NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM REVIEW
FOURTH CYCLE

PROCEDURES AND RATIONALE
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. History of Program Review ................................................................. 2

II. Purpose of Program Review ............................................................... 3

III. Changes for the Fourth Cycle .......................................................... 5

IV. Detailed Changes for the Fourth Cycle ............................................. 5

V. Program Review Council and Review Subcommittees ....................... 9

VI. Review Scheduling ............................................................................ 9

VIII. Process Overview ........................................................................... 11
  1. Notification and Orientation .............................................................. 11
  2. Data Elements .................................................................................. 12
     A. Data Profile .................................................................................. 12
     B. Faculty/Staff/Constituent Feedback Surveys ................................. 12
  3. Identification of Key Issues ............................................................... 13
  4. Self-Study ....................................................................................... 13
  5. External Reviewer Identification and Visit ....................................... 14
  6. External Reviewer Report .................................................................. 16
  7. Program Review Council Review .................................................... 16
  8. Distribution of Final Report to the Unit ......................................... 16
  9. Implementation Agreement Meetings .............................................. 17
     A. Meeting with Central Administration, Line Head and Unit Head .... 17
     B. Line Head Meeting with Unit ....................................................... 17
 10. Communication of the Review Outcomes ...................................... 17
 11. One Year Follow-Up ...................................................................... 18

IX. Conclusion ......................................................................................... 18
I. **History of Program Review**

Program Review at Northwestern University began in 1985 as a faculty initiative to achieve and maintain the highest standards within all academic and administrative units of the university. The central administration and General Faculty Committee (now the Faculty Senate) collaborated to create a systematic review process that has been continually adapted to the changing needs of Northwestern.

Since it began, more than 400 academic and administrative unit reviews have occurred and nearly 700 faculty and administrators have participated in the process as members of the Program Review Council or Review Subcommittees. In addition, more than 700 highly regarded experts from other universities and organizations have visited our campuses to serve as external reviewers. The reviews have been conducted in cycles lasting seven to ten years with the first cycle taking place from 1985-1991, the second from 1992-1999, and the third from 2000-2009. Northwestern is now in the fourth cycle of the review process. After the completion of each cycle, a hiatus year is taken during which the process itself is reviewed and, at its request, the Board of Trustees is also reviewed.

In the first cycle, each unit prepared a comprehensive self-study that described its history and identified strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the context of the University’s mission. The process included a review by an internal subcommittee, as well as by a team of visiting external experts. Based on these reviews and the resulting external reviewers’ report, each subcommittee developed a report on behalf of the Program Review Council that, along with the external reviewers’ report, was presented to the senior administration, the line administration, and the unit. Recommendations and plans for implementation were discussed with and agreed to by the deans or vice presidents and department chairs or directors. Two years after the review, a follow-up report from the unit was requested to document the unit’s progress in implementing the recommendations.

After a review of the first cycle, procedures for the second cycle were modified to allow these reviews to build directly on the results of the first review. Units were asked to develop a list of key issues emanating from their previous review and from significant changes in the unit or emerging in the field since the review. An analysis of these issues then became the primary focus of the second cycle unit report. Other aspects of the process, such as the internal subcommittee review, the visit by external experts, and the follow-up administrative meetings, remained in place for the second cycle. Units were not necessarily reviewed in the same order as in the first cycle; a number of factors, such as the extent of problems identified in the first review of the unit, significant changes within the unit, schedule of accreditation visits, and the desirability of reviewing like units in the same year, influenced the scheduling process. Near the end of the second cycle, the follow-up process was changed from a two-year to a one-year timeframe to better gauge the unit’s efforts in implementing the recommendations and to provide assistance where needed.

Since the majority of the units reviewed during the third cycle were reviewed in the first and/or second cycles, the purpose of the third cycle was to assure that the unit
had established and was working toward clear strategic improvements and addressing specific issues that grew out of the prior reviews or had arisen since each unit’s last review. In this way, the third cycle continued the spirit of the previous two cycles.

