

Academic Program Review Improvement Effort (APRIE) Project Final Report

October 2022

Summary

This report summarizes the effort to improve the Academic Program Review process at UAF. It provides background information on the project, an overview of the problems identified within the Academic Program Review process, key changes made to solve these problems, and the next steps in the implementation of the redesigned process.

Background

Academic Program Review (APR) is required to comply with accreditation standards and with Board of Regents' policy and regulation 10.06. APR at UAF had not been significantly revised since 2012. Recent expedited and budget-driven special reviews of programs have left faculty wary (and weary) of the process, and our accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), provided constructive recommendations to improve the program reviewing process during our most recent accreditation review. Since all active degree and certificate programs underwent expedited reviews in 2019-20 and 2020-21, UAF paused its academic program review process in 2021-22 to conduct a thorough assessment and revisioning of the process.

Process Improvement Goals

- Address recommendations from NWCCU and incorporate disaggregated student success data into the process.
- Create a more formative, improvement-focused process rather than a summative evaluation environment.
- Improve morale and culture of academic program review at UAF.
- Strengthen understanding of and trust in the provided data for program review.

APRIE Members and Working Team

APRIE Team Members

- Sarah Stanley*, Faculty Fellow in Assessment and Accreditation, Associate Professor of English
- Chantelle McGinness, Director, Office of Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research
- Madara Mason, Associate Director of Teaching & Learning, Faculty Development
- Carrie Baker, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Professor of Theatre & Film
- Kelly Ott, Performance Analyst, Office of Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research
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- Michelle Strickland*, Accreditation Coordinator, Office of the Provost

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Early contributors

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- Mark Herrmann, Dean, College of Business and Security Management
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- Nicole Lamers, Performance Analyst, Office of Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research
- Sheena Tanner, Fiscal Officer, College of Rural and Community Development
- Trent Sutton, Professor and Associate Dean, College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences
- Keith Swarner, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Community and Technical College
- Meryem Udden, Governance Manager and Faculty Senate Coordinator

Steering Committee

- Anupma Prakash, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
- Alexandra Fitts, Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Chantelle McGinness, Director, Office of Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research
- Sandra Wildfeuer, Past President, UAF Faculty Senate, Associate Professor of Mathematics
- Deana Waters, Program Advisor and Assistant Professor, Paralegal Studies

PIT Crew facilitators

- Amy Bristor, Alaska Advantage & Dual Enrollment Coordinator, eCampus
- Amber Leytem, Process Improvement Project Manager, Office of Management and Budget
- Briana Walters, Director, Office of Management & Budget

APRIE Team Process

- Theory, Facilitation and Discovery

January 2021

- Multiple stakeholders in the existing process participated in a detailed mapping of the then-current program review process and identified process rubs (which are defined as barriers to optimal productivity, quality, accuracy and/or faculty/staff/student satisfaction).
- Process rubs were identified in the following areas: communication, data, review content, review committees, scheduling/timing.

- New World Development

January-July 2021

- Multiple stakeholders participated in discussions leading to: mapping out a new world process, performance targeting for the redesigned process, identification of breakthrough concepts, and creation of an optimal new-world process flowchart.
- The group then undertook implementation planning and preparation for the many moving parts of the new process design.

- Change Implementation

July 2021-August 2022

- The committee met weekly to monitor task completion progress, troubleshoot challenges and celebrate successes in the following thematic categories in the implementation process:
 - 1.1 Cycle & Timing
 - 1.2 Review Structure
 - 1.3 Data
 - 1.4 Training
 - 1.5 Communications

- Communication

- 2021-22 academic year: communications to various stakeholder groups, including deans/directors, department chairs, Faculty Senate, UNAC.
- 2022-23 academic year: training for data liaisons, deans/directors, department chairs, department faculty, and review committees.

Problems Identified

The discovery phase identified issues that stakeholders had with the process:

- Inconsistent or infrequent communication/notification to departments about important issues such as scheduled review meetings.
- Concerns with the availability and definitions of the provided data, which often led to ad hoc requests to Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research (PAIR) for revised or personalized department data on short notice during a busy time of year for PAIR.

