

Criteria for Institutional Enhancements and Reductions

The "Criteria for Institutional Enhancements and Reductions" is a report originally written in 1991 by the Strategic Planning Steering Group and last revised in 1997. It delineates a set of principles for identifying academic priorities--including program quality, centrality, and potential for excellence--in order to guide the University and its units as they seek to invest resources strategically.

In aspiring to become one of the best public research universities in the nation, the University of Iowa has committed itself to continuous reassessment of its quality and effectiveness. To accelerate progress toward its institutional goals, the University must continually review its various components and make appropriate adjustments in allocation of resources, following well-defined criteria for enhancement, maintenance, or reduction of specific programs and services. In addition to these regularly scheduled reviews, evaluations are also precipitated by special circumstances such as changes in leadership or funding sources. In either situation, the University follows the same procedures and applies the particular criteria deemed appropriate for the unit or program under review. In all evaluations, the University is guided by its core values, as expressed in its 1996 strategic plan, *Achieving Distinction 2000*.

A cautionary note: although quantitatively-driven or formula-based methods of analysis provide essential data, they should not be the sole focus of the review process; indeed, if used in isolation, they can even be misleading. In virtually every case, the best basis for judging whether a program or unit meets a particular criterion involves assessing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

The Criteria

In an organization as complex as the University of Iowa, no single set of criteria can apply equally to its hundreds of programs, units, and activities, ranging along a continuum from the academic to the nonacademic. At one end of the spectrum, for example, are academic departments centering on scholarly disciplines; at the other end are units providing basic nonacademic services, such as payroll and purchasing. For simplicity's sake, academic and nonacademic criteria are presented along two parallel tracks, with the understanding that many units are hybrids that will draw criteria first from one side and then from the other, as is appropriate to each unit's particular mission and its contribution to the University's overall mission of teaching, research, and service.

For both academic and nonacademic programs, criteria designed to set priorities are divided into two classes: primary and secondary. Primary criteria are of the highest priority; secondary criteria come under consideration only if the primary criteria have first been fully satisfied.

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>Primary criteria include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of a program and • its centrality to the University's role and mission. <p>These two criteria are of the highest priority, and their assessment should represent the first phase of any program evaluation. Once the quality and centrality of programs are established, a set of secondary criteria may be applicable. Secondary criteria are "modifiers" for evaluations based on quality and centrality.</p>	<p>Primary criteria include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of a unit; • its essential relationship to the University's role and mission; and • value offered. <p>These three criteria are of the highest priority, and their assessment should represent the first phase of any unit evaluation. Once the quality, essential relationship, and value of units are established, secondary criteria may be applicable. Secondary criteria are "modifiers" for evaluations based on quality, essential relationship and value.</p>
<p>Secondary criteria include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external impact, • potential for excellence, and • cost effectiveness. <p>The secondary criteria come into consideration when the primary criteria reveal problems of quality or centrality in a program, or when it is necessary to distinguish among programs with similar levels of quality and centrality.</p>	<p>Secondary criteria include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential for excellence.

