

Strategic Assessment and Planning Process for the Academic Units at the University of Michigan

The Purpose of the Strategic Assessment

The University of Michigan is universally recognized as one of the premier research universities in the world. In order to ensure the continued high quality of its creative pursuit of excellence, the University solicits frank views and opinions through periodic strategic assessments. The strategic assessments are designed to provide the faculty, Deans and the Provost with independent and authoritative evaluations of the University's academic units, which can assist in the longer term planning efforts for the unit.

Strategic assessments are intended to provide a sharpened focus on program areas in which excellence can be achieved that will enhance national stature and assure the most efficient use of available resources. Assessments should emphasize the comparative advantage that the University of Michigan offers within the discipline or field of study.

Overview of the Strategic Assessment

The strategic assessment consists of on-going, high quality self and peer reviews of the University's schools and colleges, on a ten-year cycle. The purpose of the strategic assessment is to foster academic excellence at all levels, to determine how to raise and maintain the quality of every academic unit to a higher level, and to provide guidance for administrative decisions in support of continual future improvement.

Strategic assessments provide each unit with an opportunity to take stock of its strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate its strategies and goals, and to receive assistance from two review committees; one internal to the University, and one comprised of external academic leaders in the unit's disciplines. The review process helps units determine their comparative advantage and whether their programs are cohesive, coherent, effective, and true to their mission. The process is informal enough to accommodate the culture and goals of individual units and flexible enough to adapt as the University learns from conducting the reviews.

The Office of the Dean is primarily responsible for the strategic assessment. The Office of the Provost plays an important role of oversight and staffing of unit reviews, working closely to coordinate activities, and to facilitate the process for both appointed review committees.

The review process consists of four steps. First, the Office of the Provost will provide a series of data displays to the academic unit (see Appendix A). The data will include current and past student enrollment, faculty size, sponsored research, applications, staffing and budgets. The data displays may be supplemented by the unit if the faculty sees the need for additional information.

Second, the Dean will direct the preparation of a self-assessment. The self-assessment provides an opportunity for the unit to judge its own success in establishing and meeting its goals and the goals of the University. A key part of the self-assessment is the unit's critical assessment of its strengths and weaknesses in its teaching and research programs and, where relevant, its clinical programs. The Provost may also ask the unit to address particular issues or questions relevant to the unit's role in the university (see Appendix B). Academic units should focus on the comparative advantage that their program brings to their discipline, and focus on the future direction of the unit. Preparation of the self-study can be done using the unit's existing planning and budget structure or by appointing a group specifically designed to assist in the self-study (see Appendix C). Before embarking on the self-assessment, the dean should explicitly review his or her plan for completing the self-assessment component with the Provost. Some units will be encouraged to also submit their strategic plan; others will use the self-assessment process as a springboard for developing a future strategic plan.

Note: When writing the self-assessment, please be reminded that the need to be comprehensive does not necessarily mean the document should be exhaustive. The document should be reader friendly, acronym free, and fairly consistent across programs/departments. The goal is to inform your reviewers, not overwhelm them. Typically anything over 100 pages is too much (not including CVs or appendices).

Third, two separate external committees will be appointed to assist in the review. The University Advisory Committee is comprised of three to six University of Michigan faculty members who are not affiliated with the unit under review (see Appendix D). In addition, an External Review Committee, consisting of three to six distinguished scholars from outside the university is appointed (see Appendix E). Both committees are chosen by the Provost in consultation with the Dean of the academic unit. Depending upon the size and complexity of the unit, the reviews are conducted over a two- to three-day period (see Appendix F). External reviewers need to gain an understanding both of the scope of programmatic offerings in the unit and the unit's effectiveness in delivering its programs by talking with faculty, students and staff from the academic unit. If not included in the self-assessment, the unit will be responsible for providing current information to the review committees (see Appendix G). Each committee will then produce a report offering opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the academic unit, both within the context of the University, and within the future of the discipline or profession worldwide.

Fourth, the academic unit will provide the Provost with a revision of their self-assessment that incorporates responses to the review committees' conclusions. This final report should acknowledge and address the positive and negative aspects of the review committees' findings, and include any modifications in light of the review comments.

On the whole, strategic assessments will:

1. Provide a concise, honest appraisal of an academic unit's strengths and weaknesses.

2. Be evaluative, not just descriptive. Plans for improvement require academic judgments about the quality of the program, students, curriculum, resources and future directions.
3. Incorporate expert assessment provided by reviewers from other institutions of high quality.
4. Be forward looking. While assessment of a program's current status is important, priorities for continual future growth and development are of greatest concern.

APPENDIX A

Data Displays Provided to the Academic Unit from the Office of Budgeting and Planning

The following will be provided to the unit prior to conducting the self-assessment.

