DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS: LESSONS LEARNED

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AIR Webinar
3-6-19 at 2 pm ET

THE PRESENTER

- **Ute S. Lahaie, Ph.D.**
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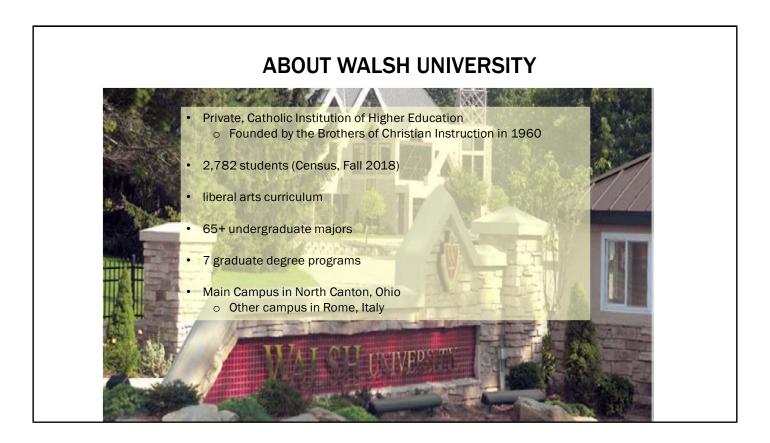 ulahaie@walsh.edu

OBJECTIVES

- Rationale for developing a program review system that aligns with assessment
- How the program review process aligns with the budgeting and strategic planning processes
- Make-up and role of the program review committee

- Pitfalls and problems with the implementation of a program review process
- Lessons learned from implementing a new program review process

The objectives for this presentation are to:
- Introduce the rationale for developing a program review system that aligns with assessment
- Show how the program review process serves to provide alignment with the budgeting and planning processes
- Share information on the make-up and role of the program review committee

I will also share lessons learned regarding pitfalls and problems with the implementation of a program review process and talk about how those lessons helped us overcome the obstacles we encountered and, ultimately, helped us improve our new program review process.

I also want to add a full disclosure to all attendees of today's webinar: I gave different versions of this presentation, first at the Ohio Association of Institutional Research (OAIRP) conference in Fall 2017, and then at the 2018 AIR Forum in Orlando, Florida.

ABOUT WALSH UNIVERSITY

- Private, Catholic Institution of Higher Education
  - Founded by the Brothers of Christian Instruction in 1960

- 2,782 students (Census, Fall 2018)

- liberal arts curriculum

- 65+ undergraduate majors

- 7 graduate degree programs

- Main Campus in North Canton, Ohio
  - Other campus in Rome, Italy

Walsh University is a private, faith-based liberal arts institution in the Catholic tradition. It is a relatively young institution that was founded by the Brothers of Christian Instruction in 1960 in North Canton, which is located in Northeast Ohio, one hour south of Cleveland.

The Carnegie Classification of Walsh University is that of a Master's College and University: Medium Program with a high undergraduate enrollment. In Fall 2018, the university enrolled 2,782 students, the majority of whom were undergraduate students majoring in one of our 65+ undergraduate majors. The university also has 7 graduate degree programs in Business, Education, the Health Sciences, and Theology. Of special note is the global learning focus of our institution, with regular faculty-led global learning trips to Walsh's campus in Rome, Italy.

THE PROBLEM

Program Review	• No formalized program review process until 2016 • Regular program reviews limited to programs with external accreditors
Assessment	• Limited impact on identifying opportunities for the growth of the academic programs
Budget & Strategic Plan	• Limited connections of assessment and program review to the strategic planning and budgeting processes