The evaluation of the Program Review process following the third cycle affirmed its value for both academic and administrative units and made several specific recommendations for further refinements to the process for the fourth cycle. These focused on the areas of benchmarks and data, communication, follow-up, and general process improvements. An important objective was to further engage deans and vice presidents throughout the process, including the identification of key issues and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations and instill a cadence of continuous improvement. Another point of emphasis in the revisions for the fourth cycle is increasing the use of data that can help provide indicators of a unit’s quality and improvement over time.

II. Purpose of Program Review

Program Review requires a commitment of time and effort from all involved. In light of the costs of resources required, it is appropriate to ask, “Why should the University continue to engage in Program Review?” This has been the fundamental question that drives the review of the Program Review process at the end of each cycle. And each time, the value of Program Review has been affirmed because the benefits of doing it outweigh the costs. Further, the President, Provost, and Board of Trustees have indicated that they uniformly value Program Review’s insights into unit performance and utilize the findings as key inputs in University-wide strategic planning and decision-making.

The benefits of Program Review include:

- **Providing opportunities for self-study, strategic planning, and change in units**
  Program Review ensures that each unit systematically takes time to step back from everyday challenges to evaluate its strengths, weaknesses, and progress in order to create a strong foundation for the development of future strategic plans and priorities.

- **Facilitating continuous improvement**
  The specific recommendations included in the implementation agreements resulting from Program Review help units benchmark progress in critical areas.

- **Providing information utilized in area-wide strategic planning and decision-making**
  Recommendations derived from Program Review are systematically integrated into the plans and budget requests for the various schools and administrative areas.
• **Providing information utilized in university-wide strategic planning and decision-making**
  Program Review has created a base of knowledge and shared understanding that provides a critical backdrop to all University decision-making processes, including the setting of priorities, hiring plans, budget setting, space allocations, fundraising priorities, and program sizing.

• **Encouraging better communication and collaboration**
  Program Review is designed to foster communication both within the unit as well as between the unit and central administration. The process also provides an opportunity for each member of the unit to provide feedback to external reviewers.

• **Providing candid assessment by external experts**
  Program Review provides a mechanism for rigorous evaluation and feedback by experts in the field that are valued by both the unit and the administration. (In some cases, the department or dean has used the panel of outside experts for continuing consultations after the review.)

• **Fostering interdisciplinary understanding and socialization**
  Faculty and administrators frequently remark on the improved understanding among related units thanks to the involvement of internal subcommittees. A similar benefit is seen in faculty-administration relations as a result of faculty subcommittees gaining a deeper understanding of the administrative operations of the University.

• **Fostering appreciation of complexity and diversity of the University**
  Whether it is the variance in governance between departments or the details of what drives excellence across varied fields, Program Review makes these differences more visible and helps the university strategically address these variations in constructive ways.

• **Providing increased external visibility**
  External reviewers often note the unanticipated strengths they observe at Northwestern or comment on the deepening of their respect for the institution as a result of their visit. The Program Review process also fosters dialogue amongst exemplary peers about the most effective ways to assess the quality of the university.

• **Providing accountability to the Board of Trustees**
  Each year, review summaries, implementation agreements, and follow-up reports are provided to the Board of Trustees. The candor and commitment represented by this effort provides an important assurance to the Board that the University is evaluating itself and continually striving for improvement. The Board's support for this process is also evidenced by its request to be reviewed at the end of each cycle.
III. Changes for the Fourth Cycle

Following the completion of each cycle of Program Review, a hiatus was taken to thoroughly evaluate the process in order to determine what is most valuable as well as what changes could further improve it. The process has been continuously adapted based on the recommendations of these reviews and will again incorporate changes for this cycle based on the recommendations of the Third Cycle Review Committee (TCRC).

The TCRC met regularly over the course of a year to discuss all aspects of Program Review and to consider specific areas where the process could be improved. As was done for previous cycles, the Committee surveyed and interviewed a wide range of members of the Northwestern community, including faculty, deans and senior administrators in order to better understand the perceived strengths and weaknesses in the process. Based on the information gathered through these steps, the Committee issued a report on the overall efficacy of Program Review and their recommendations for changes for the third cycle. The report and recommendations were also reviewed by members of the University’s leadership in order to incorporate their feedback; this included a year-long effort by the Deans Council. The report and recommendations were then reviewed and approved by the President and Provost.

