Dr. Dickeson, and the findings of a subgroup of the AcTF who were instructed to examine “best practices and cautionary tales” as presented on the Internet by other institutions that have gone or are undergoing program prioritization. The system the AcTF developed based on these processes and many discussions was presented to the faculty in July, and again in September. Since that time we have solicited, received, and reviewed a great deal of feedback about the system.