Until 2016, Walsh did not have a formalized program review process. Regular program reviews were limited to programs with external accreditors. The 2016 Program Prioritization Process that was conducted for all academic programs was the first systematic review process in which all programs were asked to respond to data. Prior to that time, program reviews were only ad hoc.
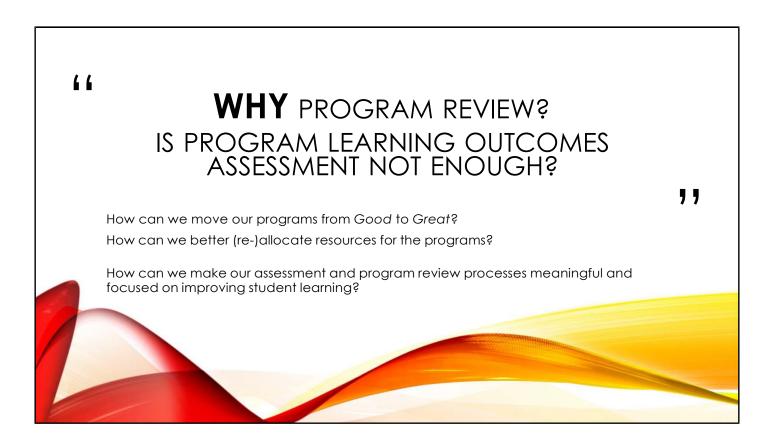
The university had an established annual academic program assessment process. However, this process had limited impact on identifying opportunities for the growth of academic programs, and it had limited connections to the strategic planning and budgeting processes. A systematically conducted Program Review Process would ensure a systematic review of all curricular and co-curricular programs for the purpose of continuous improvement, while at the same time more closely aligning program review and assessment with the strategic planning and budgeting processes.

In summer 2016, the Academic Vice President at Walsh University appointed a Program Prioritization Task Force (PPTF) that was charged with reviewing all academic programs. The purpose of this review was twofold: a) During a time of tight budgets, there was a need to prioritize programs in order to optimize resources, and b) there was a need to establish a practice of regular program reviews in compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's criteria for the institution's upcoming reaccreditation. The Program Prioritization process was based on Robert Dickeson's 2010 publication entitled *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*. The chair and co-chair of the Program Prioritization Taskforce conducted a series of meetings with all schools and departments to explain the program prioritization process and get advice on the best way to structure

the request for feedback. Based on the guidance from chairs/deans and survey results, a data sheet was assembled for each unit. Information included: Data on its inquiries/applications/accepts/enrolls, low enrollment courses, cost per student credit hour, degrees awarded in the discipline (and compared with statewide ratios), courses taught by tenured/fulltime/adjunct faculty, and responses from graduates on their perceived level of preparation for the workforce or graduate school.
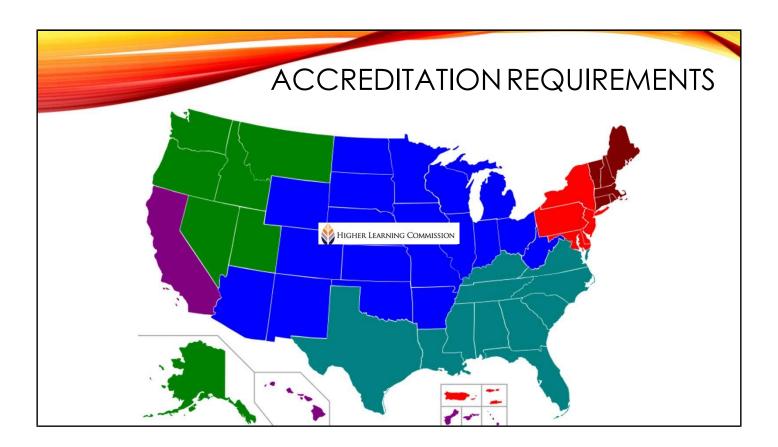
Along with the data sheet, units received a response sheet which queried them about:

- History of the program and recent changes to meet student and community needs
- Relevance of the program to Walsh's mission, core values, and strategic plan
- Demand for graduates of the program and relevance of the discipline to meet those needs
- Quality and distinctiveness of the program
- Response to information on the data sheet
- Opportunity analysis: How will the program address concerns and grow?

WHY PROGRAM REVIEW?
IS PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT NOT ENOUGH?

How can we move our programs from *Good* to *Great*?
How can we better (re-)allocate resources for the programs?

How can we make our assessment and program review processes meaningful and focused on improving student learning?

"Why Program Review? Is Program Learning Outcomes Assessment not Enough?" This was a question that we discussed at great length at our institution in 2017-18, which marked the year that followed the 2016 Program Prioritization Process. In this time of tight budgets and uneven growth of different programs, we needed to continue the process established with Program Prioritization that allowed us to better reallocate resources. Continuing to cut operational budgets across the board for all programs did not make any sense in light of the fact that some of the programs had experienced rapid growth and needed additional staffing or other resources. As part of this question, we also asked "How can we move our programs from *Good* to *Great*?" How can we distinguish ourselves as an institution? How can we better (re-)allocate resources for the programs to ensure that we strengthen the programs that are growing?

