Colleagues,

The attached program template is the basis for an online form that will be completed by program faculty. The template defines the questions for each of the ten criteria. These responses will be used by the Academic Task Force (AcTF) to compare programs to each other and place them into quintiles. The criteria and quintiles were described in the July 8th memo sent out to the campus community by email and that can be found at: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/chancellor/Prioritization/communication-archive.cfm.

The information in green typeface on the template will be supplied for you by the Facilitation Team at a later date.

**Template Revision Process**

To ensure that the template is well suited to our needs at UAA and that it is as ‘user friendly’ as possible, the AcTF selected 3 programs representing a range of program types and asked their representatives to complete the template and give us feedback about how it might be improved. In recent weeks, the AcTF has been consulting with the faculty and department chairs who have been involved in completing a draft form of the program template. This process culminated in a listening session with the chairs of the pilot programs on Wednesday September 18th.

The AcTF wishes to express its gratitude to the pilot program faculty and chairs for working so hard to provide us with this essential feedback. Their service to the UAA academic community has been critical to improving the Program Prioritization process.

In summary the main points of feedback provided by the pilots were:

**Positives:**
- Overall the pilot programs expressed that the template was well organized and that the criteria ‘made sense’ for prioritization.

**Challenges:**
- Time to complete is insufficient, particularly for departments with many templates to complete.
- In general the criteria weights make sense but minor differences between criteria seem odd specifically giving a false impression of precision.
- Instructions and training for completing templates are insufficient.
- Some phrasing of template items needs revision for clarity. In addition some definitions need to be added or clarified.
- More support from the facilitation team or others is needed for some types of more objective data / records.
- Narrative questions should be more limited in number and use more objective data.
- Word limits for responses to narrative questions need to be increased.
The Academic Program Template and the Process

- Understanding of how the prioritization results will be used by the administration lacks detail and may impact how programs complete template.

Further analysis of the Academic Program List revealed that some departments have 10-20 templates to complete. Chairs of such programs noted that the quality of their overall submissions will suffer if they have the same amount of time to complete all of their templates as compared to departments that have considerably fewer templates to complete in the same time.

The AcTF met for more than four hours today with the full committee to respond to these points of feedback. The AcTF has made the following changes to the template.

- Created a shorter template form
- Reduced the amount of information required to complete templates and eliminated redundant requests for information
- Simplified the weighting scheme so that it is easier to understand while generally preserving the relative importance of the criteria as published in the July 8th memo
- Shifted the emphasis in data queries to rely more on centrally provided data and reduce the amount of narrative responses required
- Clarified terms and added instructions to improve comprehension of the essentials of template requests

In addition, we aimed to ease the template completion process by making it more comprehensible with improved guidance. We will further address such issues in briefings, orientations, and trainings in coming weeks.

**Planned Further Improvements**

The AcTF is also working with the Program Prioritization Steering Group on making additional changes to improve the template completion process. Chief among these is a proposed adjustment to the published deadline for program template completion. Our primary concern is that departments have a fair opportunity to produce quality template submissions.

Finally, for the past three weeks the AcTF is has been working on and refining a rubric to aid our evaluation of responses to each of the criteria on the template. This effort is primarily to aid us developing a shared understanding of what constitutes good and better responses and in making evaluations in as consistent and fair a manner as possible. This will also aid us in reaching consensus and discussing the basis for disagreement when it arises. The AcTF also appreciates the important role that a rubric would have in communicating to faculty and program representatives how to interpret criteria questions and to present the AcTF with the information we need to evaluate programs. When the rubric is finalized early next week we will share it with the campus community and it will become a feature of briefings, orientations, and trainings on how to complete program templates.

The AcTF is working diligently to ensure this is the best possible template for UAA. We also acknowledge that as we approach the next cycle of program prioritization (in approximately 5 years) we will have learned from this experience and have further improvements to make.
In early October, the Provost and Vice Chancellor will address the last concern raised by the pilot programs as to how this information will be implemented. Thank you in advance for your thoughtfully prepared templates. The AcTF has already been pleased to develop a deeper understanding of the rich and diverse work that our colleagues are doing in the three pilot programs and we anticipate learning more from reading yours also. We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming briefings and trainings.

On behalf of the full Academic Task Force,

Robert Boeckmann, Mark Fitch, and Tara Smith
Tri Chairs, AcTF