

DRAFT Criteria, Metrics, and Questions for the Academic Program Prioritization Process at PSU

Academic Program Prioritization Committee (APPC)

Draft to Faculty Senate, November 3, 2014

Introduction

This document proposes a set of six high-level criteria, together with associated metrics (capturing quantitative data) and questions (capturing qualitative data), for use within the academic program prioritization (APP) process at PSU. These items are shared here in a draft, incomplete form that we hope will stimulate and focus a productive conversation as the APPC, the Senate, and the faculty as a whole work together to finalize the parameters of the APP process. *We welcome and strongly encourage any feedback that will help to improve the draft set of parameters described here.*

Scope

The scope of the APP process is limited, by the charge to the APPC, to consideration of *academic programs*, which are defined as *collections of activities that consume resources and either contribute transcribed courses to a credential or else lead directly to a credential*. As such, a single academic unit or department may house multiple programs, such as one or more bachelors, masters, doctoral, or certificate programs, for example. We recognize that members of the PSU community are engaged in many activities that contribute in important and significant ways to the work of the university but fall outside the immediate scope of any particular academic program, and hence outside the scope of APP. This includes some of the activities within academic units and departments as well as all other parts of the university, including centers, institutes, student services, facilities, and administrative units. We concur with and repeat the observation in the previous APPC committee's final report that a review that extends to include all of these activities would require the development and use of evaluation procedures and criteria that may be different from those used in APP. For this reason, we also agree with the previous committee's recommendation that *academic program prioritization be pursued as part of a broader evaluation that includes all parts of the University*.

Timeline

In keeping with the charge to APPC, it is our goal to finalize the selection of criteria and associated metrics and questions for this iteration of APP before the end of Fall 2014. As a result of interactions with other ongoing, university-wide projects, we expect that this timeline will allow us: (1) to consider and refine the selection of criteria in light of potential revisions to the University's mission statement resulting from Strategic Planning; and (2) to use work that is

being done in the context of Strategic Enrollment Management Planning as inputs both to program administrators and scoring teams.

Proposed Criteria

We propose to use the following six criteria as the basis for the scoring of academic programs in the APP process at PSU:

1. **Demand**, including both internal demand (within PSU) and external demand.
2. **Quality**, of program inputs and outcomes.
3. **Productivity**, taking considerations of size and scope into account.
4. **Financial Performance**, including revenue and costs.
5. **Relation to Mission**, including contributions to knowledge, scholarship, and community engagement.
6. **Trajectory**, including past history and future opportunities.

This list reflects our attempts to capture the academic priorities of faculty at PSU, but its development was also informed by the lists of criteria that have been used as part of similar APP processes at other institutions. The criteria descriptions above are intended to be broadly interpreted, and there is no significance to the order in which they are listed.

Metrics and Questions

We have worked to assemble a set of quantitative metrics and qualitative questions corresponding to each (and in many cases, several) of the criteria listed above. The metrics and questions are needed:

1. to identify specific data that will be needed and used in the APP scoring process;
2. to clarify and explain the meaning of each of the criteria in more concrete terms.

Several important considerations have influenced the selection of metrics and questions:

- A critical challenge/fundamental goal, which will also be carried over to the process of developing scoring instruments and rubrics, is to ensure that a *consistent, rigorous approach can be applied uniformly across all programs*. This must be balanced, however, by the fact that some specific metrics or questions may not be relevant or applicable to all programs.
- A consensus from conversations about APP across campus is that *numeric data alone will not capture important details of context and nuance that are needed to document and understand the contributions of each academic program*. For this reason, we include questions, focusing on qualitative aspects, in the data collection process as an essential

complement to any numeric data that might be used. For similar reasons, we will invite and encourage comments, interpretation, and corrections to any of the quantitative data that is supplied. This kind of feedback will likely be useful, not only for the current APP process, but also as an input that informs future iterations of APP.

- We recognize that the process of collecting data for metrics and questions could impose a significant, unwanted additional burden on program administrators. One strategy that we propose in an attempt to reduce such impact is to leverage institutional data, resulting from OIRP analysis or other sources on or beyond the campus, for example. Our intention here is to provide program administrators with as much of the quantitative data as possible at the start of the data collection effort, providing them with the opportunity to reflect and comment on that data, but not expecting them to generate it themselves. We also recognize the need for clarity and precision in the ways that each metric is defined and that each question is formulated. We also understand the importance of providing clear and strong guidance on how each question is expected to be answered and on the form of answers that should be provided. Again, the goal is to minimize the burden on program administrators while also maximizing the utility of the information that is collected. *We recognize that the formulations of metrics and questions that are presented below do not yet meet these standards.* While we are willing to add new metrics and questions as necessary in response to feedback, we are just as happy to remove items from the current list that will not contribute useful inputs to the APP process. *No data collection will begin until these issues have been resolved, and until the rubrics or other scoring instruments have been developed and shared with the campus community.*
- The descriptions of metrics and questions below do not specify the timeframe for which data should be collected and reported. As a starting point, the previous APPC committee recommended that data for APP be provided for a spread of three years, but no final decision on this has been made.
- As we have already described, there is an important distinction to be made between academic programs and the units or departments in which they are based. In some cases, it is hard to map data, readily available at the unit level, to meaningful data at the program level. Many faculty, for example, are involved in both undergraduate and graduate education and we do not know of any reasonable, practical, and general mechanism to account for their division of faculty time between different programs and activities. For this reason, *while we will attempt to focus as much as possible on data at the program level, we also recognize that some elements will only be available at the department or unit level, providing a context but not a direct match for evaluating individual programs.*
- The top-level criteria and the metrics and questions described below are intended to be broadly applicable to all academic programs. It is important, however, that we maintain a

clear separation between fundamentally different types of programs. For example, we do not imagine that a direct comparison of the metrics for a large undergraduate program and a small doctoral program would yield meaningful results. In a similar way, we must also be sensitive to discipline-specific standards, expectations, and variations.