The TCRC made several recommendations focused on the areas of Preparation, Process, Communication, and Follow-up. While some of the recommendations confirmed existing procedures, others resulted in specific changes to the process. Although not all of the recommendations directly affect the Program Review process from the unit’s perspective, they are described here so that all those involved in Program Review are aware of them.

IV. Detailed Changes for the Fourth Cycle

*Recommendations that confirm/expand existing processes are marked by an asterisk*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase lead time for units and administration to more thoroughly prepare for Program Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **De-mystify the Program Review process**

   Once a unit head has agreed to the scheduling of a review, an email will be sent from the Program Review office to all members of the unit, providing them with information about the process and linking them to thorough online documentation. In addition, an orientation session will now be offered for all units under review to provide unit members with an opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the process.

3. **Clarify the importance and utility of Program Review**

   In addition to the written documentation of the benefits of the process, a joint letter from the President, Provost, and Dean/VP will be sent to all members of the unit to help set expectations about how the outputs of the process are used.

4. **Ensure all units participate while also allowing flexibility in when they participate**

   All units will be allowed, in consultation with their Dean or unit head, to delay their review if there are imminent or recent major changes. However, no unit may opt out of the process itself, nor making available a proportional number of representatives to serve in some capacity on the PRC or a review subcommittee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Enhance Dean / VP engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAP will continue to seek the valuable input of the Deans/VPs in all aspects of their units’ reviews, proactively contacting them to make sure they are sufficiently engaged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Enhance the self-study process**

   Alongside the self-study (and prior to the actual review), OAP will now provide a) a data profile; b) a faculty/staff survey; and c) a prompt to use these elements to help identify issues and complete the self-study.

7. **Streamline the self-study process**

   OAP will now provide a) a strategic planning guide; b) questions to prompt the kind of analysis expected in the self-study and strategic plan; and c) a self-study template. In addition, units will be encouraged to reflect and build upon not only prior Program Review materials but also any other assessment materials they have completed.
| 8. Improve satisfaction with selection of internal and external reviewers | OAP will continue to consult with the unit head and Dean/VP regarding selection of reviewers and require both internal and external reviewers to disclose any conflict of interest. |
| 9. Increase consistency of external review process | More specific guidance concerning the final report will be given to external reviewers, including the request to suggest field-specific ‘best practices’ (as opposed to simply responding to current practices). |
| 10. Increase accuracy of final report | While fact-checking by the unit head is an established practice in Program Review, additional time will be added to facilitate this process. In addition, if the unit head feels the need to append further comments, they may continue to do so in an addendum. |
| 11. Special planning for groupings of administrative sub-units | As it is sometimes difficult to find reviewers with expertise relevant for all sub-units in a grouping, special attention will be given to the advance collection of data and issues. Further, reviewers will be instructed to provide feedback on all sub-units. Recommendations for each sub-unit will be encouraged, but only if reviewers feel confident in their understanding of the sub-unit’s operations and issues. |
| 12. Definition of ‘Peer Institution’ for Administrative/Service units | ‘Peer institutions’ for administrative program review will include institutions that are of similar strength in the area being reviewed, not only institutions that are academically similar. |
| 13. Increase attention to issue of resources in recommendations | Reviewers will be reminded that Program Review is primarily focused on determining the best allocation of existing resources. However, in cases where recommendations that would require additional resources are made, it will be highlighted that these are ‘currently unfunded mandates’ and provide additional justification for their necessity. |

