

Appendix B

University of Minnesota Criteria for Academic Program Investments and Reviews¹

The University currently uses several related processes and techniques to perform program reviews. These processes encompass academic, financial, and management reviews at both the collegiate and departmental level, and for both academic and administrative units. All of our program reviews, regardless of focus, level, or type of unit, concentrate on one or more University review criteria. These criteria are:

Quality: Inevitably subjective, this measure includes the quality of the faculty in teaching, research, and service as reflected in peer national ratings, publications, outside funding, the quality of students and staff, library collections, and other indices. Consideration of diversity in our programs, in our hiring, and in our student recruitment must be included in judging quality. Administrative units are often evaluated on their quality of service.

Centrality: Each program should be evaluated in terms of its contribution to the mission of the University of Minnesota. Centrality of research, instruction, and service represents a program's contribution to a coherent whole which helps to sustain and stimulate related work elsewhere in the University. With respect to instruction, centrality also addresses the degree to which a program is an essential component of a challenging education that taken as a whole is intended at the undergraduate level to communicate an understanding of the major ideas and achievements of humankind and a sense of the values of different cultures and ages; at the graduate and professional levels, centrality in instructional programs extends this commitment beyond communicating the major ideas and achievements of humankind, to an expansion and deepening of knowledge, to furthering its utilization for society's welfare, and to preparing students for advanced fields of leadership and practice.

Comparative Advantage: The uniqueness of academic resources of programs in the context of higher education is an important aspect of evaluation, especially within the state and larger regional context. What are the unique characteristics of each program that make it particularly appropriate to this University? It is not sufficient that programs meet an important local or national need, or that they be unique within the state. Many important programs can and should be the responsibility of others, in Minnesota or elsewhere. What is the rationale for the program in the context of the mission and resources of the University of Minnesota? Does this program maintain and strengthen critically important areas of the University?

¹ These criteria have been used in University-wide planning efforts since the mid-1980s. See, for example, "A Strategy for Focus: Guidelines to the College," Office of the Provost, November 1986; subsequently modified in October 1990 as part of the "Strategy to Improve the Quality of the University, 1991-96," and further revised and expanded by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost in summer 2000, and discussed with the Educational Planning and Policy Committee at its November 8, 2001 meeting.

Demand: The level and direction of change in demand for each program in both the short and long term will be considered. Other indicators to consider include number of applications, proportion and quality of acceptances, number of enrolled students, degrees awarded, services performed in support of other programs, and instruction of students or research undertaken for the solution of pressing problems of society.

Efficiency and Effectiveness: Because aspirations are always limited by the resources available, programs must be continually examined to see if more economical or more efficient ways are possible to accomplish the same ends. Yet, cost alone (e.g., the full-year equivalent costs) must not govern the decision; the effectiveness or impact of the program must also be weighed. When taken together, efficiency and effectiveness provide an important measure of whether funds are being put to their best use.

Growth and Leveraging Resources: Program review requires evaluation of priorities, and related, internal shifts of resources to areas of higher priority from areas of lesser priority. Resources needed to support academic research, education and outreach are derived from a wide range of public and private sources. An important component of new and current program evaluation is the potential to leverage existing resources and to expand new resources.