- Financial data that was not consistent in how it was prepared or provided, depending on the academic unit and staffing.
- Multiple detailed manual processes that took administrative time and effort, and led to difficulties keeping ahead of deadlines in the review process.
- Low faculty morale due to constant threat or perceived threat of program cuts.

Early Wins

- Increased participation from faculty in the review structure: where the past process had one faculty committee of 8-10 representatives from across campus, now each college/school doing full reviews has a committee that includes five or more faculty (eg. 15 faculty serving on committees in 2022-23). The report portal is shared in a way that encourages more department faculty to participate in preparing the report.
- Involvement of data liaisons, individuals who weren't necessarily involved in program review in the past, who are now lending their expertise and perspective to the process.
- Consistency in the financial data prepared and provided to academic units in a full review utilizing a standardized template with detailed instructions for program review financial data preparation.
- Power BI data dashboard and reporting template/portal have received positive early feedback from departments, deans and leadership. Having access to program review data for all programs regardless of their review phase is particularly game-changing for departments.

Key Changes Made

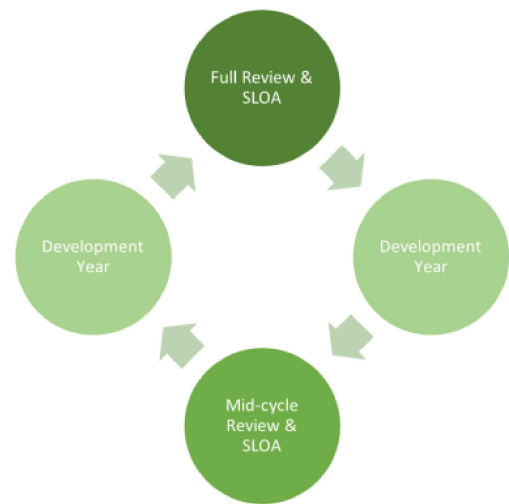
- Address recommendations from NWCCU and incorporate disaggregated student success data into the process.
 - The committee has addressed recommendations from NWCCU and incorporated disaggregated student success data into departmental data sets. Department chairs have been trained on how to read these new data sets. Data Liaisons will be able to assist departments in understanding this data and brainstorming ways to address equity gaps that the data might reveal.
- Create a more formative, improvement-focused process rather than a summative evaluation environment.
 - Moving review committees to the colleges and schools will enable programs to get more specific feedback from peers who are most familiar with the programs. The college review committee feedback form is focused on program improvement and formative feedback tags targeted at program development.
- Improve morale and culture of academic program review at UAF.
 - The committee anticipates the changes to the APR process will improve faculty morale and transform the culture of these reviews on campus. The committee focused specifically on involving faculty in this revisioning process and addressing faculty concerns. In spring 2022, APRIE committee members met with chair councils across the

university and presented changes to faculty department chairs. The response to the changes was overwhelmingly positive. Academic year 2022-23 will be the first year implementing the new process, and we hope by spring 2023 to see that changing the feedback focus and overall environment of program review and streamlining the reporting process has had a positive impact on faculty morale.

- Strengthen trust in the provided data for program review.
 - Major changes to departmental data are being implemented through this new process. The APRIE committee is confident that huge strides have been made to provide accurate, reliable, regularly available program data. PAIR was directly involved in the process, along with fiscal officers from specific colleges.

Track 1: Cycle and Timing

- Under the previous APR process, UAF used a five-year cycle with Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) reporting happening separately on a two-year cycle. The new APR process uses a four-year cycle and integrates SLOA reporting into the APR cycle.
 - New Cycle:
 - Year 1: Full Review and SLOA
 - Year 2: Development Year
 - Year 3: Mid-cycle Review and SLOA
 - Year 4: Development Year
- The new APR four-year cycle creates smaller, more regular check-ins as a way to normalize program self-reflection as routine practice.
- Integrating SLOA reporting into the APR reporting process will ensure SLOA reporting compliance for accreditation, and properly align it with the overall review of a program's health.