With the important provisos above in mind, we now present our current proposed set of metrics and questions. The order in which the items are listed has no particular significance, and it will probably be possible to sort or group them in a more sensible manner in future revisions of this document. Many of the metrics and questions are relevant to multiple criteria. For this reason, rather than listing one set of items for each criterion, we use a table to present a single list and to document the many-to-many relationships between metrics, questions, and criteria.

Acknowledging that this involves some subjective components, the table still provides a tool that can help us to ensure appropriate coverage. The columns on the right of the table correspond to individual criteria. If one of these columns had no entries, then it would suggest that there is no means to assess the corresponding criterion. In a similar way, a row with no entries would indicate that the associated metric/question is not relevant to the APP process. This scheme is extensible: it will allow us to add new criteria (columns) and new metrics/questions (rows) as necessary.

The rightmost column of the table, labeled Src, is used to capture our expectations about the expected source for answers to that item. This includes, for example, the use of institutional data (ID) in addition to direct responses from each program (PR).

Criteria Labels: Demand; Quality; Productivity; Financial performance; Relation to Mission; Trajectory.	D	Q	P	F	M	T	Src
Question: What are the program’s current areas of strength?	D	Q	P		M	T	PR
Question: How does the program’s scholarly activity advance the curriculum?		Q			M	T	PR
Question: Describe the strengths, quality, and rigor (as appropriate) of any scholarly and/or creative work that is generated as a result of the program.		Q	P				PR
Question: How does the program connect through community engagement and service?					M		PR
Question: To what degree are students involved in scholarly and/or creative work, community engagement, internships, or other such activities beyond the classroom as part of the program?		Q	P		M		PR

Criteria Labels: Demand; Quality; Productivity; Financial performance; Relation to Mission; Trajectory.	D	Q	P	F	M	T	Src
Question: How does the program support the mission, signature areas of focus, and strategic priorities of PSU?					M		PR
Question: What are the expected outcomes and timelines of any current or recently completed special initiatives that are in support of, or carried out as part of the program?	D	Q	P	F	M	T	PR
Question: Comment on the expected future for the program, using data collected here or from other sources as support.	D	Q	P		M	T	PR
Metric: Number of degrees awarded by level & concentration	D		P			T	ID
Metric: SCH attributed to program from within and outside the program	D		P	F		T	ID
Question: How is the program connected to and necessary for other programs?	D				M		PR
Metric: Labor market projections	D				M	T	PR+ID
Metric: Number of applications from potential students, absolute and per faculty FTE	D					T	ID or N/A
Metric: Selectivity (#admitted / #applications)		Q	P				ID or N/A
Metric: Yield (#enrolled / #admitted)		Q	P				ID or N/A
Question: What changes, if any, are you observing in patterns of student applications, enrollments, and graduations?	D					T	PR
Metric: Per faculty FTE statistics for enrollment, SCH, and degrees awarded		Q	P				ID
Metric: Time to degree		Q	P				ID
Metric: Graduation rates (4 and 6 year)			P			T	ID
Metric: Number of faculty with a terminal degree		Q					ID

Criteria Labels: Demand; Quality; Productivity; Financial performance; Relation to Mission; Trajectory.	D	Q	P	F	M	T	Src
Metric: Share of courses taught by faculty/instructors by rank (e.g., tenure line, fixed term, adjunct, or GTA)		Q					ID
Metric: Average class size	D	Q	P				ID
Question: To what extent are class sizes determined by factors such as seating capacity; faculty numbers; discipline-specific standards; facilities and equipment; etc.?	D	Q				T	PR
Metric: Average teaching load for faculty [<i>TBD: how best to measure this? #courses, #credits, SCH, ...?</i>]	D	Q	P	F			PR
Question: Is there an established accrediting body or professional society that has established standards for the area in which the program lies? If so, what is the ability of the program to meet those standards? If not, to what extent does the program make use of other internally or externally monitored quality control procedures?		Q					PR
Metric: Composition of student body (e.g., headcount; diversity; resident/non-resident; full-time/part-time; international; first-time college; etc.)	D	Q			M		ID
Metric: Faculty FTE and composition (e.g., tenured/on track; part-time; minority; etc.)		Q			M		ID
Metric: Staff headcount and composition (e.g., permanent, student worker, full-time/part-time, etc.)		Q		F	M	T	PR+ID
Metric: Revenue generated by grants, contracts, gifts, etc.		Q		F			ID
Metric: Revenue generated by tuition, in total, and as distributed between resident, non-resident, differential tuition, etc.				F			ID
Metric: Aggregated distributed research awards				F			ID
Metric: Instructional expenditures per SCH			P	F			ID
Metric: SCH per FTE instructional funding			P	F			ID

Criteria Labels: Demand; Quality; Productivity; Financial performance; Relation to Mission; Trajectory.	D	Q	P	F	M	T	Src
Metric: Faculty salary benchmarks				F			ID
Metric: Tuition income per direct instructional expenses			P	F			ID
Question: To what extent are the available equipment, facilities, and supplies adequate to support the program? What are the highest priorities for the program in this area?	D	Q	P	F		T	PR