Primary Criteria

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>Quality</p> <p>Judgments of quality, adhering to the academic peer-review process, are essential to any program evaluation. This assessment requires program reviews undertaken with substantial faculty involvement. Evaluations of undergraduate and graduate programs should incorporate standards specific to the discipline or program and also involve a comparison to the best programs in the University, state, and nation. In the case of graduate programs, comparisons with the very best programs within the Big Ten and nationally are quite important. Top graduate programs nationally should anchor the high end of the quality standard applied to graduate programs within the University. As a general rule, departments should emphasize a subset of the areas within their discipline and strive toward the highest level of quality at both undergraduate and graduate levels in those areas. Even a department too small as a whole to reach lofty national distinction should be expected to develop subareas that achieve such a level of excellence.</p>	<p>Quality</p> <p>Judgments of quality are essential to any unit evaluation. Evaluations of units should incorporate standards specific to their function and also involve a comparison to the very best similar units within the Big Ten and nationally. As a general rule, larger units should emphasize a subset of the areas within their function and strive toward the highest level of quality in those areas.</p> <p>The most important basis for assessments of quality consists of the judgments made by clients and customers of a unit's function. Also vitally important to consider are the University's periodic reviews of a unit. These internally-generated reviews combine substantial campus involvement with the advice of external reviewers, supplemented by essential dialogue between a Director and the unit's staff.</p>
<p>While specific indicators of quality may vary somewhat across programs, the following seem applicable to virtually any program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the characteristics of the student body attracted to the program (e.g., qualifications of entering students, the success with which the program competes for students on a state and national scale, the diversity of students in the program); • the quality of the program's faculty (e.g., teaching effectiveness, published scholarship in major journals, exhibitions or performances in major forums, noteworthy awards and honors for teaching, research, and service, the success of efforts to • compete for research grants where applicable, and competition for current faculty from other universities; • the degree to which a department's programs or subareas have reached a high ranking, nationally; • the quality of the curriculum at undergraduate and graduate levels; • the quality of student placements in jobs, including academic positions or other educational programs, after graduation; and • post-graduation student evaluations of programs, especially evaluations of teaching effectiveness (e.g. Registrar surveys, surveys by the department or program) 	<p>While specific indicators of quality may vary somewhat across units, the following seem applicable to virtually any unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the degree to which the unit meets or exceeds its customers' expectations; • the evaluation of the unit's function by customers, clients, peers, and colleagues; • the quality and rigor of the unit's self-imposed annual performance standards; • the quality of the unit's staff (e.g. recognition by University customers; leadership in relevant professional associations, • noteworthy awards and honors for service, and competition for current staff from other universities and the private sector); • effectiveness of staff performance appraisal process; and • the degree to which a unit or subareas have achieved local, state or peer recognition.

Centrality

Centrality to the University's role and mission—to the goals and Areas of Focus delineated in the University's Strategic Plan—is of utmost importance. Judgments about centrality should be based on the degree to which the body of knowledge created and disseminated by a program or discipline is critical or necessary to teaching, research, and/or service at the University. The centrality criterion encourages us to raise questions about the existing organization of knowledge embedded in the structure of the University.

Indicators of **centrality** include

- the degree to which a program contributes to the University's role and mission;
- the contribution the program makes to the goals of the Strategic Plan;
- the degree to which a program contributes to the seven Institutional Goals in *Achieving Distinction 2000* (comprehensive strength in undergraduate programs, premier graduate and professional programs in a significant number of areas, a faculty of national and international distinction, distinguished research and scholarship, a culturally diverse and inclusive university community, strong ties between the University and external constituencies, and a high-quality academic and working environment);
- the degree to which a program contributes to the five Areas of Focus in *Achieving Distinction 2000* (the arts; basic science and technological innovation; human and environmental health; literature, discourse, and critical analysis; and social change);
- the extent of interdependence and synergy with other University programs, as suggested by the number and proportion of nonmajors served by its curriculum and the program's contribution to productive interdisciplinary research efforts;
- the extent of the program's contribution to general education requirements for undergraduates (e.g., its share of total general education enrollment); and
- student demand, as measured (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and with comparison to peer institutions) by
 - number of majors,
 - number of applicants to the program and applicant/admit ratio,
 - total enrollment and enrollment trends, and
 - degrees granted by the program.

The above indicators should provide a sound basis for making difficult and interpretive judgments of centrality to the University's role and mission.

Essential Relationship

Essential Relationship to the University's role and mission—to the goals and Areas of Focus delineated in the University's Strategic Plan and in the first level unit's plan—is of utmost importance. Judgments about essential relationship should be based on the degree to which the unit's function is critical or necessary to teaching, research, and/or service at the University or is a requirement of external sponsors/agencies. The essential relationship criterion encourages us to raise questions about the existing organization of support services embedded in the structure of the University.

Indicators of **essential relationship** include

- the degree to which there are no substitutes or more efficient alternatives;
- the degree to which a unit is essential in meeting regulatory requirements, other external mandates or accountability measures;
- the degree to which a unit contributes to the University's role and mission;
- the degree to which a unit contributes to the seven Institutional Goals in *Achieving Distinction 2000* (comprehensive strength in undergraduate programs, premier graduate and professional programs in a significant number of areas, a faculty of national and international distinction, distinguished research and scholarship, a culturally diverse and inclusive university community, strong ties between the University and external constituencies, and a high-quality academic and working environment).
- the degree to which a unit contributes to the five Areas of Focus in *Achieving Distinction 2000* (the arts; basic science and technological innovation; human and environmental health; literature, discourse, and critical analysis; and social change);
- the degree to which the unit fulfills its goals and first-level unit strategic goals; and
- the extent of interdependence and synergy with other University and academic programs and nonacademic units.