**Communication**

<p>| 14. Improve summary reports for Board of Trustees | Reports will continue to include executive summaries highlighting key issues and final recommendations. |
| 15. Improve post-review communication to members of unit | OAP will continue to communicate with the entire unit via email when the report and implementation agreements are finalized. This will ensure members understand that the process is complete and that their unit head will now be working with the unit on implementation. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. Improve online documentation to facilitate better understanding of all aspects of the process</strong></td>
<td>Further efforts will be made to foster a clear and complete understanding of the process. The website will be re-organized and include all non-confidential documentation, including an FAQ and details on how Program Review is used (similar to the email sent early in the process from the President and Provost).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17. Increase emphasis on confidentiality</strong></td>
<td>A Confidentiality Commitment will be shared with all reviewers and PRC/subcommittee members. In addition, additional scrutiny will be given to any references or quotes that could jeopardize confidentiality and these will be moved to confidential addendums as necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-Up</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. Continue follow-up reports until all issues have been addressed or revised</strong></td>
<td>Beyond requiring a single one-year follow-up report, Deans and VPs are strongly encouraged to follow-up with units beyond the one year follow-up to track progress. The assignment of this responsibility to a specific individual in the Dean or Vice President’s office is strongly encouraged.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19. Increase awareness of implementation</strong></td>
<td>OAP will distribute the implementation agreements and follow-up reports to PRC/subcommittee members so that they can track the outcomes of their hard work. Implementation agreements are also shared with new chairs, directors, VPs and deans of their respective units.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Program Review Council and Review Subcommittees
Program Review is overseen by the Program Review Council, an appointed group of senior faculty and administrators who also serve as chairs of the review subcommittees. The Chair of the PRC is appointed every two years from among the senior members of this group, while the Vice President for Administration and Planning serves as the Vice Chair on an ongoing basis.

The size of the Program Review Council mirrors the number of reviews scheduled each year so that each PRC member chairs one internal subcommittee each year. At least two-thirds of the members of PRC are faculty. The members of the PRC are appointed by the Vice President for Administration and Planning based on the recommendations of deans and senior administrators. The PRC is representative of the various disciplinary and administrative interests within the University (though not all areas are represented every single year). Members of the PRC are generally appointed to serve staggered, three-year terms. The Council Chair is appointed with input from the University’s senior administration.

Each program review is assigned an internal subcommittee, which works in tandem with the external reviewers. The review subcommittees typically have two members: a PRC member who chairs the subcommittee and an additional faculty member or senior administrator. Members of the subcommittee cannot be members of the unit under review (including joint and courtesy appointments) and must also be free of any other potential conflicts of interest. Deans, VPs, and unit heads are given the opportunity to veto potential members if they believe such conflicts may exist. For administrative unit reviews, subcommittees will include at least one administrator.

The Director of Program Review in the Office of Administration and Planning is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Program Review Council and assuring the completion of each program review. The Office of Administration and Planning provides other administrative and support services for the Program Review Council and its subcommittees.

VI. Review Scheduling
Similar to previous cycles, the fourth cycle is scheduled to take place over ten years. The schedule for the complete review cycle will be reviewed annually and revised during the cycle as needed (with the most current schedule available on the Program Review website). To build upon interdisciplinary connections, some units are grouped together for review in the same year; these clusters are based on functional compatibility rather than organizational lines (e.g., life sciences, cognitive sciences, area studies, business operations, etc.). For the most part, the ‘unit of analysis’ has been maintained across the cycles (e.g., departments in larger schools, smaller schools as a whole, large research centers, individual/small groups of administrative units depending on size).

The Vice President for Administration and Planning requests input from the Deans and Vice Presidents about their preferred scheduling of their units. Deans and Vice
Presidents should consult with their units about scheduling options prior to providing feedback and final recommendations to OAP. The Vice President for Administration and Planning will make the final determination on scheduling; while most preferences can often be accommodated, some shifts may occur in order to smooth out the number of reviews in each year. Where possible and appropriate, the timing of the review relative to accreditation will reflect the preference of the Dean. However, while some of the materials required may be similar, the purpose and goals of an accreditation review are substantially different from those of Program Review and an accreditation will not be considered a substitute for Program Review.

While units are typically reviewed in a similar order relative to the previous cycle, there will be flexibility in the order of reviews based on the current needs assessed by the university.

**VII. Review Timeline**
The Program Review of a unit will take place over a full year. Typically, preparation for the review begins in the fall quarter after units are formally notified in spring. The actual review is conducted over the course of the academic year.

