

MOTION ON ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

WHEREAS, President Rawlings has stated his intention to have all academic programs reviewed on a regular basis, and

WHEREAS, sound academic administration at all levels should be based on a well- founded assessment of strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, and

WHEREAS, a faculty committee jointly appointed by the Nominations and Elections Committee and the Provost has recommended a framework for academic program review that incorporates a representative faculty voice in its management, and

WHEREAS, the Committee on Academic Programs and Policies has reviewed that framework and has suggested certain modifications in its structure,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Senate recommends to the administration that the attached framework for academic program reviews be adopted.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Preamble

Early last Fall, President Hunter Rawlings and Provost Don Randel established a committee to propose guidelines for University-wide academic program review. The committee, whose voting members are all from the tenured faculty, was jointly selected by the FCR and the Provost. (For membership, see Appendix B.) The committee received its charge from the Provost, interviewed the Provost and several college deans, studied reports of program review at a number of universities around the country, met regularly to discuss possible approaches, and, on February 12, released a draft proposal to the University community as a whole and to the faculty in particular.

The draft received numerous comments, many suggesting specific refinements, quite a few worrying about whether the benefits would outweigh the costs, and a small percentage expressing strong opposition. This is a revised version of the earlier draft: it attempts to be responsive to most of the suggestions and criticisms. We strongly urge that this report be sent to both the academic deans and the Faculty Senate for review, revision, and approval. We also recommend that, if Cornell opts for University-wide program review, the review process itself be evaluated in five years.

Introduction

We recommend that Cornell adopt University-wide academic program review. Our proposals aim not simply to establish consistent standards across the University (see Appendix A) but also and indeed primarily to clarify existing and potential linkages among related units on campus. The purpose of the entire process is to improve Cornell by encouraging the faculty throughout the University critically to evaluate their academic programs, by providing a sounder basis for planning, and by promoting more effective cooperation across traditional boundaries.

Currently, the frequency of review varies considerably from college to college. Those units systematically engaged in such formal evaluation have generally found it valuable. The procedures outlined here are designed to build on, rather than to repeat, these ongoing efforts. Where units are already reviewed--for instance, in response to state or professional requirements--the Cornell review will be combined with the externally mandated evaluation. In most cases, the University component of the review will necessitate little or no additional preparation by the unit undergoing scrutiny. In no case will Cornell institute a second, separate review. In all cases, bureaucratic requirements should take a back seat to self-improvement and University-wide program development.

We propose a five-to-ten year cycle of reviews for departments, graduate fields, and research centers. In each unit a self-study prepares the way for an evaluation by an ad-hoc evaluation committee consisting of both specialists from outside the University and Cornell faculty members from outside the unit under review. The primary responsibility for carrying out the reviews will rest with the college deans. The self-study, probably the most important part of the process, is designed to clarify the unit's self-understanding and provide a sharper sense of direction to its work. Together with the report of the ad-hoc evaluation committee, it should encourage agreement between the unit and its dean's office about a

specific plan of action.

The report calls as well for the establishment of a University-wide Faculty Committee on Program Review (FCPR) to oversee the entire process. The FCPR will also organize a distinct, annual evaluation of a broad, cross-departmental area of scholarship. These reviews, often extending across several colleges, will foster more effective cooperation and higher quality in academic areas where the University has an ongoing, substantial, but often dispersed commitment of resources. Both the reviews of individual units organized by the college deans and the broader evaluations under the direction of the FCPR will in some cases lead to the reallocation of resources.

Program Review at Cornell

1. All departments¹, degree-granting graduate fields, and centers² will be reviewed once every five to ten years³. Whenever possible, fields and centers that can be associated with a department will be reviewed with that department. Where the interdisciplinary nature of the field or center⁴ makes combined reviews unfeasible, independent field and center reviews will be carried out.

2. The college dean⁵ will be responsible for the unit reviews with support provided by the provost, if requested. A departmental review will consist of two phases: a self-study by the department faculty and an evaluation by an ad-hoc evaluation committee. The department will find appropriate mechanisms to involve a broad spectrum of students in the self-study.

The self-study will address specific issues raised by the dean, the department under review, and the University administration, and will include:

- a) A description of the fundamental questions that organize and motivate the current teaching, research, outreach and other scholarly activities of the department, showing how the faculty share intellectual discourse and purpose;
- b) A critical analysis of the current state of the work of the department, including graduate and undergraduate teaching (with attention to the purpose and coherence of the curricula), research, and outreach, with whatever quantitative information required by the dean;
- c) Specific issues, if any, the department wishes the ad-hoc evaluation committee to address and any other expectations the department has of the evaluation committee;
- d) A plan for the next five to ten years, including staffing and resource allocation, and its relationship to the fiscal guidelines supplied by the dean.

The self-study need not be a long or time-consuming process. Thorough and comprehensive annual reviews should provide the necessary background and framework for the study.

Additional university-wide review criteria and required information may be specified by the Faculty Committee on Program Review (see paragraph 3). Examples of possible criteria are given in Appendix A. Every effort will be made to ensure that the University's administrative systems will provide the required quantitative data automatically. When the self-study is complete the department will forward a copy of both to the dean and the FCPR.

The ad-hoc evaluation committee will consist of at least three specialists in the field from outside of Cornell⁶. The dean will form the committee after consultation with the faculty of the department under review. The committee will be asked to evaluate the department's principal activities, to compare it with leading departments in other universities, to assess its trajectory, and to recommend whatever changes the committee believes are appropriate, under the assumption of constant resources.