Value Offered

Value refers to the relationship between cost and the quality of the unit's services or products. Units of similarly high quality may differ sharply in value because of significant differences in cost. A unit's cost may be high because, for example, costly equipment is required. Others may be less cost effective because of management problems or because they are operating at less than optimum scale. Cost effectiveness should not be confused with the question of the savings which may be realized from reduction, elimination, or substitution. Cost savings are a result of, not a determinate of, reallocation decisions.

Major indicators of **value offered** include

- the quality level required by customers or external stakeholders;
- the ratio between cost and quality;
- availability of substitute services with equal or greater value;
- a high level of cost awareness within the unit;
- an effective system of financial control and accountability within the unit;
- the use of strategic planning and resource management to meet emerging operating needs;
- percentage of program funds derived from the General Fund, or (where appropriate) the program's overall financial contribution to the University, and to its own administrative costs, from sources other than the General Fund; and
- cost contrast with substitutes or peers.

Secondary Criteria

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>Strategic decisions about programs, based on quality and centrality, involve four basic possibilities: strengthen, maintain, downsize, or phase out. Such decisions need to treat quality and centrality as matters of degree and also consider the secondary criteria, which may lead one to consider refinements, adjustments, or modifications of the strategies indicated by assessments of quality and centrality. Secondary criteria also are a basis for making distinctions among programs at similar levels of quality and centrality.</p> <p>External Impact</p> <p>The University must carefully consider existing and prospective programs having or capable of having a critical impact on external constituencies or "stakeholders" (e.g., citizens of Iowa). In this assessment, impact on the state is at least as important to consider as impact upon the region and nation. While this criterion should not override the quality of teaching and research in the program or its centrality to the University mission and Strategic Plan, programs that make extremely important contributions to the state should be given special credit on that basis.</p> <p>The primary indicators of external impact are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the availability of comparable programs at other colleges and universities in the state, and • the existing or potential contribution to the state and nation based on the skills and educational backgrounds required in the workforce of the future. <p>Governmental agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor, have projections regarding future workforce needs. These projections ought to be consulted when this criterion is assessed.</p>	<p>Strategic decisions about units, based on quality, essential relationship, and value involve five basic possibilities: strengthen, maintain, downsize, phase out, or substitute with external services. Such decisions need to treat quality, essential relationship, and value as matters of degree and also consider the secondary criteria, which may lead one to consider refinements, adjustments, or modifications of the strategies indicated by assessments of quality, essential relationship, and value. Secondary criteria also are a basis for making distinctions among units at similar levels of quality, essential relationship, and value.</p>
<p>Potential for Excellence</p> <p>It is vital that the University be willing to invest in programs with the clear potential for significant improvement to the point of achieving national stature. A program of relatively lower quality than some others but with a recent record of impressive accomplishment and strong leadership may prove to be a more worthy investment than a stagnating higher quality program. Attention to programs "on the move" and emerging fields in which modest investments will yield large increments of quality would appear to make a great deal of strategic sense.</p>	<p>Potential for Excellence</p> <p>It is vital that the University be willing to invest in units with the clear potential for significant improvement. A unit of relatively lower quality than some others but with a recent record of impressive accomplishment and strong leadership may prove to be a more worthy investment than a stagnating higher quality unit. Attention to units "on the move" and emerging fields in which modest investments will yield large increments of quality would appear to make a great deal of strategic sense. A potential for excellence also can be indicated by a unit's ability to be flexible and innovative in response to a changing external environment and customer requirements.</p>

