OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

# Academic Program Review Office

# Report

# Fall 2017 – Spring 2018



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Academic Program Review · Dane Smith Hall Room 220

**Executive Summary**

This report summarizes the general findings and activities of the Academic Program Review Office at the University of New Mexico. The office has undergone considerable turnover and change in the past year. At the start of the 2017 academic year, the Vice-Provost, Director of Assessment, and APR Coordinator left the office, creating a two-month personnel vacuum. This impacted the Philosophy, Cinematic Arts, and Landscape Architecture Site-Visits which took place in the Fall semester, and is reflected in the feedback received during those visits. After a new APR Specialist was hired in November as part of the restructure of the Office of Assessment, a variety of changes were implemented to the APR process. The APR Process APP developed by the Institute of Design and Innovation was discontinued following numerous technical issues and repeated feedback from departments engaged in its use. Under the direction of Interim Associate Provost Pamela Cheek, the APR manual was redesigned with input from a newly formed faculty APR Oversight Committee. The new manual and process reflect a more flexible approach to program review that allows departments to better incorporate outside accreditation when applicable. The Office anticipates rolling out the new process for programs undergoing Site-Visits in Fall of 2018. The Office of Assessment also hired a Data Analyst to support the data needs of departments going through the APR process, in reflection of the diminished ability to request batch data from sources such as OIA or Enrollment Management. Finally, the Office has begun collecting accreditation and program review document from HSC for the first time.

Moving forward, the APR Office is working to align APR activities and criteria with Assessment processes on campus and develop a more service-oriented approach to our work with campus partners. To this end, several criteria in the APR Manual were modified to decrease duplication of reports and efforts. The Office has also begun using APR reports and data to support hiring reviews and community engaged learning efforts. In the long term, the restructure of the Office will support the research mission of the university by engaging with grants and other student success initiatives on campus. Finally, the Office has begun working with the Health Sciences Center, School of Law, and Branch Campuses to improve document collection and alignment of program review across the university.



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The APRs that have been conducted this academic year have highlighted and underscored various strengths and weaknesses of the university. The first is that UNM is fortunate to have an unusually dedicated and productive faculty and staff body. This was reiterated across every department review. UNM's departments are conducting exceptional work and producing excellent students and faculty. By and large, they are currently functioning quite well given resource constraints. However, reviewers noted that, due to budgetary issues, these faculty and staff are critically overworked and underpaid. The majority of reviewers argued that the college and university leaders lack a long-term strategic plan for the recruitment and retention of high quality faculty. They warn that unless efforts are made to address these issues, UNM will find itself in serious crisis within the next several years. Finally, assessment practices are inconsistent across the university; where some departments design and implement assessments that yield direct insight into student learning others conduct assessments to meet minimum compliance requirements.

This report is broken down among colleges, and describes the results of APRs conducted during the 2017-2018 academic year while highlighting APR related issues and challenges.

**Anderson School of Management**

No updates in the current academic year. ASM will go through its next review Spring of 2020.

**Branch Campuses**

Program review at the branch campuses is not currently coordinated by the Main Campus APR Office, however branches are still expected to follow the processes laid out by the Office and submit their findings. Communication has suffered due to turn over in the Office, and is currently being reestablished to gather missing documents and begin providing strategic support.

**College of Arts and Sciences**

Philosophy was the only A&S department to undergo a program review during the 2017-2018 academic year, with its Site-Visit taking place on October 5$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$. Of particular note to the Review Team was the wide number of specializations present in the department, and the fact

that no perceivable tensions existed between faculty of different concentrations. PhD placements were considered excellent, and overall the program was described as having nationally competitive potential. However, faculty recruitment and retention were noted as concerns given budgetary issues, and staff were described as strained by workload. Finally, the PhD program is admitting too few students, in the opinion of the reviewers.

**College of Education**

No COE programs went through review during the 2017-2018 academic year, however several APR related concerns exist. Under the previous Office of Assessment leadership, it was determined that all academic programs under the Department of Individual, Family, and Community Education would undergo program review at the same time. However, this has created some confusion in the department, and it appears that several programs have not gone through review in some time. The most pressing concern is Nutrition and Dietetics, which held its most recent review in 2006. Under the current schedule, IFCE will hold its next Site-Visit in 2022, which means that Nutrition will not have experienced a program review in over sixteen years. This is a concern that might be rectified by a mid-cycle review of some kind.