The Provost first asked these questions at Dean's Council, then charged the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment with developing a program review proposal. The Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment also presented these questions for discussion at the meeting of the university program assessment committee. The overarching question was: "How can we develop a program review process that is meaningful and focused on **continuous improvement** for the purpose of *improving student learning?*"

Walsh is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, which accredits colleges and universities in a 19-state region of the United States, shown in blue on the map.

Program review (along with assessment and strategic planning) is essential to the institutional accreditation process, as specified in the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria and Core Components for Accreditation. The evaluation of programs for their effectiveness for student learning and the continuous improvement of educational programs and services are at the core of the institutional accreditation process. According to the Higher Learning Commission's criteria for accreditation, the purpose of program review is to align the review and assessment processes with strategic planning and budgeting with the purpose of continuously improving student learning.

THE SOLUTION: A PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE 2016 PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Program Prioritization Process (2016-17): Walsh's first comprehensive program review

Based on Robert Dickeson's Program Prioritization model

All academic programs had to complete a response form:
- describing the program's contribution to the institution's mission,
- responding to data, and
- describing the program's quality and opportunity analysis

The Program Prioritization TaskForce (PPTF) conducted a rubric evaluation of the program responses
- assigned a traffic-light rating
- complemented the ratings with recommendations
- compiled recommendations into a report to the senior administration for the purpose of resource (re-)allocation

Following the successful completion of the Program Prioritization Process, which was led by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Provost requested a proposal for a new program review process.

My research of different models for program review showed that a carefully designed and regular program review process can integrate otherwise separate processes by including program assessment outcomes—how well the programs are achieving their student learning goals—and resource allocations for goals that align with the university's strategic plan.
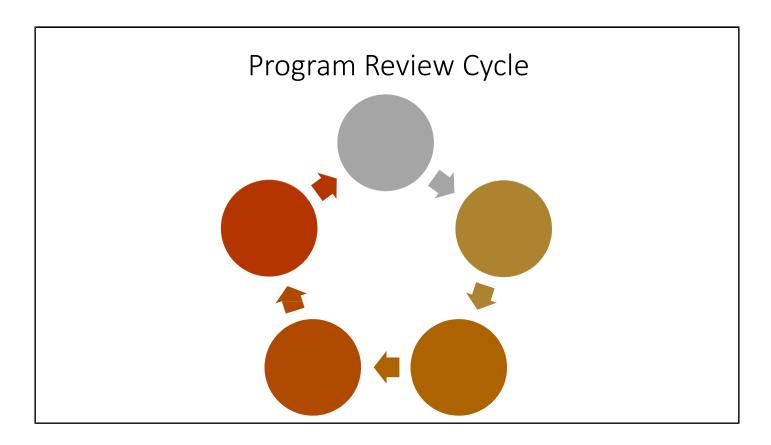
It was clear that the 2016 Program Prioritization Process was ideally suited to serve as a baseline for a new review process of academic programs as it served a twofold purpose: a) to optimize resources, and b) to establish a practice of regular program reviews in compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's criteria for reaccreditation. During the Program Prioritization Process, each academic program received data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment. The programs were asked to provide a report consisting of an abbreviated self-study along with a response to the data. All units received a program-specific data sheet and completed a response form describing their program's history, contribution to the mission, quality and distinctiveness, regional and national demand for their graduates, and an opportunity analysis. The Program Prioritization Task Force (PPTF) completed a rubric evaluating each program's responses with a traffic-light rating and reported recommendations to senior administrators for resource (re-) allocation.