Some indicators of a program's **potential for excellence** include

- national and international shifts which open up new opportunities for high-quality teaching and research, and
- rapid growth in faculty quality, as indicated by
 - quality of recent faculty hiring (e.g., amount and kind of competition for them) and increased national visibility of faculty,
 - rate of publication in top professional journals,
 - significant editorial activities of faculty (e.g., editorships, editorial boards, NSF panels),
 - evidence of outstanding teaching,
- in some disciplines, a growth of external (competitive) research funds, and
- degree that a department is effectively focusing its faculty effort on what it can do best.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness refers to the relationship between funds invested and academic benefits derived. Some programs may be inherently more expensive on a per-unit basis because, for example, costly equipment or an unusually high faculty-student ratio is required. Others may be less cost effective because of management problems or because they are operating at less than optimum scale. Cost effectiveness should not be confused with the question of the savings which may be realized from reduction or elimination. Cost savings are a result, not a determinate, of reallocation decisions.

Major indicators of cost effectiveness include

- expenditures per credit hour,
- FTE faculty on state funds per major, per nonmajor, and per total enrollment;
- FTE Staff (P&S, Merit) on state funds per FTE faculty;
- cost comparison with peers;
- use of effective systems of financial management; and
- other indicators as appropriate to discipline.

Some indicators of a unit's **potential for excellence** include

- Organizational awareness and responsiveness to external data and trends (work process, structure, goals);
- State, national, international developments which open up new opportunities for high-quality service; and
- rapid growth in staff quality, as indicated by
 - recognition by UI users of unit's excellence
 - accomplishment of strategic objectives and goals
 - quality of staff hiring (e.g., amount and kind of competition for them)
 - evidence of outstanding service
 - degree that a unit is effectively focusing its staff effort on what it can do best
 - measurement against benchmarks;
 - ability to adapt to meet customer needs.

Principles of Implementation

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>In the course of considering program enhancements and reductions, two constraining principles must be maintained. The first is that the impact on students of a program reduction will be minimized by ensuring that all students enrolled in the program can complete their degrees on schedule.</p> <p>(It is also important to consider student impact in the case of program enhancements.) The second is that the impact on faculty and academic freedom will be minimized by security for tenured faculty and the employment of neutral principles in determining which, if any, non-tenured faculty will be retained.</p>	<p>In the course of considering unit enhancements and reductions, the principles of consultation, accountability, and communication will be central in guiding decisions and subsequent actions. Career status and union contract provisions will be respected. When appropriate, every reasonable effort will be made to provide staff with the training necessary to facilitate relocation.</p>

Consideration for Program Change and Funding Reallocation

Fundamentally, there are two routes by which programs can come to be considered for changes in funding or structure. The first is through the University's ordinary process of regularly scheduled reviews, usually at five- to seven-year intervals which in the case of academic units are associated with the reaccreditation process. The second is by way of special circumstances requiring unscheduled reviews to accelerate progress toward the University's institutional goals. In either case, the review follows the same procedures, and the outcome of the review forms the basis for all decisions on changes in structure or enhancements or reductions in funding. It is recognized that proposals for reductions or elimination of support from the General Fund merit especially close scrutiny and require careful attention to all affected individuals and programs.

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>Regular Review</p> <p>All departments, programs, units, and offices of The University of Iowa are scrutinized on a specified cycle of reviews that varies across type of administrative structure and the nature of the unit, but usually involves a process of self-study, evaluation by internal and/or external reviewers, and a response by the administrator responsible for the unit or program. Every step requires written documentation and is reported to the Provost or the Vice President in charge of the unit or program. Although most reviews will result in recommendations that can and should be addressed within the overall resources of the responsible administrative unit, administrators receiving evaluations may, as part of their response, identify programs or units that merit consideration for University-level review. Through the Provost or the appropriate Vice President, such programs can be brought to the Strategic Planning Steering Group for consideration. Again, in most cases, the Steering Group will recommend that any changes be handled within the primary administrative unit. However, in some cases, the Steering Group may agree that there exists a significant opportunity for advancing University-wide goals or for reallocating</p>	<p>Regular Review</p> <p>All units of The University of Iowa are scrutinized on a specified cycle of reviews that varies across type of administrative structure and the nature of the unit, but usually involves a process of self-study, evaluation by internal and/or external reviewers, and a response by the administrator responsible for the unit. These unit reviews typically occur every five years. Every step requires written documentation and is reported to the Provost or the Vice President in charge of the unit. Although most reviews will result in recommendations that can and should be addressed within the overall resources of the responsible administrative unit, administrators receiving evaluations may, as part of their response, identify units that merit consideration for University-level review. Through the Provost or the appropriate Vice President, such programs can be brought to the Strategic Planning Steering Group for consideration. Again, in most cases, the Steering Group will recommend that any changes be handled within the primary administrative unit. However, in some cases, the Steering Group may agree that there exists a significant opportunity for advancing University-wide goals or for reallocating resources to other</p>

