OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Academic Program Review: State of Affairs Report

Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
August 2019

Executive Summary:

      This report summarizes the general findings and activities of the Academic Program Review process at the University of New Mexico, situated within the Office of Assessment & APR and overseen by the Office of the Provost.

      Office personnel, structure, and general procedures have changed significantly since the last APR State of Affairs Report. Transition of a new APR Program Specialist was finalized in Summer 2018, along with the hiring of a new Assessment Program Specialist position within the Office of Assessment & APR in Fall 2018. These mirrored positions, overseen by the Director, work with the office's Institutional Researcher to help programs with their assessment and program review needs. The office's two budgets were also combined.

      Over the past year, there were four major APR initiatives pursued by the office: the processing of past APR documents, transitioning towards a new iteration of the "APR Process & Procedures" manual (and updating the embedded Master Schedule), researching structures for a General Education program review process, and reaching out to Branch Campuses to re-establish contact with their various assessment & program review personnel.

      The Master Schedule has since been updated and is now current through Fall 2025 program reviews, while past APR documents have been approved by the Associate Provost for Curriculum & Assessment and returned to the relevant programs. The 8th Edition of the APR Process & Procedures manual will be fully implemented this coming academic year (AY 19-20), as programs will be utilizing it from the start of the process in order to craft their self-studies. The construction of a General Education program review process has begun, with notable influences from similar endeavors at the University of Arizona and UC Mercedes. Finally, contact with Branch Campuses has been re-established in order to understand their program review processes & schedules. This included asking Branch Campuses to align their processes/procedures with the new Main Campus 8th Edition, as well as updating their own review schedules. The office also collaborated with Branch Campus Deans and visited their campuses to discuss assessment and program review best practices.

Main Campus Program Reviews:

    Four programs underwent Fall 2018 Site-Visits, while two programs underwent Spring 2019 visits. The Department of English Spring 2019 visit was conducted under the 8th Edition process

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and procedures, to see any potential issues before fully transitioning towards the new manual. All others programs utilized the 7th Edition process. The conducted program reviews were:

- Organization, Information, & Learning Sciences (OILS)
- Nuclear Engineering
- School of Public Administration
- Anthropology
- Computer Science
- English Language & Literature

Numerous program-level & institutional-level trends resulted from these six program reviews, and were evident either in a program's self-study or from the associated review team reports. Strengths, issues, and general trends are summarized below:

Faculty Research/Scholarship

The most common trend noted by reviewers was that UNM faculty are extremely productive, often surpassing research/scholarly works at institutions with significantly more resources. The productive faculty achieve this despite some obstacles, including budgetary limitations or high teaching-load numbers. A common warning from Review Teams is that this is often unsustainable in the face of poor morale or high teaching-loads. While recommendations generally included increasing Faculty or student-facing FTE, other recommendations were given; the elimination of some low-participation courses, for example.

Student & Alumni Satisfaction

Within all six reviewed programs, there was ample evidence of the high-level of satisfaction current/graduated students had with their education. Post-graduation employers included lauded companies/universities such as Apple, Intel, the US Naval Research Laboratory, Sandia Labs, Los Alamos Labs, John Hopkins, Vanderbilt, and the National Park Service. UNM's utilization of distance-learning technology to connect rural students to Main & Branch Campuses was mentioned by numerous alumni as something that allowed them to pursue post-secondary & graduate education. Similarly, reviewers often commended the level of distance education opportunities present within curricula.

National Prominence & Marketing

Notably brought up in the reviews of Anthropology, Nuclear Engineering, and OILS, review teams stated that these programs could be nationally & internationally well-known programs. However, poor marketing at *mainly* the institutional-level to prospective undergraduate/graduate students has been a detriment to taking advantage of these programs' faculty and research opportunities. Additionally, reviewers recommended that these programs advertise themselves through professional relationships with professors/researchers at other institutions.

Structure & Staff

Nearly all of the reviewed programs had structural issues mentioned in their previous APRs, which took place in the late '00s. This usually manifested itself as poor reporting structures between chairs, staff members, and faculty. While some such issues still exist, they have been increasingly addressed and streamlined by the time of these most recent APRs. All reviewed programs mentioned that this was partly due to an extremely dedicated network of staff members, who accomplished this despite leadership turnover and a general lack of Cost-of-Living Adjustments in the years preceding the reviews.

Advisement of Graduate Students & Junior Faculty

Discussed in the Review Team Reports for Anthropology and English, systemic department-level issues of subpar faculty mentorship (between senior & junior-faculty) and subpar advisement (between faculty & graduate students) existed. Often this manifested itself in misunderstandings for promotion practices, or what was expected of graduate students. Cases of "faculty bullying" were also noted in the English Review Team Report. Review Teams advised utilizing the nationally-known UNM Mentoring Institute to strengthen the mentoring relationship between faculty-faculty, as well as for the relationships between faculty & graduate students.

Upcoming Main Campus Program Reviews:

In the Fall 2019 semester, three programs will undergo an APR site-visit. They are:

- Department of Art
- Department of History
- Water Resources Graduate Program

In the Spring 2020 semester, four programs will undergo an APR site-visit. They are:

- Anderson School of Management
- Architecture Department
- Department of Music
- Optical Sciences & Engineering Program

These units are currently crafting their self-studies in preparation for their site-visits.

APR Feedback:

As part of the APR process, surveys are sent to reviewers to see what aspects of the process could be changed for the better, and which aspects are especially strong. From last year's survey results, it was clear that the low honorarium was an issue not only for the reviewers, but also for the units undergoing the review. The potentially damaging impact of the low honorarium on a program's reputation was specifically mentioned. Over this past year, the office utilized the survey results (as well as researching comparable honorariums from our peer institutions) to increase our honorarium payments. The reviewer honoraria is now in-line with what other institutions provide for a reviewers' service.

The most common issue noted in this year's surveys was that some aspects of the 7th Edition were convoluted and repetitive, especially in regards to what exactly the role of the reviewers was. These are areas that were specifically changed in the 8th Edition, and should not pose the same issues moving forward.