An accelerated review schedule may be possible depending upon reviewer availability. Units are asked to notify the Vice President for Administration and Planning of this preference in advance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter (prior to review year)</td>
<td>Unit receives notification regarding its program review for the upcoming academic year and pertinent deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Unit attends orientation meeting to learn about the Program Review process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Unit provides list of potential external reviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring – Fall</td>
<td>External reviewers are finalized based on unit nominations and Dean/VP input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer – Fall</td>
<td>Data profile and faculty survey are completed and used to inform the unit self-study and provide background to the review team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Unit (in coordination with Dean/VP) identifies key issues to focus on in the upcoming review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Unit finalizes and provides the self-study to OAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>OAP and the Program Review Council (PRC) reviews the self-study for completeness and clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>External reviewers visit campus and together with the internal subcommittee conduct interviews with key unit faculty/administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>External reviewers provide final report and recommendations within 10 working days of review visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Spring</td>
<td>Final report is distributed to unit for fact-checking and comments. Amended final version is then distributed to PRC and central administration for review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Spring</td>
<td>Internal subcommittee reviews external reviewer report, follows up with unit on any outstanding issues, and adds addendum if necessary. The PRC evaluates report, asks questions of subcommittee, and makes recommendations to subcommittee for modifications as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Amended final reports are made available to all members of unit for review. Unit heads coordinate with unit members on implementation items resulting from report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer – Fall</td>
<td>Implementation meetings are held with Unit Head, Dean/VP, and central administration to develop and finalize implementation agreements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**One Year Follow Up**

| Early Fall (one year later) | Unit provides written report of progress to date to central administration |
| Late Fall | Implementation agreements may be revised (in consultation with Dean/VP) based on progress to date and new developments |

### VIII. Process Overview

The Program Review process includes the following steps, each of which is discussed in more detail below:

1. Notification and Orientation
2. Data Elements
   - A. Data Profile
   - B. Faculty/Staff/Constituent Feedback
3. Identification of Key Issues
4. Self-Study
5. External Reviewer Identification and Visit
6. External Reviewer Report
7. Program Review Council Review
8. Distribution of Final Report to the Unit
9. Implementation Agreement Meeting
10. Communication of Review Outcomes
11. One Year Follow-Up

1. **Notification and Orientation**

   Beginning in the winter quarter, members of the administration review the tentative schedule of reviews for the upcoming year. Deans and Vice Presidents are asked to confirm with their units that the timing of the review is not problematic, and the schedule is adjusted to accommodate unit needs. Once the list of units to be reviewed has been confirmed, the units are formally notified by the Office of Administration and Planning during winter or early spring.
quarter. The notification packet provides information on the unit’s previous review and lists the initial information requests (names of potential external reviewers, list of key issues, etc.) as well as the dates by which this information is needed. An orientation session is held with each unit head to discuss the review process, timing and answer any questions. Unit heads may identify other individuals from the department to join this discussion.

2. Data Elements
Though data has frequently found its way into Program Review materials, this cycle introduces a more standardized and complete framework for incorporating data into each review. The data elements that are being added will help to frame the review, enhance the self-study process, and lead toward a cycle of continuous improvement that will be more relevant to the ever-changing environment of academe. These data elements include a data profile and department and constituent feedback surveys.

A. Data Profile
For academic units, the Office of Administration and Planning has consulted with each school to build a core data profile of relevant indicators that will be compiled by OAP (or the school when they have access to the appropriate data) and provided to the unit for review and analysis. This data may be useful for identifying particular strengths and weaknesses of a unit, though no single data element will be regarded as an absolute metric by which to measure the unit’s current quality. Rather, these data elements will provide tangible reference points for the unit’s self-study and strategic planning as well as provide more detailed background for the reviewers to work from.

For administrative units, the Office of Administration and Planning will consult with the unit and line VP to identify the correct data elements to include for the review. In cases where institutional data is needed, OAP will work to provide this data. In other cases, the unit may have access to the appropriate data and/or peer comparisons.

B. Faculty/Staff/Constituent Feedback Surveys
In academic units, the Office of Administration and Planning will gather survey feedback from faculty for the purpose of gaining a diverse set of perspectives on the current state of the unit and opportunities for future strategic direction. This addition to the Program Review process serves two purposes. The first is that it allows the unit to take faculty feedback into account to inform the self-study and strategic planning. The second is that it allows all faculty members to have a voice in the process despite the fact that it is not always possible for every faculty member to participate in the interviews with the external reviewers and internal subcommittee. In some cases, surveys of graduate students and post-docs may also be included.