**College of Fine Arts**

The Department of Cinematic Arts held a Site-Visit October 25-27th. The review team identified faculty commitment and student engagement as the most prominent strengths of the department. Most of the pressing issues stemmed from the recent merger of the Cinematic Arts and IFDM departments. There are currently duplication of curriculum, services, and activities, which the department chair is aware of and working to address. Students expressed some confusion over degree paths, and the review team observed some inconsistencies in student competencies that they tied to a lack of assessment of student learning and skills. The small number of full-time faculty is also noted as a concern for the future of the department. The review team identified an urgent need to augment staff oversight the Mesa del Sol facility. However, they believe that the department has a great deal of potential once these issues are addressed.

**Graduate Studies**

The only program overseen by Graduate Studies, Water Resources, will go through its Site-Visit in Fall of 2019.

**Health Sciences Center**

HSC program review is not currently coordinated by the APR Office. Following discussions with the previous APR staff, Health Sciences has begun submitting their accreditation documents for archiving in the digital repository as evidence of program review.

**Honors College**

The only program overseen by the Honors College, Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, will go through its Site-Visit in Spring of 2022.

**College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences**

The only program in ULLS, Organization, Information, and Learning Sciences, will go through its Site-Visit Fall of 2018.

**School of Architecture and Planning**

The Department of Landscape Architecture held its Site-Visit November 13-15, 2017. All criteria were ranked as "Met," and the following key strengths were noted: strong faculty, continuous accreditation, excellent community engagement and departmental environment, and good facilities. Some shortcomings that were identified are a lack of clear strategic planning and a relatively new assessment process that has not been in place for very long. There was also no data provided on student retention and graduation rates, and the review team was concerned about the lack of a graduate handbook. They also felt that building an alumni association could help with identifying external funding and tracking graduate outcomes.

**School of Engineering**

Four departments held Site-Visits in Spring of 2018, Civil, Chemical and Biological, Electrical and Computer, and Mechanical Engineering. Their findings are articulated below.

Chemical and Biological Engineering:

Site visit: May 8-9, 2018

The Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering received a score of "Met" on five criteria, as scored by the review team. Two criteria received a "Met With Concerns" score while one criterion was found to have "Not Met" standards.

Overall, the Review Team noted numerous strengths. Reviewers wrote that the department is "a leader at the University of New Mexico in innovation and intellectual property production." The department has placed significant emphasis on improving students' scientific/engineering writing skills through the hiring of a part-time English professor, in order to prepare students for their professional careers. Additionally, a $2 million NSF grant awarded to the department is "an innovative and unique program that is improving student training." This program was specifically noted as increasing the department's national visibility. In regards to enrollment and graduation trends, the review team noted several areas where the department excels. Like most undergraduate chemical engineering programs in the US, enrollment has grown significantly, however, the student-to-faculty ratio is still considered low, allowing undergraduates access to more opportunities than would be the case with a higher ratio. Furthermore, relative to other engineering programs, the department has high percentages of women and under-represented minorities. Upon graduation, nearly 45% of undergraduates attend graduate school, and many of those students enroll in top programs. Finally, the Review Team was particularly impressed with the department's new facilities where "'interaction areas' facilitated student-student and student-faculty interactions." Additionally, the laboratory space is well-equipped and had room for future space needs.

The Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering likewise saw their new facilities as a strength with a positive impact on student/faculty morale and on recruitment efforts. Further noted strengths were the increases in the overall graduate student population and the number of awarded B.S. degrees over the past 10 years. Several examples were given of faculty involvement in developing interdisciplinary graduate educational programs, which have grown and now involve faculty from Engineering and other schools. Moreover, the department sees its strong ties to Sandia National Laboratories as a selling point to prospective undergraduate and

graduate students, allowing them access to research and internship opportunities not otherwise available.

The Review Team and Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering documented a number of weaknesses within its faculty and programs, many of which are budgetary in nature. Salary compression was noted as a significant issue among mid-career faculty, as "Associate Professors who are productive and have been in the Department for a longer time are paid nearly the same as Assistant Professors." Since the associate rank compression affects female faculty, it raises significant concerns about gender equity. Another weakness documented by the Review Team is that the department does not receive funding to appoint graduate students as teaching assistants. This lowers the number of graduate students that can be recruited, subsequently affecting the national ranking of the department. Muddying the issue is that "the graduate students reported that one-third of the students enter the graduate program without funding", which is at odds with the reporting of the department. This lack of communication affects student morale and the overall effectiveness of the program. In regards to faculty accomplishments, the Review Team did note that that department has received recognition for research and teaching from professional societies/organization, but none have received awards from the American Institute of Chemical Engineers or the Biomedical Engineering Society. Awards received by the faculty from these organizations would enhance the department's visibility and improve its national ranking. Concerning the undergraduate programs, a troubling statement by the Review Team was that a "large number of undergraduate students plagiarized their laboratory/course reports" while the College of Engineering did not take action against this plagiarism.

