Advice to Schools and Colleges for Implementing Systematic Program Review
Draft for Comments Dated November 11, 2016

Purpose

In 2015, Syracuse University had 1077 full time faculty members and 502 registered academic programs. While recent new hires have increased the number of faculty and "clean up" efforts have helped with retiring some dormant programs, those numbers mean that on average there is one academic program for every two Syracuse faculty members. That is a huge workload – in curriculum maintenance, program assessment, advising, compliance and record keeping – and a diversion from engagement in our missions of teaching and scholarship. In a 2015 report, the Educational Advisory Board commented, "… the proliferation of courses, specializations, and programs spreads resources more thinly across a broader array of activities, reducing quality by diverting funds from institutional priorities while at the same time producing a level of complexity that creates barriers to student success." By giving better attention to restructuring our existing academic offerings we can teach the topics we love in the context of academic programs that are better structured to meet the learning goals of our students.

Our regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, comments that, "program review [is] used to change and improve educational programs, consistent with institutional values, purpose, and goals." Middle States expects us to review every academic program we offer on a four-year cycle, to use our feedback from program assessment to improve existing programs, and to merge or sunset programs that have reached the natural juncture for such changes.

The purpose of program review is to craft and maintain a set of high-quality academic programs that support our educational objectives for students while making effective use of our institutional resources. If we do this well, we will continuously maintain a list of high-quality programs that are consistent with our mission, sought by students, and financially sustainable.

Academic programs are reviewed for their *quality, demand, cost-effectiveness, and centrality to mission* (emphasis added)." Defined below, these four characteristics comprise the basis of Syracuse University's program review.

Quality	The quality of the program is demonstrable by the extent of student learning, student persistence, employment outcomes, or other markers appropriate to the discipline.
Demand	There is sufficient student demand, in the form of student enrollments and/or student majors, and sustenance or growth potential to warrant maintaining the program.
Cost Effectiveness	The value of the program to students and to the university warrants the resources required to maintain the program.

Centrality to Mission	The program is deeply connected to successful execution of our mission as a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research university as well as the specific mission of the school/college.

Process

Each school and college at Syracuse University will engage in a process that reviews each program on a four-year cycle. Syracuse University's program review process incorporates all of the following features:

- A fair and equitable, faculty-driven procedure for evaluating each program for which the school/college is responsible, using assessment outcomes, institutional data, and disciplinary norms to drive recommendations;
- Specific criteria for evaluation that address the four characteristics of quality, demand, cost-effectiveness, and centrality to mission;
- A schedule for program review that allows for each program in the school or college to be evaluated at least once every four years; for schools/colleges or programs with specialized accreditors, the specialized accreditation timelines should be factored into the program review calendar to minimize redundant work;
- A process of cross-college consultation on joint programs and other programs where modifications, mergers, or closure would affect the work of another school/college;
- An annual, school-wide or college-wide review of the full portfolio of programs to act on recent recommendations and ensure fit with the mission of the school/college and the university. This review should consider program-specific assessment plans and annual assessment progress reports as one element of the evaluation process.
- Evaluation conclusions and recommended improvements identified in a review process should be included as success criteria in the next review cycle.

Steps to Undertake Systematic Program Review

1. *Appoint a Program Review Chair*: Each dean can appoint a faculty member or staff member to take responsibility for structuring the review process. Program review is an every-year activity, so the appointment would ideally be for a multi-year period. For schools that have specialized/disciplinary accreditation, these processes may mesh with the existing assessment and compliance duties of a staff or faculty member who runs the specialized accreditation process. The Program Review chair will set the annual schedule for evaluation and provide the reporting deadlines for program representatives and others involved in the program evaluation process.

2. *Appoint Program Representatives*: For each unit (e.g., an academic department) that "owns" a program or set of related programs, the dean appoints one or more faculty representatives who can gather data (see next item) about the programs under review in a given year. Depending upon local culture, this could be a faculty member, program director, a department chair, or an associate chair.

3. *Collect Data*: Data about a program should always contain the common data elements (below) plus any additional indicators the program representatives consider relevant in each of the four areas. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) will provide the common data elements, and will also be helpful assembling additional data.

