ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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As a university dedicated to meeting the needs of its region and to providing leadership and expertise for students and the community, CSUB must actively plan for the future. An evidence-based program review is an essential component of the active planning process. The required elements of a program review are: evidence-based self-examination, assessment of student learning outcomes, evaluation of resources necessary to ensure quality, and the harmony of the program visions and plans with those of the university. Program review provides a critical reflection of who we are, where we are going, where we should be going, and how we should get there. It involves a program’s commitment and willingness to candidly evaluate goals, objectives, and activities, through outcomes-based assessment of student learning. Consequently, ever improving decisions on curriculum and budgeting of scarce resources are made when faculty use program review data to inform the decision-making process.

The program review process strives to inform program decisions based upon evidence-based assessment and assessment results in turn lead to a foundation for informed budget and curricular decisions. This dynamic interplay, which is the heart of the program review, is primarily a faculty-driven process. This faculty endeavor utilizes accreditation reports (when available) and annual reports to reduce redundant reporting and to facilitate comparisons across departments, schools, and universities. Transparency and accountability is enhanced by tying together the recommendations for program improvement with budgeting, faculty lines and space requirements through a Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan (MOUAP). Consequently, program review establishes a faculty reviewed process by which evidence-based claims and decision-making can be used for planning and budgeting. The program review establishes intermediate benchmarks and follow-up plans that track program progress toward achieving and ensuring alignment of student, programmatic and university-wide academic goals and objectives.

PURPOSES OF PROGRAM REVIEW

Program review aims to maintain and strengthen the quality of the university's curriculum and its ability to meet the challenges of the future. Program review should be centered on the desire to provide a quality university-level program balanced with respect for the needs of society in general and the region in particular, student abilities and interests, and career needs. Most importantly, program review must provide an evidence-based determination of whether students are accomplishing the program's learning objectives through outcomes-based assessment of student learning and development. In this way, the results of program review provide the evidentiary basis for informed, transparent and accountable decisions about program, faculty and student needs, curricular planning, and resource allocation and management. Through this faculty-driven program review process, the university administration, working collaboratively with the faculty at multiple steps in the process, is better prepared to allocate scarce resources and to plan for change. Successful program review is dependent upon faculty willingness to engage in an intensive and comprehensive self-study process that uses data and honest professional discourse about the
evaluation criteria to be applied, changes in knowledge, the relationship of programs to one another, and the educational needs of students and society at large.

To achieve these purposes, faculty are required to evaluate the program’s student learning outcomes, annual assessment findings, benchmarking results, subsequent changes, and evidence concerning the impact of these changes. Such assessment demands that well-qualified internal and external reviewers evaluate the program’s learning outcomes, assessment plan, evidence, benchmarking results, and assessment impact. Such reviewers provide evaluative feedback and suggestions for improvement. It is expected that the program faculty use this feedback to improve student learning. Program faculty are to prepare a retrospective Self-Study and a forward looking Program Plan in advance of the next cycle of review. It is expected that the campus will systematically integrate program reviews into planning and budgeting processes, through negotiation of formal action plans with mutually agreed-upon commitments.

ANNUAL REPORTS

The office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment (IRPA) prepares data annually for each program, including the number of students, faculty, degrees granted, and instructional cost. The program is asked to update additional tables indicating the work that has been done over the last year on assessment of student learning outcomes, faculty activity, and funding plans. A narrative, not expected to exceed two pages, focuses on clarifying and explaining the data and discussing any emerging trends. If the program has a MOUAP, it is required to evaluate the extent to which it has met any program goals or benchmarks and may also report the status of agreed upon resource allocations. The cumulative data and narratives will form the foundation for the next program review.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE FOR THE REVIEW PROCESS

PROGRAM SELF-STUDY COMMITTEE:

Each program conducting a review shall select a Self-Study Committee of at least three members. In consultation with program faculty and representative students, the committee is responsible for the preparation of a Self-Study and a Program Plan (Planning) document. The committee receives a packet containing the review guidelines and deadlines, model program reviews, and other material. The chair of the department or interdisciplinary program is responsible for ensuring the completion of the program review. The title page of the program review document shall state that by a majority vote the program faculty has approved the Self-Study and the Program Plan Document and the date on which approval was voted.