The Department of Chemical & Biological Engineering identified similar concerns, especially budgetary constraints. The department has not seen significant donations from alumni, which along with constrained funding from the state, has led to budget cuts and mid-year rescissions, affecting morale and the ability to attract graduate students. Particularly, enrollment in the M.S. and PhD programs in chemical engineering has shown a decline over the past 10 years. PhD qualifying exam scores evaluate most students in the "marginal pass" category. While students may participate in cooperative education programs or summer internships, "these play no formal role in the curriculum."

Civil Engineering:

Site visit: March 19-20, 2018

Overall, the Review Team noted many strengths of the Department of Civil Engineering. Past APR recommendations were taken seriously and were implemented, such as the establishment of a water resources center of excellence. The change of the department's name to the Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering was seen as a positive, as it encapsulates the wide breadth of the department. The Review Team found the "increased efforts for online offering of the curriculum in their Master of Engineering" to have increased enrollments, especially among already employed students in need of a flexible schedule. Furthermore, the graduate program enrollments have increased due to coordinated efforts through the School of Engineering as well a departmental organization based on the disciplines pertinent to the department's geographic location (i.e. emphasis on water management). A $5 million NSF CREST Award was specifically mentioned as important for future enrollment numbers. Faculty excellence in teaching and grant securement was seen as further support for this. The Review Team also saw the department's proximity to several DoE National Labs as important contributors to undergraduate and graduate success. The department itself sees these connections with Sandia and Los Alamos, along with the growth in research funding, as important factors in attracting graduate students. In all, the reviewers saw the increase on national ranking from 82 to 76 as a good sign for the department.

The Review Team identified several weaknesses in the department. They noted that "more concerted efforts in recruiting a more diverse group, especially Native Americans… will further enhance the departmental programs at all levels of instruction." Furthermore, the department could benefit from tracking the success rates of students in passing the FE and PE exams, allowing the department to better assess itself. Some of the weaknesses are financial in nature, such as the lack of salary advancements in the past seven years, the "insufficient number of teaching assistants and support for PhD students," and the lack of technical staff for the laboratories. Reviewers saw teaching loads as higher than in some comparable departments. Finally, the reviewers saw the low number of PhDs graduating on an annual basis as a cause for concern (especially in regards to the department's national ranking), as well as the lack of dedicated office space for PhD students.

Electrical and Computer Engineering:

Site visit: April 2-4, 2018

Overall, the Review Team scored the Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering favorably, with six criteria receiving a "Met" standards. Only two criteria standards were designated as "Met With Concerns." Reviewers noted several strengths of the department, especially in regards to faculty and the graduate programs. Faculty and staff morale is exceptionally high, and are also "appreciative of the recent appointment and stabilization of unit leadership." The Review Team noted that "there is truly world-class reputation in several research areas," which in the long run supports the strong PhD program. Reviewers saw that the department effectively leveraged local national laboratories, allowing a strong research program for such a modest-sized department. The department itself saw this area as a particular strength, as it allows many senior designs to be externally sponsored by research laboratories, ultimately providing students "with a unique perspective of engineering." Overall, the department's research portfolio was noted as being excellent in scope and funding level. This supports the production of a large number of PhD students, enabling the "recruitment of strong faculty in a professional and very collegial environment." The Review Team also mentioned the department's 4+1 program, and how it "could lead to recruitment of more master's students from UNM."

Reviewers did find areas of weaknesses within the department, mostly in regards to the small faculty size and declining enrollment in the department across the board. The Review Team saw the declining enrollment within the graduate and undergraduate programs as something that deserves immediate attention. It was noted that this trend is not unusual among other institutions, but, regardless, "the potential impact on revenue could be significant," causing a cascade of problems. A solution to this problem proposed by the reviewers would be to increase recruitment and mentorship of under-represented minority and women faculty, allowing the department to be more marketable to those populations in the undergraduate and graduate student bodies. Another proposed solution would be to consolidate and rename some emphasis areas, which would provide clarity to students and "enable better marketing of the program and its strengths." An increase in faculty or reduction in emphasis areas could also solve an issue

presented by the undergraduate students, where concerns were expressed about the lack of interaction with tenured and tenure-track faculty. Furthermore, while the department's relationship with national laboratories was seen as a strength, the reviewers did seem to believe that this relationship could be improved, especially those between faculty and laboratory personnel.

