

Strategic Analysis of Academic Programs (December 1, 2011)

Introduction

As the external environment for higher education challenges us to contain costs and consider alternative financial models, Nazareth College must strengthen its position with new and expanded program opportunities for students, as well as continue to fulfill its mission and vision. In other words, we will in the coming years seek to maintain, develop or expand programs to support enrollments, at the same time that there will be little increase in revenues. In order to plan for the future, it is imperative that we examine our priorities for resources among programs and units—both instructional and non instructional. The reallocation of resources, the consolidation or reduction of programs, or the phasing out of programs may be necessary. It is also critical that there be an objective and transparent basis for establishing priorities. While it is a given that decisions regarding the allocation of resources are the responsibility of the administration, a publicly shared strategic review of programs and units will support timely planning and an understanding of our common purpose.

The strategic analysis of academic programs is central to this review of campus-wide priorities. Degree programs attract students to the college, and the costs for personnel and operating expenses in the instructional areas make up the bulk of the college budget. In addition, the review of instructional programs can be comparative, using standard data and qualitative information across academic programs. The process described below will result in a report that will enable the institution to make wise decisions about the configuration and support of existing academic programs. All aspects of this process, as well as any decisions based on this information, will occur within the relevant policies in the Faculty Manual. These decisions will also take into account the results of a strategic review of non instructional departments and units, which will occur simultaneously.

The Process

The outcome of this process will be a comparative summary of individual programs' strategic value, as defined by a set of agreed upon qualitative and quantitative criteria. The format for this summary will be developed by the Strategic Analysis of Programs Committee, in consultation with the president. (A sample strategic summary, entitled "Alternative Futures," shows how individual programs might be "rated" according to numerous criteria.) Whatever the format, this summary will not constitute decisions about programs, but rather serve as a resource to be used in all decisions about program support: staffing, operations, space, etc.

A representative Strategic Analysis of Programs Committee (SAPC) will prepare this summary, which will be made available to the campus community. Membership of the committee will include five tenured faculty members, one from SoE, SoM, and HHS, two from CAS) elected within the schools/CAS (schools will elect their own representatives), the deans, and nonvoting ex officio representatives from Enrollment Management, Finance, and Institutional Research and Assessment. The Strategic Analysis of Programs Committee will be co chaired by the VPAA and the Chair of FEC (both nonvoting).

The following factors may be taken into account in the strategic analysis. The committee will be responsible for finalizing and clarifying (elaborating on) the criteria that will be applied to all programs:

1. Impact, justification, uniqueness and overall essentiality of the program (including relevance to Mission and 2020 Strategic Plan)
2. External demand for the program
3. Internal demand for the program
4. Quality of program inputs and processes
5. Quality of program outcomes
6. Size, scope, and productivity of the program (considered longitudinally where possible)
7. Costs and other expenses associated with the program
8. Opportunity analysis of the program, including opportunities for collaboration with other institutions

The prioritization will take into account a standard data package (e.g., factors 1, 2, 5, 6), as well as a qualitative statement prepared by individual programs or departments (e.g., factors 3, 4, 7, 8). These qualitative statements may draw on self study documents and assessments prepared for regular program reviews or accreditation processes. Data reflecting multiple years, where available, will be consulted. At the graduate level, this analysis will be done by program; at the undergraduate level, the analysis will focus on individual degree programs where it is possible and appropriate. The SAPC will develop a template for departments to use in preparing strategic reports to the SAPC. Using these reports, the SAPC will prepare a strategic summary of existing programs. The Strategic Analysis of Programs Committee will be empanelled by February 4, 2012. The overall process will conclude in time to provide input to the FY14 budget (October 15, 2012).

Charge to the Strategic Analysis Committee

This committee will prepare a strategic summary of academic programs to be used in making decisions about resources for existing academic programs. This summary will be based on a standard data set, prepared by Institutional Research, and program evaluations submitted by individual departments and programs.

To that end, the Strategic Analysis Committee will:

- Consult with the President to determine the format of the strategic analysis, to ensure that the committee's report is pertinent to current institutional challenges and goals
- Establish a timeline for the process, including reports to FEC, submission deadlines, and an opportunity for departmental feedback
- Finalize the standard data reports that will be used by the committee
- Clarify the qualitative criteria to be used in the strategic analysis and develop a weighting for qualitative factors
- Develop a methodology for weighing quantitative and qualitative factors
- Develop a plan for communicating its work (methodology, criteria and reports) and receiving responses
- Carry out and report the strategic analysis of academic programs

2012 Timetable:

January 27: Strategic Analysis of Academic Programs discussed

January 30-February 4: Schools/CAS conduct elections for faculty representatives

TBD: Template for Strategic Analysis report finalized by SAPC and communicated to departments and programs

TBD: Each program submits report (data and qualitative information) to SAPC

TBD: Opportunity for departmental response to report

October 15: Committee finalizes strategic summary

In the future, consideration should be given to an ongoing cycle of strategic review, refreshing the data, reports, and strategic analyses.