- Tenure and tenure track faculty member instructional profile and activity summary for the last six years
- Regular not on track instructional profile and activity summary for the past year
- Lecturer instructional profile and activity summary for the last six years
- Regular clinical instructional staff instructional profile and activity summary for the last six years
- Faculty and staff FTE distribution for the last six years
- Tenured and tenure track instructional activity listing for the past year: hiring
- Tenured and tenure track instructional activity listing for the past year: attrition
- Tenured and tenure track instructional activity listing for the past year: promotion
- Instructional staff listing as of November 1 of the current year
- Glossary for faculty and staff data displays

APPENDIX B

List of Possible Questions to be Addressed During the Self-Assessment

General Questions for all Academic Units

1. What are the most significant strengths of your unit? What are the most important things that you could do to build those strengths?
2. What are the most worrisome weaknesses within your unit? What are the most important things you could do to shore them up?
3. What are the directions in which your best competitors are headed? How do these directions compare to the direction in which your unit is headed? What will set you apart from the crowd yet distinguish you among your peer schools?
4. What are the comparative advantages or definitive strengths of your unit at the University of Michigan, relative to the very best schools or universities within your field across the nation and the world? What does the constellation of the University of Michigan give you as an advantage? What collaborations and activities within the University and with other units here would you like to see emerge in the next few years?
5. How can you exploit collaborations in the furtherance of your goals? What do you need elsewhere in UM to reach your goals?
6. What do you want to look like in ten (10) years?
7. What implications do your plans have for undergraduate education? Graduate and professional education?
8. How do your goals enhance your educational values?
9. What implications do your plans have for collaborations here and elsewhere?
10. What are the implications for increased outreach and public service?
11. Diversity, along many dimensions, remains an important goal of the University. How will your plans enhance the diversity within the unit, within the profession, and within the University?

APPENDIX C

Suggested Information to be Included within the Self-Assessment

The following types of data might accompany the self-assessment. The external review committees may request clarification or additions to this information.

Organizational Chart

- 1) Glossary of acronyms if appropriate

Quality Indicators

- 2) Surveys, national rankings and metrics of excellence
- 3) Undergraduate student quality data (summarized by department, if applicable)
 - a) Numbers of applicants, admits, and newly enrolled students
 - b) Admit rate and yield (conversion rate)
 - c) Quality data, such as high school GPA and standardized test scores (SATs)
 - d) Diversity of new and/or enrolled students, including gender and ethnicity
 - e) Trend data so we can see change over time on these measures
- 4) Graduate student quality data (same as list above)
- 5) Faculty scholarship
 - a) New sponsored project grants
 - b) Total awards, past five years
 - c) Expenditures, past five years
 - d) Number of proposals submitted/funded by year
 - e) Major awards, e.g., federally-funded “center” grants, grants over \$1 million, high prestige grants, “young investigator” awards
- 6) Faculty quality indicators, including major prizes and awards, membership in national academies

Academic Programs

- 1) Enrollment by department/degree program for the past 10 years
- 2) Number of courses taught in the school or department
 - a) Number of undergraduates enrolled by class size
 - b) Percentage of undergraduate classes by size
- 3) Advisement

- 4) Assessment of Student Learning and Educational Effectiveness (accomplishment of learners at an appropriate level of performance for the degrees awarded)

Graduate education:

- a) Ph.D. placements
- b) Dissertation and thesis evaluation
- c) Passage rates on professional entry examinations
- d) Performance on Masters Degree examinations (alternatives to thesis)
- e) Portfolios of music, art, architecture, etc.
- f) Other learning assessments

Undergraduate education:

- a) Performance on examinations
- b) Quality of honors theses
- c) Assessment of artistic performances, design portfolios, compositions, etc.
- d) Selection for all-University honors (Renaissance Scholars, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Beta Kappa)
- e) Selection for national honors (Fulbright, Luce, Marshall, Rhodes, Truman Scholarships, etc.)
- f) Performance on GRE's, MCAT's, et al.
- g) Continuation to higher degrees (quality of institutions accepting graduates)
- h) Job placement rate
- i) Employer surveys of job performance

Resources

- 1) Financial operations data
- 2) Table of gifts (3-5 years) and fundraising goals
- 3) Graduate student fellowships and endowments (3-5 years)
- 4) Facilities and space (describe any issues with current facilities and space)
- 5) Computers, libraries and information access
- 6) Learning resources
- 7) Staff support (describe any issues with staff support)

Governance

- 1) List associate chairs, divisional directors, and chairs of major committees
- 2) List student associations, honor societies, and their student officers

Profiles of highly ranked peer institutions

APPENDIX D

University Advisory Committee

Appointments to the University Advisory Committee may include faculty and researchers from non-affiliated units within the University of Michigan. They focus on the role of the unit within the context of the University of Michigan in areas such as collaboration, and added value to the institution.