The committee's activities should include separate meetings with both non-tenured faculty and students. Within six weeks of the review, the committee will report to the dean. The dean will discuss the report with the department chair and faculty. The dean and department will prepare and exchange independent responses to the review that will include specific plans of action. The dean will send the report and the two replies to the Provost and the FCPR.

The travel, subsistence, and honorarium expenses for the external members of the ad-hoc evaluation committee will be provided by the Provost.

3. The Faculty Committee on Program Review (FCPR), a new university-wide professorial faculty committee, will oversee the program review process. The Committee will consist of nine faculty members representing the broad disciplinary areas and academic functions of Cornell and the Vice-President for Academic Programs, Planning and Budgeting ex-officio. Members of the FCPR will be selected jointly by the Provost and the Senate, and will serve three-year staggered terms. The chair of the Committee will be chosen jointly by the Provost and the Senate. Functions of the Committee will include:

a) Determining (after consultation with appropriate deans) the cycle for reviews of departments, fields, and centers to facilitate the Area Reviews (see paragraph 4);

b) Monitoring the quality of the review process by:

(1) Receiving and reviewing the department's self study and any comments on the plan for review, reviewing and approving the dean's (or other administrator's) detailed plan for each review, including the ad-hoc evaluation committee's composition and charge,

(2) Establishing and maintaining minimum criteria for reviews to ensure the regular collection of uniform data from the entire University,

(3) Receiving copies of the individual program reviews, including (a) the self-study, (b) the ad hoc evaluation committee, (c) a response by the department being reviewed, and (d) a response by the dean, which states the action to be taken as a result of the review,

(4) Receiving an annual report from the Provost giving the results of the area reviews completed or in progress;

c) Commissioning reviews of selected centers, fields, and cross-departmental groupings to be carried out by the Dean of the Graduate School, the Vice-President for Research and Advanced Studies, or a college dean.

Departments or other units being reviewed may approach the FCPR directly at any time.

4. Area Reviews: Each year, the Faculty Committee on Program Review will organize a review of a broad area of scholarship. The areas should be broad enough so that a seven year cycle touches a significant part of the University's instructional, research and outreach activities. Wherever possible, the Area Reviews will be carried out by Area Review Committees, whose members will be drawn from the ad-hoc evaluation committees. In addition, selected alumni with expertise in the area may be included. The Provost will appoint the Area Review Committees and construct their charge. In the Area Review process, the relationship between the Provost and the Faculty Committee on Program Review will be parallel and similar to the relationship between a college dean and the Faculty Committee on Program Review. Departments and units included in area reviews will also be consulted by the Provost in planning and executing these reviews.

Adopted as amended by the Faculty Senate, September 18, 1996

Appendix A

Note: The criteria listed below are meant to be suggestive rather than comprehensive.

Undergraduate Education:

1. Undergraduate and graduate course enrollments* Number of FTE faculty*.
2. Summaries of course evaluations*.
3. Number and quality of majors in each department*.

4. Number of undergraduates engaged in independent research or study with faculty*.
5. Quality of advising*.
6. Appropriate measures of outcomes (jobs, graduate and professional school, etc.)*.
7. Diversity of students taught, especially majors*, in the relevant categories above.

Graduate Education:

1. Number of students who apply to a field, who are admitted, and who matriculate. Average GRE's of matriculants*. Data provided by the graduate school.
2. Competitive fellowships awarded to graduate students*. Data provided by the graduate school.
3. Measures of graduate completion rates and times to degree*. Data provided by the graduate school.
4. Complete list of initial placement of all doctoral students*. List should include: institution/company, specific department/administrative unit/department, and title of appointment. Where the numbers are small, the same information should be provided for recipients of the master's degree. Where they are large, summary data should be provided.
5. Faculty membership on special committees.
6. Diversity of graduate students in the relevant categories above.

Faculty Research and Scholarly activity:

1. All faculty publications and invited addresses.
2. Grants and contracts in which department faculty are substantially involved. Sources of support, duration, and amount of grants.
3. Information on faculty professional service and consulting outside the university including editorships, and membership on editorial boards and national advisory boards.
4. All faculty awards and honors.
5. Diversity of the faculty.

Faculty Service at Cornell and within the Immediate Community:

1. Service on Cornell committees and in other capacities that reflect important contributions to the Cornell community.

Extension review:

1. Description of outreach groups served* and their economic roles in NYS.
2. Description of process used to determine issues of importance to client groups and to develop resources addressing those issues.
3. Description and self-evaluation of extension programs and resources developed, including comparative information on strongest similar programs in other states. Description of how resources are linked to ongoing research.
4. Evaluations by outreach groups of departmental extension resources and extension programs including: technical quality and utility, educational quality, and responsiveness*.

*This information is to be provided for each year since the last program review (up to a maximum of 10 years).

Inaccessibility of data may sometimes make it impossible to provide a full historical record. On the other hand, much of it may be collected annually and hence be readily available.

Appendix B

Members of the Committee

Nina Bassuk, Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture

Valerie Bunce, Government

Walter Cohen, Dean of the Graduate School (ex officio)

Cutberto Garza, Nutrition

Kent Hubbell, Architecture

Katherine Houpt, Veterinary Physiology

Peter Hurst, Institutional Planning and Research (ex officio)

Frank Keil, Psychology

Sidney Leibovich, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Maureen O'Hara, JGSM

David Shalloway, Biochemistry

Peter Stein, Dean of the Faculty

Lloyd N. Trefethen, Computer Science