

DRAFT 10-28-2009

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the Program Review Process

Provost Marten denBoer

Q. Where can I get information about the plans for budget cuts?

A. Related documents are posted at the AA website under Planning and Accountability – Academic Program Indicators.

Q. Where can I send comments or further questions?

A. The Academic Senate is the representative body of the faculty and is certainly a very appropriate venue for providing input. I have also invited faculty to email me directly.

Q. Who is going to look at data and make decisions in the process?

A. Ultimately it will be my decision to recommend programs for closure, based on information that will be shared.

Q. Over what period of time are you analyzing data?

A. The table of indicators includes numeric data provided by Central Academic Affairs for Fall 2008 and the 2008-09 fiscal and academic year, along with trend data from 2005 through 2008. The qualitative indicators provide opportunity to elaborate on the data if there are anomalies that should be considered.

Q. What is the timetable for making decisions on potential program cuts?

A. I want to meet with each department where the possibility of closure exists and then make the necessary referrals to the Academic Senate by the end of the fall quarter.

Q. What are our goals regarding the process of cutting the budget?

A. It is important to preserve as much of the range and diversity of our academic programs as possible while having the resources to support strong programs that need investment for the future.

Q. What is the possible scope of the cuts? Will we close departments?

A. The focus at this time is on possible program closures. That is where the largest long-term savings occurs. It will also be useful to consider the administrative merger of some departments.

Q. What are the cost saving related to the merger of “small” departments?

A. When you merge departments, you save the administrative support as well as the administrative time of the chair – typically between \$50,000 – \$100,000. There are also indirect savings and, of course, the faculty in the combined department have a smaller committee workload.

Q. What are the cost savings in closing a program?

A. When a program is closed, there are significant long-term savings because future investment in new faculty and facilities will not be needed. Most programs have a fair number of courses that are only useful in that department - usually between 10 - 20 courses that serve a particular major. These courses would not have to be offered at all in the future. It takes longer to realize these savings, but the goal is long-term cost reduction.

Q. Are there alternative to closing programs?

A. Yes, and in fact I would hope departments would suggest these as I meet with them to discuss program closure. Some programs might be saved by sharing with another campus. For example, if we have a few students in a program and Cal State LA also has a few in an equivalent program, we can work together to offer a cost effective program. Closer to home, it might also be possible to close small programs offered in separate departments and then combine resources across departments or colleges to offer a new, more effective program, perhaps on a self-supported basis.

Q. How has the process evolved and where is it now?

A. Numerical data was provided by Central Academic Affairs and is meant to provide current information on each program and department. In addition, I asked each dean to provide at least one narrative on the qualitative indicators - early in the process - so that we could look at some samples in order to refine the final indicators and rubrics.

At one point, we thought to use the rubrics (which are posted) to convert the qualitative indicators into numbers. Now, the thinking is that the conversion to numbers isn't needed; the rubric can guide what is in each indicator and condense the narrative to sentences. Connected to the larger picture, and based on the discussions I will have with departments, I can then make a qualitative judgment.

Q. How do you define 'unique' courses?

A. For this purpose, I am defining a 'unique course' as one that is primarily offered to service the students in a particular program.

Q. What is the status of graduate programs?

A. We need to look at these along with the undergraduate programs. Because emphasis on graduate programs in this university is relatively new, we need to be sure to assess the future of the program. A strong future needs to be taken into account even if the program is small now.