Members of the PPTF reviewed the program responses using a rubric adapted with permission from Boise State University, and assigned one of the following tags:
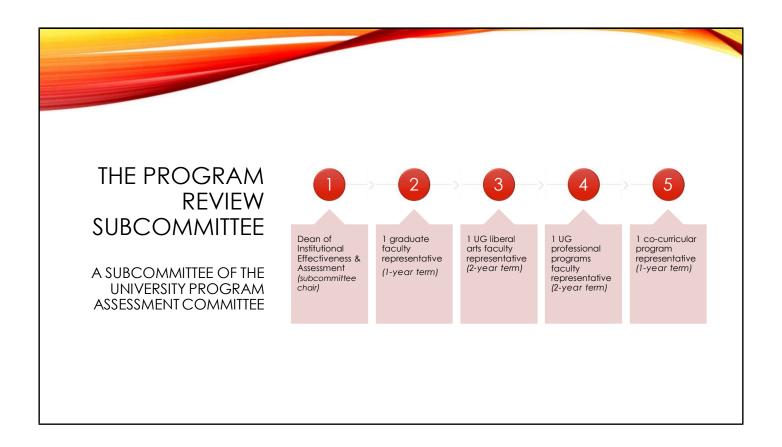
- GREEN: All is well with this program. Funding and staffing are at appropriate levels and opportunity analysis promises future viability.
- YELLOW: Shortfalls (staff, curriculum, facilities) must be addressed. Enhanced resources could help this program thrive based on opportunity analysis
- ORANGE: Closer analysis is required to craft plans for an ideal future for this program.
- RED: Great effort required to improve this this program. Extensive overhaul required.

The program review proposal was designed to integrate the well-established Annual Program Assessment Process and the 2016 Program Prioritization Process by asking programs to provide annual responses to data and to report outcomes of the prior year annual assessment process. A proper timing of the annual reports would ensure that the results can be used for budgetary considerations. These annual reports would be followed by a more in-depth comprehensive (five-year) report that combines the results of the annual reports with additional questions designed to promote deeper reflection about the program's effectiveness. This review process was designed to include both academic and co-curricular programs.
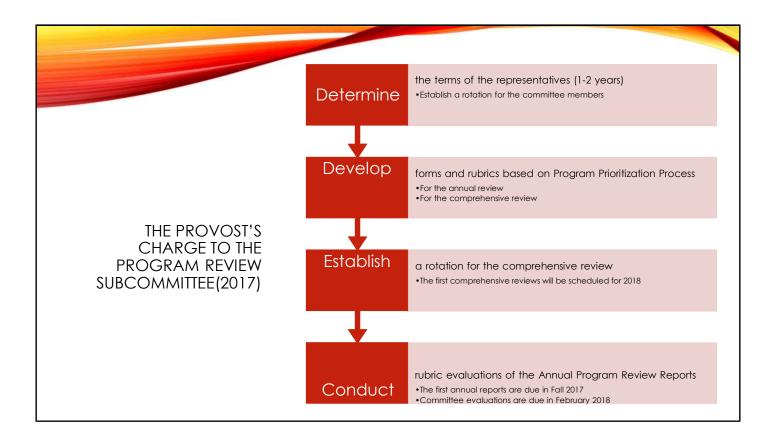
The proposal included concessions for programs with external accreditation requirements, allowing them to substitute the institution's comprehensive program review with the self-study report submitted to external accreditors. However, programs with external accreditation requirements still needed to report on actions from the annual assessment process. This multi-year report was designed to allow units to engage in a deeper self-study, to identify important issues and challenges, to get support and suggestions on how to meet those challenges, and to communicate priorities to the academic leadership.

Program Review Cycle

This model shows the proposed program review cycle. In year 1 of the new program review process, which was scheduled to begin in 2017-18, all programs would need to submit an annual report consisting of responses to the "Question(s) of the Year". A rotation for the comprehensive reviews would then need to be established. Starting in 2018-19, the first group of programs would be asked to submit a comprehensive review with the goal of completing the first round of comprehensive reviews of all programs in 2022-23. When not undergoing a comprehensive review, programs would need to submit annual reports.

THE PROGRAM REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE UNIVERSITY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

1 Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment *(subcommittee chair)*

2 1 graduate faculty representative *(1-year term)*

3 1 UG liberal arts faculty representative *(2-year term)*

4 1 UG professional programs faculty representative *(2-year term)*

5 1 co-curricular program representative *(1-year term)*

In summer 2017, the Provost approved the Program Review proposal that was built on the foundation of the 2016 Program Prioritization Process and asked the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment to form a program review committee. To avoid adding yet another committee to Walsh's existing committee structure, the Provost proposed to form a subcommittee of the university program assessment committee. The 5-member subcommittee would consist of a graduate faculty representative, an undergraduate faculty member representing the liberal arts, an undergraduate faculty member representing professional programs, and one staff member representing co-curricular programs

Determine	the terms of the representatives (1-2 years) •Establish a rotation for the committee members	
Develop	forms and rubrics based on Program Prioritization Process •For the annual review •For the comprehensive review	
Establish	a rotation for the comprehensive review •The first comprehensive reviews will be scheduled for 2018	
Conduct	rubric evaluations of the Annual Program Review Reports •The first annual reports are due in Fall 2017 •Committee evaluations are due in February 2018	