EXTERNAL REVIEW OR PROGRAM ACCREDITATION:

The AVPAP, in consultation with the school dean, may provide a list of available reviewers from which a program may select. When a list is not available, the program proposes an external reviewer in consultation with the AVPAP and is asked to assure the program review committee that the individual is capable of carrying out a neutral review. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs maintains a fund to pay for the external reviewer.

An external reviewer will evaluate each program as part of the program review or accreditation process. The purpose for the external reviewer is to assist the faculty to improve the quality of
their program by providing a new, comparative, and broader perspective on the program, its last seven years of operation, and its plans for the next seven years. The external reviewer will conduct an exit interview with the program faculty, the chair of the University Program Review Committee (UPRC), the appropriate school dean, and the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies (AVPAP), and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The external reviewer will provide the Office of Academic Programs with a report that provides comments and recommendations regarding the program. The program faculty has the opportunity to review the report (within a reasonable time period) for factual inaccuracies and misperceptions and submit a written response. The program faculty’s written response to the External Reviewer’s report becomes part of the package of documents subsequently reviewed by the UPRC, the appropriate school dean, and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

SCHOOL DEAN REVIEW:

School deans are also responsible for assessment processes, the management of resources and strategic planning activities. The school dean, after reading the program self-study and program plan, and external reviewer's report or accreditation report, may add another review with comments and recommendations. In the case of interschool programs, all relevant deans have an opportunity to add their comments and recommendations.

UNIVERSITY REVIEW:

Upon receiving the documents written by the school dean, the Program Self-Study Committee, and the external reviewer(s), the University Program Review Committee engages in a review of the program. The UPRC consists of one faculty member elected by each of the schools and two at-large faculty, as well as one faculty from the Academic Senate membership selected by the Executive Committee, and as a non-voting member the AVPAP (ex officio). To ensure continuity in UPRC operation the members shall serve two-year staggered terms. Each member is given five WTUs of assigned time for his/her two year service.

The UPRC will examine all documents developed during the review. On the basis of its examination the committee shall prepare its comments and recommendations. These are forwarded to the Office of Academic Programs. The UPRC shall also monitor the overall program review process, recommend changes in the policy and procedures of that process, and assure that program review findings are used transparently and with accountability to inform university-wide curricular and budgetary planning processes. Finally, at the end of the academic year the chair of the UPRC shall submit to the Academic Senate a summary of the major findings and recommendations for all programs reviewed.

PROVOST REVIEW

After examining the program review documents, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall meet with the program coordinator, the chair of the UPRC and other individuals who have roles in the resource allocation and planning process (e.g., the department and school dean) to discuss the program review and recommendations. At the close of the meeting the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, through active negotiation with the program faculty and
appropriate school dean, shall prepare a Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan (MOUAP) for allocation of academic affairs resources to academic programs that identifies the agreed-upon recommendations to be implemented, as well as the resources that will be provided to support those recommendations, during the next seven years. The program faculty and the school dean shall be responsible for implementing the recommendations.

Copies of the documents from each program review shall be maintained in the office of Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate office. Copies of the concluding Memorandum of Understanding Action Plan (MOUAP) for allocation of academic affairs resources to academic programs negotiated between the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the program faculty and the appropriate school dean will be sent to the Academic Senate, the appropriate school dean, the chair of the UPRC, and the chair of the Program Self-Study Committee. Finally, at the end of the academic year the AVPAP shall circulate a summary of the major findings, recommendations and budgetary allotments for all programs reviewed.

PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAMS WITH EXTERNAL REVIEW FOR ACCREDITATION

Those programs that have external accreditation procedures are excused from duplicating information necessary for that external accreditation procedure in their program review process. Given that each accreditation procedure is unique, on a case-by-case basis certain of the elements identified in the Guidelines for Documents Prepared during the Program Review Process may simply be included as part of the accreditation documents submitted with their program review materials. This often includes such information on students, faculty, resources and enrollments compiled by the office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment (IRPA) and that forms the basis of the annual academic scans, reflection on program assessment of student learning outcomes, and strategic planning for the future. Consequently, program faculty of such externally accredited programs should include their accreditation documents and only those elements NOT encompassed by those accreditation documents as their program review documents.

APPROVED BY ACADEMIC SENATE June 21, 2010
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