For administrative units, a similar survey may be used for staff if such data
does not already exist. Where an administrative unit has a clear service
mission, constituent feedback will be included.

3. **Identification of Key Issues**
Each unit will identify a short list of key issues that it believes should be
highlighted in its review. These should be the critical issues facing the unit
currently and over the next three-to-five years. The list of issues is provided to
the Office of the Vice President for Administration and Planning, who will
distribute it to the appropriate University officers and PRC members for review.
The unit then receives a letter that summarizes the feedback received on these
issues and may highlight additional issues that should be addressed by the unit
as well. As the review continues, other issues may be identified either by the
unit, Dean, VP, or PRC. While these issues will certainly be included in the self-
study, the initial identification of issues can give significant early focus to the
review process, although the scope of the review is certainly not limited to these
issues. For additional detail, please see the Key Issues Guidance document.

4. **Self-Study**
The process of creating the self-study report has been identified by many as
perhaps the most important and valuable aspect of the Program Review
process. The self-study phase of Program Review represents a valuable
opportunity for the unit to candidly assess progress and consider options for
how to further strengthen the unit. Many units find the process to be useful for
strategic planning within the unit, leading to better decisions about where to
focus efforts and how to allocate resources within the unit.

The primary purposes of the unit self-study report are:
- To explicate the strategic plans of the unit, with specific reference to the
  mission and strategic plans of the unit’s school as well as the University as a
  whole
- To analyze program strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities
- To analyze the department’s strategic position relative to peers
- To address in detail how to best manage the challenges facing the unit
- To identify ways that the program can improve using existing resources

Please note that while opportunities which would require additional resources
may be identified during the self-study, the document should not be regarded
as a tool to persuade colleagues or the administration to allocate additional
resources to the program. Every effort should be made to identify areas from
which resources should be reallocated toward a better use (i.e. one that
contributes more toward the strategic goals of the unit).

In preparing the report, units are encouraged to identify a committee of unit
members to develop the report. Units are encouraged to identify a few junior
members of the unit to participate in the self-study committee to bring new
perspectives. The unit’s self-study committee should consider the previous
Program Review and determine whether previously identified key issues have
been adequately addressed. However, the self-study also provides an opportunity for a fresh examination of the unit, and should be a document that stands on its own in analyzing the current state of the unit and directly addressing critical issues, especially those submitted in the key issues document. The data elements provided by the Office of Administration and Planning may also be utilized as inputs for analyzing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the unit as applicable. The self-study committee should meet with the other unit members to gather their input and perspective on the various issues identified. The report may include, as appendices, any additional data or performance measures that the unit considers good indicators of its progress toward its goals.

For administrative units, unique performance measures are often needed to objectively evaluate a unit’s performance. In cases where they do not exist or the data are incomplete, the University is asking that all units develop and maintain such measures, not only for Program Review but also to inform other University processes (e.g., budgeting, strategic planning, etc.). Units should work closely with the dean or vice president in the development of these measures.

The Office of Administration and Planning will maintain guidelines and templates that describe in greater detail what specific elements should be covered in the self-study report. While there is no single process that is required to be used, the final report should be shared with all members of the unit and should represent a good faith effort at reaching consensus. If true consensus is not possible, the report should clearly describe the nature of the disagreement and how final decisions about priorities were made.

The complete report (including appendices) should be submitted electronically to the Office of Administration and Planning in Microsoft Word format. If electronic copies of certain materials are not available, please submit unbound print copies of these documents.

The self-study report will be reviewed by the Office of Administration and Planning and the internal subcommittee to ensure it is complete. Incomplete reports will be returned to the unit with specific feedback on how the report should be revised. The report does not become a public document, but is made available to the Program Review Council, internal subcommittee, external reviewers, and relevant administrative officers. For academic units, this includes the President, Provost, Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School (for units with graduate programs), and the Dean of the school. For administrative units, it includes the President and the Vice President(s) with line or related responsibility for the unit reviewed.

5. **External Reviewer Identification and Visit**

As in previous cycles, at least two outside experts are asked to review the unit based upon a review of the self-study and other Program Review materials as
well as interviews they conduct during a visit to campus. The expertise and objectivity brought by the external reviewers has been relied upon heavily by the PRC and is often cited by units under review as a particular strength of the Program Review process.

