

Commission for Development of Criteria for Evaluation and Prioritization of Academic Programs

This is the final report of the Commission for Development of Criteria for Evaluation and Prioritization of Academic Programs. The report covers: (1) President Smith's charge to the commission, (2) an operational definition of Academic Program, and (3) nine criteria for evaluation and prioritization of academic programs at the University of Nebraska.

Charge to the Commission

President Smith issued the following charge to the Commission at its first meeting on October 29, 1999.

The charge of the commission is to develop criteria by which academic programs of the University of Nebraska will be evaluated and prioritized. The criteria developed should address attributes of an academic program such as quality, importance to the overall mission of NU, centrality to the core mission of the appropriate campus, faculty productivity, fiscal considerations, and the need or demand for the program.

President Smith went on to amplify on the important attributes of a successful academic program:

Traditionally, the *quality* of a program has been assessed in terms of its inputs (the curriculum, faculty, students, facilities and other resources) and processes (the way the inputs are put to use). However, equally important is the need to assess the program's performance, its contributions to diversity and the resultant outcomes. What is the demonstrable effectiveness of the program in preparing students, creating new knowledge and in meeting its other goals?

Centrality to the campus core mission addresses the connecting relationship between a given program and the achievement of the overall mission of the university and its campuses. It is possible that an academic program independent of its quality may be essential because of its academic centrality to the campus, or because it serves a unique societal need that the institution values.

A quality faculty is central to the strength of any academic program. Assessment of *faculty productivity* is thus essential in evaluating a program. Effectiveness in teaching, success in producing scholarly works and attracting sponsored research, and the extent of public services rendered are all aspects of faculty productivity.

Given the future environment with somewhat limited resources, consideration should also be given to the *fiscal* aspects of academic programs. Attempt should be made to assess, where

relevant, programmatic costs as well as any actual or potential revenue that is attributable to the program.

Assessing the *need for* the program should address demands both external and internal to the university. Current national demand, and state or local demand for the program are examples of the external demand. Internally, in addition to serving its own majors, does a program produce services needed by programs within the campus? Generally, the criteria established for this attribute should help assessment of present and projected demand.

The preceding brief descriptions are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all relevant attributes. Rather, they are examples of the typical attributes the commission should consider in developing both qualitative and quantitative criteria that are appropriate for evaluating and prioritizing academic programs at the University of Nebraska.

Definition of Academic Program

Academic program is the focus of the evaluative criteria being considered by the commission. Thus, the commission developed the following operational definition of academic program with related explanatory statements.

Academic Program: an organized and directed accumulation of resources to accomplish specific academic objectives, with educational, service and/or research outcomes.

It is implied in the definition that the following are representative examples of academic programs:

- o Distinct degree offerings, such as bachelors, masters, or doctoral;
- o Specific concentrations nested within academic areas, for example, analytical versus organic chemistry;
- o Offerings or research activities which bridge disciplines, such as interdisciplinary materials science programs;
- o Service/outreach activities (including cooperative extension) which are linked directly or indirectly to educational and/or research programs;
- o Non-degree offerings, such as minors and certificates in the absence of associated majors; and
- o Non-degree granting programs, such as library services, instructional technologies groups, and teaching councils.

Criteria for Evaluation and Prioritization of Academic Programs

The vision statements as well as roles and missions of the University of Nebraska and its campuses have guided the thinking of the commission in developing the following criteria for program evaluation and prioritization. The Regent-approved role and mission statements of each campus as well as outlines of their latest strategic plans can be found in their respective Websites. The mission statement and strategic plan for the University are found in the Strategic Framework Document (revised in February 2000). (See [Appendix 2](#) for reference.)

Nine criteria are presented as the framework within which each campus will reach holistic judgement about programs and set priorities that will guide resource allocation and program development. While all nine criteria must be addressed in the assessment of each academic program, the applicability of the specific indicators in each criterion will vary by campus and program. Evaluation and prioritization should take place in full recognition of the multiple dimensions of the many academic programs on the various campuses.

The commission is sensitive to the amount of work the proposed criteria will generate. However, it also believes that existing institutional data bases, and periodic information compiled for regular program evaluation purposes can be relied upon to ameliorate the burden.

Even though implementation of the criteria is not within its mandate, the commission believes that the evaluative process developed at each campus should start at the program level. Further, while the implementation process will be defined by each campus, the commission is of the opinion that the proposed criteria could be addressed succinctly in not more than ten pages.

It should be noted that the criteria provided must be applied not only in terms of the program's **historical and current practices and results**, but also in terms of its **future potential and possibilities**.

The nine general criteria being proposed by the commission are listed below, along with their brief explanatory notes. Specific indicators for each criterion are provided in [Appendix 1](#) for reference. The indicators are intended to serve as illustrative examples of the types of information the commission believes could be provided to address each criterion.