The selection process for the University Advisory Committee will be as follows:

1. The Dean of the academic unit will submit a list of potential University of Michigan faculty and/or researchers and their qualifications to the Provost, in consultation with appropriate faculty committees. These nominees should be people of stature who can review an entire school, college or division including a variety of subspecialties, if necessary. The Provost will also solicit recommendations from other units. Efforts will be made to assure that reviewers have sufficient independence from the unit (no joint appointments) and that reviewers represent a balance of faculty in administrative and non-administrative positions.
2. The Provost will select three to six nominees as the University Advisory Committee.

The schedule for the review committee begins with the University Advisory Committee receiving its charge from the Provost. Following this, the committee meets with the Dean of the unit; the chairs of the major departments, institutes and centers; representative faculty; and students. The University Advisory Committee also has opportunities to meet with the unit's planning and budget committee and administrative leadership.

After a period of discussion and preliminary drafting of the written report, the review committee meets first with the dean and then with the Provost to present oral reports in exit interviews. At the conclusion of, or shortly after the site visit, the committee will provide a written assessment of five to ten pages to the academic unit for use in revising their self-assessment. The Dean and faculty then have the opportunity to discuss the report and write a response to the review.

APPENDIX E

External Review Committees

Appointments to the Executive Review Committee may include deans of peer schools and other leading academics in the unit's disciplines. They focus on the coherence of programs within the unit and on the balance among programs. In those units without a departmental structure, the reviewers spend time familiarizing themselves with programmatic issues. In the larger units, the committee is furnished with a full set of departmental reviews, if available.

The selection process for the External Review Committee will be as follows:

1. The Dean of the academic unit will submit a list of potential external consultants and their qualifications to the Provost, in consultation with appropriate faculty committees. These nominees should be people of stature who can review an entire school, college or division including a variety of subspecialties, if necessary. The Provost will also solicit recommendations from noted field experts. Efforts will be made to assure that visitors have sufficient independence from University of Michigan faculty and that visitors represent a balance of faculty in administrative and non-administrative positions.
3. The Provost will select three to six nominees as the external visiting committee.

The schedule for the review committee begins with the External Review Committee receiving its charge from the Provost. Following this, the committee meets with the Dean of the unit; the chairs of the major departments, institutes and centers; representative faculty; and students. The External Review Committee also has opportunities to meet with the unit's planning and budget committee and administrative leadership.

After a period of discussion and preliminary drafting of the written report, the review committee meets first with the dean and then with the Provost to present oral reports in exit interviews. At the conclusion of, or shortly after the external committee's site visit, the committee will provide a written assessment of five to ten pages to the academic unit for use in revising their self-assessment. The Dean and faculty then have the opportunity to discuss the report and write a response to the review.

The Office of the Provost will make all travel arrangements for the External Review Committee including transportation from and to the airport, as well as hotel accommodations. The Office of the Provost will also cover a stipend for the review committee members and all expenses associated with the review.

APPENDIX F

Sample Agenda for Review Committees

Units are responsible for setting the agenda during the reviews, with consultation from the Office of the Provost. They are also responsible for coordinating transportation to and from meeting sites, and meals/snacks during the review. Please submit a draft agenda to the Office of the Provost approximately 6 weeks prior to the review date.

University Advisory Committee

Generally the University Advisory Committee visits for a day or two half-day sessions. The following meetings are suggested.

Day 1: Overview of process- Provost, Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs and Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs

Unit Executive Committee
Department Chairs/Directors
Students
Junior Faculty
Dean and Associate Deans
Tour of Facilities

External Review Committee

Generally the External Review Committee visits for a full two days, with a welcome dinner the evening prior to the review. The Provost and Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs should be invited to the welcome dinner. The first and last meetings of the review should include the Provost, Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs, and the Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs. The length of each meeting will vary depending on the group, and last anywhere between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Please be cognizant of the committee's need for an occasional break (every hour or so). It has been helpful for the review committees to have "working meals" during lunch and dinner to collect their observations and opinions.

Day 1: Social dinner with unit

Day 2: Breakfast with Provost, Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs, and Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs

Various meetings with Dean, Associate Deans, directors, faculty, students, researchers.

Facilities tour

Day 3:

Any necessary meetings that couldn't fit into Day 2

Debrief with Dean

Wrap up with Provost, Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs and Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs

Working meeting to finish report

APPENDIX G

Unit Specific Information Provided to Review Committees

Please submit one copy of the following materials to the Provost's Office approximately 6 weeks prior to the review date. If these items are already included in the self-assessment, there is no need to send duplicates.

- Faculty Curriculum Vitas
- Information on Research Programs
- Information on Educational Programs
- Summary of student composition