The unit is responsible for nominating individuals to serve as external reviewers. These individuals should be eminent leaders in their field and come from highly-reputable peer departments and institutions. Units are asked to avoid any conflict of interest in their nominations and clarify anything that might have the appearance of a conflict of interest. Units may also delineate reviewers by their areas of expertise and ask that the team be comprised of reviewers from each group to ensure coverage of sub-fields within the unit, typically providing 3-4 nominations for each area. Finally, units may request that a reviewer from a previous cycle serve again, if appropriate.

The list of potential external reviewers is then reviewed by senior administrators to ensure that there is consensus on the appropriateness of these individuals to serve as reviewers. The final selection of reviewers is the responsibility of the Office of Administration and Planning. Units are encouraged to submit their nominations as soon as possible, since it will enable the Office of Administration and Planning to extend invitations to reviewers earlier and increase the likelihood that the unit will be able to get their preferred reviewers.

All arrangements for these reviewers are made by the Office of Administration and Planning. In preparation for their visit, the reviewers receive and are asked to study their responsibilities for the review and all materials for the current review. They are also provided with the reports and recommendations from the previous review. In addition, the unit head is given contact information for the reviewers in advance of their visit so that the members of the unit can have the opportunity to provide individual comment directly if appropriate (especially in situations where someone will be unavailable during the visit).

When the external reviewers visit campus, they meet with the unit’s faculty and/or professional staff, students (both undergraduate and graduate), line administration involved (Dean or unit manager, appropriate Vice President(s), Provost, and President), and others appropriate to the review. Faculty/staff from closely-related units are also usually consulted. The unit is responsible for coordinating the schedules of the appropriate people for the visit, although the list of individuals is shared with the Office for Administration and Planning and subject to input from the central administration. Whenever possible, the meetings with central administration officers are consolidated into a single session to permit more time for unit interaction with the external reviewers. Beginning in the fourth cycle, the internal subcommittee will participate in these interviews to eliminate duplicate efforts of those being interviewed. The visit is usually about two days in length but can be extended based on specific needs.
6. External Reviewer Report
Within ten working days of the visit, the external reviewers should provide a written assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for the unit to the Office of Administration and Planning. A joint report written by all the external reviewers is strongly encouraged. The internal subcommittee will review this report and in rare circumstances develop an addendum of key issues not addressed. The external reviewers are encouraged to make the report and recommendations as specific as possible.

The internal subcommittee should remain in contact with the external reviewers if there is any need to clarify the substance of the report. Any differences of opinion that cannot be resolved, either between external reviewers or between external reviewers and the internal subcommittee, will be clearly detailed. The final report will also redact any comments about specific individuals. These will be distributed through a confidential addendum.

7. Program Review Council Review
During the late spring, the Program Review Council reviews the reports provided by the external teams. Following their review, they meet with the internal subcommittees to have a more in-depth discussion and presentation of the report. At that time, the Program Review Council may request clarification or more details on any issues that they believe the report does not clearly address. Following this discussion, these elements are reflected in the draft implementation agreement.

Though Program Review incorporates many data elements into the process, certain statements or recommendations will inevitably be based upon perceptions. Occasionally, despite the best efforts of the reviewers and the PRC, factual errors based on misperceptions occur in the final drafts of reports. In the interest of creating a valid and trustworthy report, the unit head will be given an opportunity to review the report to ensure that there are no factual errors. If factual errors are discovered, they will be promptly corrected prior to distributing the report to the department, Dean/VP and central administration.

For academic reviews, the fact-checked final report is forwarded to the President, Provost, Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School (for units with graduate programs), and Dean of the appropriate school. In administrative reviews, it is forwarded to the President, Provost, Vice President(s) to which the unit reports.

8. Distribution of Final Report to the Unit
Once the report has been fact-checked, members of the unit receive a communication from the Vice President for Administration and Planning notifying them of the availability of the report and of the implementation meeting that will be scheduled. These reports are made available to all faculty and/or professional staff in the unit for review in the unit head’s office. The reports are considered confidential and, generally, are not to be copied or
distributed electronically. All members of the unit have the opportunity to provide comments on the report by providing them to the Office of Administration and Planning. The responses become a part of the permanent record for the review and will be distributed to members of the respective PRC subcommittee, President, Provost, Vice President for Research (as applicable), Dean of the Graduate School (as applicable), and other appropriate line administration.