I. Centrality to roles and missions and strategic plans of the University and the campus

In its efforts to foster the scholarships of teaching, discovery, integration and application, the University and each of its campuses have Regent-approved roles and missions, and strategic plans. This criterion is intended to assess the extent of the relation of a program to those roles and missions, and strategic plans.

II. Need and Demand

This criterion is intended to assess the need and demand for the program. This includes demands for the program internal to the university, as well as external demand as can be demonstrated in the state, regional, national, and international markets.

III. Quality and Outcomes of Teaching/learning

The quality and outcomes of teaching/learning address both inputs and outputs. Input variables relate to students and faculty, and the output variables relate to the educational outcomes of the program. An important question addressed here is, Does the program foster learning and discovery for the constituency?

IV. Quality and Outcomes of Research/Creative Activity

The quality and outcomes of research/creative activity are intended to assess the amount, stature and quality of research and creative activities.

V. Quality and Outcomes of Service to the Public and University

The intent here is to assess the extent and quality of services rendered by the program to the public and to the university.

VI. Human, Fiscal and Physical Resources

This criterion covers the human, financial and facility resources, and is intended to assess the availability and effective usage of such resources to meet the program's teaching, research/creative activity, and public service goals.

VII. Impact

The impact criterion is intended to address educational, economic, social, and cultural benefits of the program impact on the campus, the University, Nebraska and society at large.

VIII. Cooperation and Partnership with Other Programs

This criterion is intended to assess the extent of cooperative and partnership activities beyond the program's traditional academic boundaries. It covers both academic partnerships and partnerships with business/industry/service agencies.

IX. Other Unique Dimensions of Program

The intent here is to provide an opportunity for including additional details pertaining to the unique characteristics of the program.

Appendix 1

Criteria for Evaluation and prioritization of Academic Programs

The indicators noted under each criterion are intended to serve as illustrative, and not exhaustive, examples of the types of information the commission believes could be provided to address the criterion.

I. Centrality to roles and missions and strategic plans of the University and the campus

In its efforts to foster the scholarships of teaching, discovery, integration and application, the University and each of its campuses have Regent-approved roles and missions, and strategic plans. This criterion is to assess the extent of the relation of a program to those roles and missions, and strategic plans.

- Evaluate each program relative to the roles and missions and strategic plans of the university and the campus:
 - a) How essential is the program to the university and the campus?
 - b) What is its relationship to the achievement of the university's and campus' mission?
 - c) How can this program evolve to best serve the university and the campus?
- Does the program serve the mission in ways that no other program does?

II. Need and Demand

This criterion is intended to assess the need and demand for the program. This includes demands for the program internal to the university, as well as external demand as can be demonstrated in the state, regional, national, and international markets.

1. External student demand

- National trend of demand for program
- Regional and state trend of demand for program
- Potential of future demand for program

2. Internal student demand

- Number of student majors
- Diversity of student majors
- Number of student credit hours generated
- Ratio of student credit hours earned by non-majors

- Number of FTE students served
- Potential internal demands on program
- 3. Employment market
 - Number of graduates employed in own or related fields
 - Number of vacant positions in the field
 - Workforce data
- 4. Community service and outreach needs
 - Community demand for program's services
 - Community demand for program's technical assistance, workshops, and training activities
 - Service to special populations with special (or unique) needs.
- 5. Market position
 - Number of competing programs in state, region, and nation
 - Distinctive market niche
 - Special strength in the market
- 6. Research and creative activities
 - Demand for research and creative activities
 - Special (unique) research and creative activities needs to be met

III. **Quality and Outcomes of Teaching/learning**

The quality and outcomes of teaching/learning address both inputs and outputs. Input variables relate to students and faculty, and the output variables relate to the educational outcomes of the program. An important question addressed here is, **Does the program foster learning and discovery for the constituency?** To the extent possible, data here should provide both total and per unit measures such as FTE faculty or FTE student.

1. Students:
 - High school rank, and ACT or other achievement test scores of majors
 - Average GPA of student majors
 - Student honors, recognitions and nominations
2. Faculty:
 - Faculty qualifications
 - Faculty recognitions, awards
 - Diversity enhancements (cultural, ethnic, gender, international, etc)
3. Teaching:

- Numbers of students (majors, minors, undergraduate/graduate, diversity, extended education, etc)
- Total number of student credit hours (SCH), and SCH per faculty
- Number of contact hours per faculty
- Number of FTE students per faculty
- Number of degrees or degree equivalencies awarded annually
- Development of Innovative and forward-looking curriculum
- Evidence of unit teaching effectiveness

4. Learning outcomes:

- Results of learning outcomes assessment processes
- Standardized test results such as GRE,
- Professional licensure results
- Other outcome goals of students

5. Program (Educational outcomes):

- Peer review/accreditation
- National ranking
- Job Placement rate of graduates
- Number of students going to graduate or professional programs
- Completion/graduation rates by gender and ethnicity
- Client satisfaction with program (students and parents, employers, alumni, patients and peers)

IV. Quality and Outcomes of Research/Creative Activity

The quality and outcomes of research/creative activity are intended to assess the amount, stature and quality of research/creative activity. To the extent possible, data here should provide both total and per unit measures such as FTE faculty.

