

Academic Program Prioritization

A thoughtful, comprehensive approach of reviewing, evaluating and prioritizing academic programs and support functions.

Two Realities of Reform:

1. We need to rethink our purposes, our strategies and our programs
2. The most likely source for needed resources is reallocation of existing resources

Paradigm shifts

- Seat time vs learning
- Quality as inputs vs. Quality as Outputs
- Internal validation vs. External validation
- Open vs. Shared curriculum
- Funding needs vs. Funding opportunities

Focusing on Programs as the Unit of Analysis

- Academic programs drive campus costs
- Programs have grown despite relative worth
- Most campuses trying to do too much
- Incongruence between programs/resources
- Across-the-board cuts = Mediocrity
- Reallocation of resources is required
- Reallocation requires responsible prioritization

Not All Programs Are Equal

- Some are more effective
- Some are more efficient
- Some are more central to the mission
- The Price of Academic Program Bloat for All is Impoverishment of Each

Program Prioritization Permits:

- Analysis focused on pre-selected criteria
- Concentration on resource development & resource utilization, independent of structure
- Focus on efficiency, effectiveness and centrality to mission
- Identify opportunities to increase revenue, decrease expenses, improve quality, and strengthen reputation

Weighting the Prioritization Criteria

1. External demand for the program
2. Quality of outcomes
3. Size, scope, and productivity of the program
4. Impact, justification, and overall essentiality of the program
5. Costs and other expenses associated with the program

Weighting the Prioritization Criteria

6. Internal demand for the program
7. Revenue and other resources generated by the program
8. History, development, and expectations of the program
9. Quality of program inputs and processes
10. Opportunity analysis of the program

To Analyze External Demand for the Program

- IPEDS Reports: Enrollments
- Online trends
- US Department of Labor projections
- Employer feedback
- State/regional needs; economic development data
- Student application information
- Marketing surveys
- Program added or cancelled at nearby rival institutions

To Analyze Quality of Program Outcomes

- Measures of graduate satisfaction
- Graduation rates
- Job placement and success; earnings reports
- Student learning outcomes, portfolio quality
- Success rates on professional certifications, licensure exams, etc.
- Program enrollments
- Involvement in community and public service

To Analyze Quality of Program Outcomes

- Recognition and awards
- Employer satisfaction surveys
- Faculty awards, prizes, professional distinction
- Graduates' publications and presentations
- Other validations of quality

To Analyze Size, Scope, and Productivity of the Program

- Ratio of students to faculty; adherence to such formulas
- Applicant-to-capacity ratios
- Applications-to-yield, by program
- Enrollments
- Section fill rates
- Redundancy of courses across the institution
- Five-year graduation rates, trend-line
- Student retention rates, by program

To Analyze Impact, Justification, and Overall Essentiality

- Contribution to reputation
- Contribution to state's economy
- Degree to which program is “mission-critical”
- Contains elements/resources for forward-looking new programs
- Potential to become a national leader
- Long-term need versus short-term demand
- Political influence

To Analyze costs and Expenses

- Fully allocated cost per FTE student
- Allocated institutional support
- Required expenses for regulatory or specialized accreditation requirements
- Marginal cost of program
- PT/FT, fully costed
- Technology costs
- Depreciation

To Analyze Internal Demand for the Program

- Student enrollments
- Programs that support majors and minors of other programs
- Level of shared curriculum with other programs; cross-listing of courses
- Formal interdisciplinary programs
- Program mapping of courses delivered
- Student credits by major, minor, general education, developmental education

To Analyze Revenue and Other Resources Generated

- Tuition, program-allocated
- Grant income and F&A
- Gifts and donations, program-specific
- State or federal funding, program-specific
- Revenue from clinics, centers, other enterprises; ticket, workshop income
- Online program revenues
- Other revenues obtained

To Analyze the History, Development, and Expectations of the Program

- Historical enrollment patterns
- Alignment with mission
- Relationship to national research agenda
- Relationship to labor market data
- State requirements and goals
- External reputation as measured by state coordinating board

To Analyze the History, Development, and Expectations of the Program

- Geographic uniqueness in state, region
- Legacy programs with reputation that draws students
- Incubator of institutional faculty leadership and advancement
- Extent to which program is “core” to the educational experience
- Does the program address critical shortage areas in the state?
- Faculty and student data over time
- Faculty experience

To Analyze Quality of Program Inputs and Processes

- Student academic profile data
- Percent of faculty with Ph.D.
- Percent of faculty with awards or other national distinction
- Quality of holdings/equipment/facilities needed to execute the program
- Faculty expertise in teaching methodologies

For Opportunity Analysis

- New program opportunity; potential net revenues, potential for “signature” program status
- Unique niche programs
- Exploration of alternative delivery mechanisms
- Formation of productive external partnerships and collaborations
- Potential for interdisciplinary programs
- Opportunity to realign or strengthen existing programs
- Specialized programs for key stakeholders