THE PROVOST'S CHARGE TO THE PROGRAM REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE(2017)

The Provost charged the subcommittee with determining the lengths of terms of the committee representatives to ensure a rotation of the committee, to develop forms and rubrics for both the annual and the comprehensive review processes, to establish a rotation for the comprehensive reviews, with the goal of conducting the first comprehensive reviews in 2018, and to conduct rubric evaluations of the first annual program review reports in the beginning of spring 2018 (the first annual reports were scheduled to be due in fall 2017). The subcommittee went quickly to work and reported on their progress to the university program assessment committee.

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & ASSESSMENT

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment provides data and information about the university to internal and external stakeholders through primary and secondary research and coordinates outcomes assessment for the university.
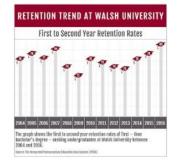
Mission

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment advances the University's mission by providing leadership and support in the areas of institutional research, assessment and accreditation.

This mission is achieved through the following goals:

1. Collaborate with academic units to foster a culture of continuous improvement through ongoing review, assessment, evaluation and action to improve student learning.
2. Coordinate institutional reporting of data to state and federal agencies, accrediting agencies, non-profit associations and other organizations.
3. Coordinate a comprehensive system of program reviews in support of the mission and strategic goals of the university.
4. Collect, analyze and disseminate information in support of institutional decision-making, planning, reporting, and grant writing.

MyWalsh University Portal

Walsh University students, faculty and staff can view additional assessment data, survey results and other information by logging in to the **MyWalsh Unviersity Portal** and clicking on Resources then Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment.

RETENTION TREND AT WALSH UNIVERSITY

First to Second Year Retention Rates

2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016

The graph shows the first to second year retention rates of first – time bachelor's degree – seeking undergraduates at Walsh University between 2004 and 2016.

Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

https://www.walsh.edu/institutional-effectiveness-assessment

To ensure transparency and to make data available to those charged with completing program review reports, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment created a new website and collaborated with the university program assessment committee on crafting a mission statement.

TRANSPARENCY AND AVAILABILITY OF DATA:
NEW PASSWORD PROTECTED PORTAL

Faculty and deans involved in the program review process could access data in a new password protected institutional effectiveness site that was added to the university's intranet and linked from the Institutional Effectiveness website.

THE PROBLEM:
IT IS ALL IN THE (BAD) TIMING…

Following the program review subcommittee's activities, the Provost asked the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness to present the new program review process to the Deans' Council in Fall 2017. The goals were to introduce the new program and to announce the timeline for the first annual program reviews.

The presentation was met with a lot of push-back during the Deans' Council meeting. A major concern raised was the perceived top-down implementation of the process without first involving the deans. Another concern was directed at the make-up of the program review committee. The fellow deans questioned the rationale for forming a committee that was a subcommittee of the university program assessment committee. The concerns were that both processes were seen as separate, and the deans felt that program review was not a process to be governed by the assessment committee. Further, the deans felt that the review committee should be at the deans' level, as the reviews consist of responses to data points that assessment coordinators typically don't deal with.
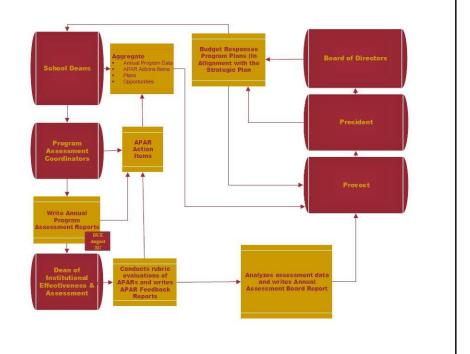
AND NOW:
THE REST OF THE STORY…

The Revised Program Review Process at Walsh

Changes:

• The Program Review Subcommittee is dissolved

• School Deans submit the program review report directly to the Provost

What remains:

• Alignment between program assessment, program review, budget and strategic planning