Mechanical Engineering:
Site visit: March 26-28, 2018

Overall, the Review Team noted several criteria as "Met with Concerns" standards for the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Reviewers did note several strengths of the department. A notable strength as documented by the Review Team was that "student learning goals and outcomes are appropriate for training modern mechanical engineers." Furthermore, the student population of the department felt confident upon graduation that the knowledge and skills that they were taught would be useful in their careers. Despite a high student-to-faculty ratio, the Review Team felt that "recent opportunities to hire faculty/lectures will enable the department to begin addressing significant enrollment growth," perhaps avoiding any future issues usually associated with these high ratios. Furthermore, the department has a reduced teaching load for junior faculty and a satisfactory mentoring role for said faculty, allowing them to achieve research development. Like most engineering programs in the US, enrollment for the department is increasing substantially in the undergraduate programs, as well as stable production of graduate degrees, ultimately resulting a wide diversity of capstone design projects. The proximity of the department to national laboratories such as Sandia and Los Alamos were seen by the Review Team as excellent opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. The FSAE program was seen as "a very unique cornerstone of the department, both from an educational perspective and as a high-visibility activity that showcases the immense talent of the ME students." Also, the facilities building has unique attributes (namely solar and energy efficiency) that could provide unique learning experiences for students.

Despite the Review team noting that recent opportunities for faculty hiring could resolve the high student-to-faculty ratio, the reviewers still saw it as a weakness for the department. Reviewers saw it as a catalyst for numerous issues, including poor one-on-one time with students

and “as class size is limited to ensure quality instruction, the teaching load of the faculty is much higher than at peer institutions.” In all, this high ratio “likely adversely impacts all aspects of faculty productivity and student learning.” Due to the high ratio, students seem to have limited knowledge of undergraduate research opportunities, and staff turnover rate is high. Aspects of the facilities for the Department of Mechanical Engineering were similarly seen as a concern, as they are “in desperate need of both space relief and modernized space to ensure that the department can meet its teaching and research missions.” Generally, instructional laboratories are small and cannot handle the high undergraduate enrollments currently being seen in the department.

**School of Law**

As with HSC, the School of Law is subject to the APR process, but coordinates its own program review. Documents have not historically been collected by the APR Office, but discussions around alignment and collection of materials have begun.

**University College**

The only unit under University College, Liberal Arts and Integrative Studies, does not go through the APR process until Spring of 2022.

**APR Feedback**

The APR Office solicits feedback from departments faculty, staff, and review teams in order to improve the APR process. Units are asked about the ease of the APR process, including guidance offered by the Office, ability to complete the Self-Study, obtain data, and help in setting up the Site-Visit. Feedback was largely negative for the Fall APRs due to the personnel gap during the beginning of the semester. However, there were several comments related to overall APR processes that give insight into potential improvements. The most notable is access to data for the Self-Study. Due to budget constraints and personnel shortages, the Office of Institutional Analytics and Enrollment Management is no longer able to accommodate batch data requests. Units are now in the position of needing to obtain data themselves through IDI dashboards or MyReports. This has been challenging as many units lack experience in working

with MyReports, and often data available on IDI is not updated or accurate. The hiring of a Data Analyst in the Office of Assessment and APR has mitigated some of these issues through the creation of data workshops, but the Office remains concerned about the sustainability of this structure.

Units also identified significant issues with the APR Process App designed by IDI to facilitate the creation of the Self-Study. Programs that used the App experienced recurring technical issues that hampered productivity and impacted the quality of their work. This is primarily what lead to the decision to discontinue the App. Units similarly found that reflective questions solicited from the university and college leadership lacked focus and utility. Finally, units expressed a lack of support from the APR Office in constructing the Self-Study. This lead to the creation of regular open office hours where departments may come to solicit feedback and assistance from APR staff.

The review teams expressed similar concerns during the Fall Site-Visits surrounding the lack of staff, and the impact this had on the reviews. Fall reviewers struggled to understand their role and expectations in the APR process. Spring reviews went more smoothly, and reviewers expressed more comfort in their responsivities. In both Fall and Spring, reviewers commented on the difficulty in understanding UNM's APR materials, particularly the APR Manual, and Review Team Worksheet. These comments were taken into account during the revisions of the manual. They also reiterated a commonly articulated frustration surrounding the amount of the honorarium paid to reviewers. Currently UNM provides $500 for reviewers, an amount below that of comparable institutions. Although the APR Office recognizes the budget constraints present across the university, we are concerned that underpaying reviewers creates a reputation for UNM, particularly given that many reviewers are department chairs, and often deans of colleges. We would request that thought be given to finding ways that the honorarium might be increased in future years.