9. Implementation Agreement Meetings
Following the Program Review Council meeting, OAP works with the internal subcommittee to draft the implementation agreement. This draft implementation agreement is then shared with the unit head, who is asked to draft a written response from the department for each of the recommendations. This draft response version is then circulated to those attending the implementation agreement discussion as outlined below.

A. Meeting with Central Administration, Line Head and Unit Head
The President, the Provost, Vice President for Administration and Planning, Vice President for Research, and Dean of the Graduate School meet with the dean or appropriate line officer and the unit head to discuss the results of the review and the PRC recommendations, and to agree on the next steps for implementation. Based on this discussion, each unit will then receive an explicit implementation agreement that clearly describes the agreed-upon actions to be taken and specifies who is responsible for carrying out each of these actions (central administration, Dean, and unit). The Dean/Vice President is encouraged to be explicit about any resource commitments he/she is willing (or not willing) to make. The Dean/Vice President and unit head are a clear party to the development of this agreement.

B. Line Head Meeting with Unit
Once the implementation agreement has been finalized, the Dean/Vice President and unit head should meet with the faculty or professional staff in the unit to discuss the agreement and needed implementation steps. Implementation agreements will be shared with the internal subcommittee, as well as all related Deans/Vice Presidents.

10. Communication of the Review Outcomes
A summary of findings and agreements for each unit reviewed in a given year is prepared for examination by the Board of Trustees. These summaries are also provided to the Program Review Council and to the Deans and Vice Presidents. In addition, the Board of Trustees receives a report on the progress demonstrated during the annual follow-up for those units reviewed during prior years.

Unit heads always have the option of sharing their report with related unit heads where cross-department or cross-school initiatives would be well-served.
As a highly interdisciplinary university, this is encouraged but ultimately remains a unit-level prerogative.

11. One Year Follow-Up

During previous cycles, there have been different methods utilized for the follow-up of Program Reviews. A two and four-year follow-up proved ineffective. A one-year follow-up worked better but did not incentivize continuous improvement beyond what was possible to accomplish in the first year following the review. In all cases, assigning specific responsibilities and having Deans/Vice Presidents more closely involved in monitoring follow-up has been especially effective.

Units are notified by letter of their one-year follow up in the spring following the completion of the review year. The implementation agreement provides the basis of the one-year follow-up report, and units are sent a template to use to respond (although this template has open-ended sections which allow each unit to add pertinent information). All units are instructed to work closely with their Dean or Vice President in the development of this report. The report is submitted by the unit to the Dean or Vice President, who forwards it to Administration and Planning along with his or her comments in the fall. These reports are then reviewed by members of the university’s senior administration and units receive written feedback on their progress-to-date following that meeting. All follow-up reports are also shared with the PRC subcommittee that conducted the review.

As part of the follow-up process, OAP and the Office of Institutional Research is also working on developing a set of data indicators that are provided annually to unit heads, and are in the process of defining what indicators would be most valuable for units. In some cases, there are data indicators that can be linked to specific recommendations and tracked over time (e.g. student survey feedback or research awards). However, in other cases the recommendations require a more qualitative tracking approach. Ultimately, the goal is for all unit heads to receive a set of data indicators annually to help them track progress, not just those units under review.

IX. Conclusion

The goal of Program Review is to encourage improvements in the quality of each unit at the University by providing a comprehensive and collaborative process to assess each unit on:

- Current strengths and weaknesses of the unit
- Areas of comparative opportunity
- Key issues to address in order to maximize opportunities
- Important future developments in the discipline or profession that need to be addressed in strategic planning
- The relationship of existing faculty and staff resources to these opportunities
- The quality of leadership in the unit
• Potential areas of cross-unit collaboration where the University and units’ resources could be leveraged
• The adequacy of other resources to carry out the mission of the unit

The product of this process should be plans which are explicit, realistic, and viable for helping each unit continuously improve and reach their highest aspirations.