resources to other needs, according to the existing criteria, and seek further information.	needs, according to the existing criteria, and seek further information.
<p>Unscheduled reviews</p> <p>A number of unexpected, sudden changes can necessitate review or close examination of a program or unit, for example, changes in accreditation, external funding, leadership, legal requirements, regulatory compliance, and shifts in external needs or priorities. In addition, planned changes in one segment of the University can have consequences for other programs and units, requiring movement of resources and responsibilities. As with regular reviews, most unanticipated changes are appropriately managed within divisions of the University, but if the magnitude of the financial change is large or the impact of the program or unit extends outside the division, University-wide review by the Steering Group is warranted.</p>	<p>Unscheduled reviews</p> <p>A number of unexpected, sudden changes can necessitate review or close examination of a unit, for example changes in external funding, leadership, legal requirements, regulatory compliance, external needs or priorities, customer focus, and the availability of substitutes. In addition, planned changes in one segment of the University may have unintended consequences for other units, requiring review of a unit's resources and responsibilities. Furthermore, significant proposals or initiatives, for example the creation of a center or institute may signal the need to review a specific unit. As with regular reviews, most unanticipated changes are appropriately managed within divisions of the University, but if the magnitude of the financial change is large or the impact of the unit extends outside the division, University-wide review by the Steering Group may be warranted.</p>

Procedures for Steering Group Review

It is assumed that all of the following steps will be followed as expeditiously as possible, but with due consideration for appropriate consultation and the amount of time necessary to gather information. **As described above, these procedures apply only to reviews that come under consideration by the Steering Group.**

Academic Units	Nonacademic Units
<p>Step 1</p> <p>On a quarterly basis, the Provost and Vice Presidents will report to the Steering Group the outcomes of regular reviews and recommend which programs or units merit additional consideration for enhancement or reductions. As circumstances for unscheduled reviews warrant, proposals or information about programs undergoing unexpected changes should be brought to the attention of the Steering Group by the Provost or a Vice President.</p>	<p>Step 1</p> <p>On a quarterly basis, the Provost and Vice Presidents will report to the Steering Group the outcomes of regular and unscheduled reviews and recommend which units merit additional consideration for enhancement or reductions.</p>
<p>Step 2</p> <p>If preliminary discussion indicates further review is necessary, the President appoints a subcommittee to investigate, provide a summary of relevant information, consult as appropriate and/or instructed, and outline possible alternative courses of action.</p>	<p>Step 2</p> <p>If preliminary discussion indicates further review is necessary, the President appoints a subcommittee to investigate, provide a summary of relevant information, consult as appropriate and/or instructed, and outline possible alternative courses of action.</p>
<p>Step 3</p> <p>At a later meeting, the Steering Group discusses the alternative actions and makes a recommendation to the President and the Vice Presidents.</p>	<p>Step 3</p> <p>At a later meeting, the Steering Group discusses the alternative actions and makes a recommendation to the President and the Vice Presidents.</p>

Step 4

If the recommendation is for program termination or a significant reduction, the program or unit will be consulted and permitted sufficient time to prepare any additional comment, information, or suggestions. The time period will be negotiated with all affected parties and a completion date stipulated. Ample opportunity will be provided for peer review and comments from the University community. Before making a recommendation to the President for action, the Steering Group, in a timely manner, will review all relevant information, including comments from members of the units, clients and/or students, administrators, and others, as appropriate.

Step 4

If the recommendation is for unit termination or a significant reduction, the unit will be consulted and permitted sufficient time to prepare any additional comment, information, or suggestions. The time period will be negotiated with all affected parties and a completion date stipulated.

Step 5

The President and Vice Presidents, with any additional consultation they deem appropriate, decide which action to pursue.

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