4. *Submit Program Reports to Curriculum Committee*: Each school and college has at least one committee dedicated to curriculum management. This committee can obtain program reports from program representatives and evaluate them with a uniform set of judgment criteria that apply to all programs in the school or college. For each reviewed program, the Curriculum Committee should make an evaluative judgment and a recommendation: keep the program, keep the program with requested modifications, merge the program with another related program, or close the program.

5. *Provide Mechanisms for Faculty Appeal of Recommendations*: Program representatives should have an opportunity to consult with program faculty and, if necessary, appeal program recommendations by presenting additional program data to the curriculum committee. Acting through the program review chair, the dean of the school/college can apply a set of deadlines and adjudication procedures to ensure a fair and equitable final decision about the program(s) in question.

6. *Conduct Consultations and Program Actions*: Substantive modifications to a program's academic content, a decision to merge, or a decision to close should be undertaken in consultation with other schools/colleges that may be affected by program changes. Most program and course changes require the approval of the Senate Committee on Curricula, and some program changes also involve communications with the New York State Department of Education and our regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor can provide guidance and support on all of these administrative steps.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment can provide assistance with the process.

Evidence for Program Evaluation

Evidence evaluated for program review should comprise a core data set common across all program reviews, plus any additional data the school/college may deem appropriate for individual programs. A concise narrative should accompany the presentation of the data. The table below lists the core data set, follow by examples of additional data schools and colleges may find valuable when examining individual programs. Additional data should be chosen with the aim of providing multiple types of evidence to provide a holistic view of the program.

Within broad disciplinary areas (such as STEM) it will be valuable to use consistent criteria for programs in each area. Academic program leaders should not pick and choose what evidence to

present, rather, the school/college curriculum committee should provide guidance and set expectations as to what evidence should be included in each program's case file.

Data Elements Common to All Program Reviews

Quality	Centrality to mission	Demand	Cost-effectiveness
• Student learning outcomes assessment results • Retention and graduation rates • Certification or licensing exam pass rates (if applicable) • Post-graduate outcomes (employment, graduate school)	Demonstration of tie to mission and strategic plan at institution and school/college levels	• Five year trend of student majors • Five year trend of degrees awarded • Five year trend of applications to program	• Total cost of salary and benefits for faculty and staff supporting program • Faculty FTE per semester credit hour of instruction • Instructional cost per semester credit hours of instruction • Class size

Optional Additional Data Elements

Quality	Centrality to mission	Demand	Cost-effectiveness
Student engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities (e.g., internships, study abroad, service learning)	Donor attention and support with scholarships, named chairs, etc.	Enrollment is high relative to programs at peer schools	Faculty development expenses
Incoming students' profiles: previous grades, rank in class, SAT/GRE scores, TOEFL scores (international students), advanced placement scores	Alumni and/or advisory board member rankings of program importance	Coursework includes graduation requirements for other programs	Travel costs associated with the program

Special honors, awards for the program or its constituent faculty	Faculty rankings of program importance	Program attracts and retains diverse student population	Capital equipment costs and maintenance costs
Proportion of students admitted to graduate schools	Mentions/Highlights in S/C Strategic Plan	Program is interdependent on or serves other programs at SU	Office supplies
Curriculum is regularly assessed, revised, and improved; results of previous evaluations	Faculty/student engagement activities (e.g., after-hours discussion)	Future outlooks, job trends for graduates in the program are clear	Laboratories
Measures of graduates' satisfaction	Visibility conferred by external rankings	There is a national demand for the program	Office space
Clearly stated and publicized program student learning outcomes	Program history; original motivation for opening the program	Ratio of IUT-In/IUT-Out	Total space costs
Technology is up-to-date and used to enhance student learning, reinforce computer skills and computer literacy	Operating context of program (e.g., requirements of the field or profession)	Additional evidence of external demand such as uniqueness/ centrality	Other costs
Curriculum is organized to facilitate learning, is free from academic gaps and repetitions; there is coherence between lessons, courses, subject areas	Reuse of teaching techniques, technology, or course content elsewhere in the university	Word of Mouth Referrals; Social Media Mentions; Press Mentions	Graduate Student Financial Aid Rate
Internships, research opportunities, teaching associates	Proportion of instruction provided by full-time faculty	Employer, client, patron testimonials about graduates	Endowment per Student
Program accreditation, certification, or other professional recognition	Research projects related to program		Tech/Facility Cost per Student
External Rankings			Cross subsidies