1. Faculty:

- Faculty qualifications
- Faculty recognitions, awards
- Diversity enhancements (cultural, ethnic, gender, international, etc)

2. Research and creative activity:

- Number of grant proposals submitted, and funded
- Dollar amounts of grants/contracts
- Intellectual property created and associated income
- Number of publications, including peer-reviewed articles
- Outside peer reviews of other works such as artistic performances

- Stature of journals in which faculty published
- Number of papers/presentations
- Number of citations, including electronic media
- Shows such as concerts, theater productions, gallery showings
- Student projects, performances, publications, presentation/papers, grants, and volunteer works

V. Quality and Outcomes of Service to the Public and University

The intent here is to assess the extent and quality of services rendered to the public and to the university by faculty and other professionals in the program.

1. Faculty and staff:
 - Faculty and staff qualifications
 - Faculty and staff recognitions, awards
 - Diversity enhancements (cultural, ethnic, gender, international, etc)

2. Outcome of service activities:
 - Number of internal and external clients served, such as communities, institutions, and organizations
 - Number of contact hours generated
 - Number of grant proposals submitted, and funded
 - Dollar amounts of grants/contracts
 - Intellectual property created and associated income
 - Number of publications, including peer-reviewed articles

3. Engagements in service:
 - Service intrinsic to the program
 - Service on boards
 - Service on general faculty and other University committees
 - Service on special University committees
 - Volunteer work
 - Contract work
 - Partnership activities with business/industry/communities

VI. Human, Fiscal and Physical Resources

This criterion covers the human, financial and facility resources, and is intended to assess the availability and effective usage of such resources to meet the program's teaching, research/creative activity, and public service goals.

1. Human:

- Numbers of faculty and staff
 - Diversity of faculty and staff
 - Array of talents available
 - Faculty and staff development efforts
2. Fiscal (financial):
- State support
 - Salaries
 - Tuition and fees income (including services and technology)
 - Grants and contracts
 - Income from intellectual property and other sources of revenue
 - Total cost of program (including direct costs, facility costs, and collateral costs)
 - Faculty and staff development costs
 - Student development costs
 - Cost per SCH and/or per FTE student
 - Laboratory and equipment cost per FTE student
 - Administrative cost as a percentage of total program cost
3. Facilities:
- Square footage of assignable space
 - Adequacy of physical facilities, including classrooms, laboratories, equipment, computer and other facilities

VII. Impact

The impact criterion is intended to address educational, economic, social, and cultural benefits of the program impact on the campus, the University, Nebraska and society at large.

- Benefit to society at large
- Benefit to Nebraska
- Benefit to campus and University
- Benefit to profession and discipline
- Contribution to economic development
- Contribution to strengthening communities
- Does the program foster University service/citizenship?
- Intangibles:
 - Goodwill
 - Citizen support
 - Student, faculty and staff morale

VIII. Cooperation and Partnership with Other Programs

This criterion is intended to assess the extent of cooperative and partnership activities beyond the program's traditional academic boundaries. It covers both academic partnerships and partnerships with business/industry/service agencies.

1. Academic partnerships:

- Intra-campus partnership activities
- Intra-University partnership activities
- Partnership with other institutions
- Sharing of resources
- Innovations leading to or resulting from such partnership activities
- Resulting improvements in own program
- Resulting cost/benefit assessment of such partnerships
- Is cooperation possible and duplication avoidable?

2. Partnership with business/industry/service agencies/communities:

- Partnership activities with business/industry/service agencies/communities
- Sharing of resources
- Innovations leading to or resulting from such partnership activities
- Resulting changes in own program
- Resulting cost/benefit assessment of such partnerships

IX. Other Unique Dimensions of Program

The intent here is to provide an opportunity for including additional details pertaining to the unique characteristics of the program.

Appendix 2

University of Nebraska The Role and Mission Statements, and Strategic Plans

The role and mission statements of the University of Nebraska campuses, last approved by the Board of Regents on 05/10/1991, can be found on the following Websites:

- UNL** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/rmunl.htm>
Also at
<http://www.unl.edu/unlfacts/mission.htm>
- UNMC** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/rmunmc.htm>
- UNO** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/rmuno.htm>
- UNK** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/rmunk.htm>
Also at
<http://aaunk.edu/facultyhandbook/mission.htm>

The strategic plans of the University of Nebraska (NU) and its campuses can be found on the following Websites. It should be noted that the strategic plans are continuously reviewed. References for the revised plans will be provided as they become available.

- NU** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/strat3.htm>
- UNL** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/stratunl.htm>
- UNMC** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/stratmc.htm>
- UNO** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/stratuno.htm>
See also at
<http://www.unomaha.edu/UNO/stratplan/>
- UNK** <http://www.uneb.edu/planreport/rmunk.htm>

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