The compromise for fall 2017 was to conduct the first annual review process without the involvement of a committee. The agreement was made that deans would submit their annual program review reports directly to the Provost. The program review committee—the subcommittee of the university program assessment committee—was dissolved.
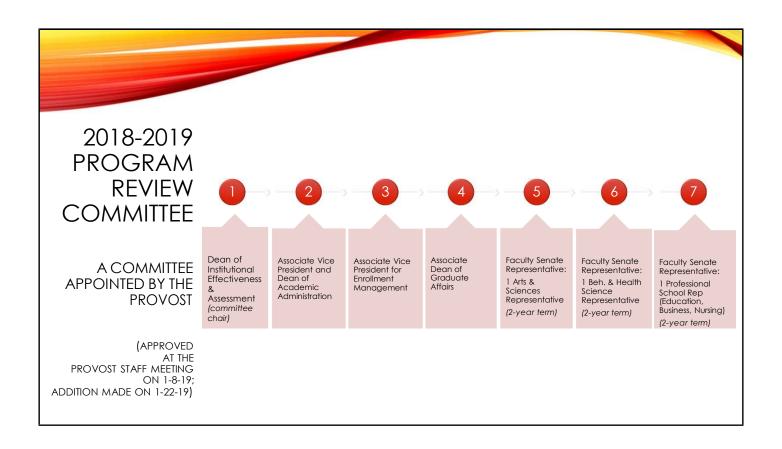
LESSONS LEARNED
FROM IMPLEMENTING A NEW
PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

The solution, which was a result of this compromise negotiated during the Deans' Council meeting, turned out to be flawed. The deans had submitted their annual reports in which they responded to several "questions of the year," to the Provost. The Provost then charged the former dean of Institutional Effectiveness, who currently serves as consultant for the accreditation process, with providing a summary report. The report turned out to be exactly that: a summary. It was apparent that the with the dissolved program review committee there was now a lack of process. The program review process was not "anchored" into any existing processes.

There were several important lessons learned from this "bumpy" implementation of a new program review process:

1. I had falsely assumed that I would not need to hold forum meetings and meetings with the school deans by establishing a new system of program reviews that was built on the on the 2016 program prioritization process.

2. When implementing the program review process in 2017, my focus was on "getting the work done." The emphasis of the work with the program review subcommittee was placed on fulfilling the Provost's charge and on meeting the tight deadlines presented to us. In short, we went straight into the "weeds" instead of starting with the "big picture" by first involving important stakeholders while renegotiating deadlines with the Provost.

3. To remedy the fact that the program review process was not anchored into any existing processes, I drafted a Program Review Policy which I presented to the Provost along with different models for a new program review committee. The Provost saw the need for both the policy and the committee and asked me to present both at the

next Deans' Council meeting.

4. Soliciting feedback for the program review policy and the make-up of the committee from the deans proved to be very positive: the Program Review Policy and the new program review committee were approved at the Deans' Council meeting.

5. At the meeting, I also requested the deans' input regarding the proposed rotation schedule for the comprehensive reviews. They appreciated the fact that I gave them the opportunity to renegotiate the proposed review schedule for the comprehensive program reviews.

6. I then met with the chair of the Faculty Senate to share the good news about the new program review committee that now had 3 Faculty Senate representatives. This announcement was well received, and the Faculty Senate announced the elections of the Faculty Senate representatives.

7. The process of implementing the new program review process may have gone much smoother had I started by involving the deans in the process during the first year rather than being initially focused on "delivering results." At the same time, the deans were much more open to the idea of implementing program review as they were more aware of accrediting requirements due to the fact that the entire university is currently deeply involved in the re-accreditation process.

2018-2019 PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE

A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE PROVOST

(APPROVED AT THE PROVOST STAFF MEETING ON 1-8-19; ADDITION MADE ON 1-22-19)

1 Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment *(committee chair)*

2 Associate Vice President and Dean of Academic Administration

3 Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management

4 Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs

5 Faculty Senate Representative: 1 Arts & Sciences Representative *(2-year term)*

6 Faculty Senate Representative: 1 Beh. & Health Science Representative *(2-year term)*

7 Faculty Senate Representative: 1 Professional School Rep (Education, Business, Nursing) *(2-year term)*

The newly approved program review committee, which is still chaired by the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment, now consists of 4 standing members of the upper-level administration along with 3 elected representatives of the Faculty Senate. The charge of the committee is to conduct rubric evaluations of both the annual and the comprehensive reviews while providing formative feedback for the annual reports and summative feedback for the comprehensive reports. The goal is to produce reports to the senior administration that include recommendations for resource (re-)allocation.

Questions and Discussion

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