Track 2: Review Structure

Full Review Year (every four years):

Under the *old cycle*, there were three levels of review:

- 1) Faculty Committee: faculty representatives from each college/school reviewing every program and making recommendations
- 2) Administrative Committee: deans and directors reviewing every program and making recommendations
- 3) Chancellor's Cabinet: members reviewing every program and making final recommendations for program deletion, continuation, or improvement plan development.

Under the *new cycle*, the levels of review are changed to:

- 1) College/School committee: faculty representatives (assigned by the dean) and external faculty and dean or dean's representative review each program in that college. Committee provides formative, program-specific recommendations to programs for areas of improvement.

- 2) Dean of the College: reviews programs in their college and the recommendations provided by the college committee.
- 3) Either the committee or the dean may recommend referring programs for further review, but APRIE anticipates most full reviews will end with the dean. *If* a program is recommended for further review, a university-wide committee will review the program.

Mid-Cycle Review Year (every four years):

This review is a smaller check-in where programs will address previous recommendations, submit a SLOA report, and respond to disaggregated student success data. This report is reviewed by the Accreditation and Assessment team, which will provide SLOA feedback and look for widespread data trends that suggest areas for UAF development or training. This new phase of the program review cycle will ensure SLOA compliance, and encourage self-reflection and reviewing of student success data as a regular departmental practice.

Development Year (every two years):

Programs will have access to their departmental interface with information-only resources and no reporting due. Programs will have the ability to review recommendations, data, and informational materials to help with program development. Annually updated disaggregated student success data will always be available to programs.

Track 3: Data

Prior to the APR process redesign, program data was compiled on a five-year cycle and provided via a static PDF document. Only units under review during a given year received program review data. The metrics considered were student credit hour activity, headcount of majors, majors' average annual student credit hour (SCH) load, degrees awarded, theoretical tuition revenue and employee full-time equivalent (FTE). Stakeholders desired self-service data options, improved communication about data definitions, readily available visualizations, and improved ability to investigate equity gaps in student achievement by considering specific demographic characteristics in accordance with new accreditation standards.

In response to stakeholders' input described above, the data products provided for APR were overhauled and separate data products were created for student success and department financial data. PAIR remains responsible for compiling the student success data, while unit-specific financial data liaisons compile the financial data from Banner and retrieve select measures from the student data for programs that are scheduled to undergo a full review.

PAIR developed and published an interactive Power BI report with the following features:

- Secure, online, self-service access for all data liaisons, department chairs, deans and other stakeholders with annual updates by the start of each academic year.
- 60 visualizations and eight data tables filterable to all academic departments.
- Disaggregation of data by gender, race, ethnicity, age, Pell Grant status, and first-generation status to enable equity gap analyses at the department, college/school, and university levels (as required by our accrediting body)
- Tool tips for conveying data definitions

In addition to disaggregating academic measures for select demographic characteristics, two new metrics of academic performance were introduced - departmental average course pass rates and graduation-informed persistence.

To promote improved data literacy across the university, PAIR has begun hosting weekly Zoom sessions where data liaisons, department chairs, and others may bring their questions in a drop-in format.

Departmental financial data to support Academic Program Review (APR) was also expanded to provide better context of resources and effort used to deliver instruction and other services to students, as follows:

- 1) SCH/FTE and Major/FTE Ratios - these are based on the Student Credit Hours (SCH) Delivered and Majors in Degree numbers provided by PAIR, and show the ratios for the number of SCHs delivered and majors supported, divided by the department's total APR full-time equivalent (FTE) value. This makes it possible to compare a few measures of instructional productivity across departments of different sizes.
- 2) APR Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) - in response to the need for a meaningful metric that can be standardized across all of the different programs being assessed in the academic program review process, new formulas for calculating department full-time equivalency were developed specifically for this financial data template. Note that these FTE values are different from the standard IPEDS or OMB FTE definitions. The intent of this change was that this new metric will help to make meaningful comparisons of total personnel support between programs that have varying sizes and structures.
- 3) Basic Expenditure & Revenue Data - in an effort to provide expenditure and revenue data that can be used to address cost-effectiveness, unit financial data liaisons are now responsible for entering three years' worth of a program/departments' annual expenditure and revenue data into this template. This expenditure and revenue data has been broken out into certain categories that are designed to show a more robust picture of departments overall operating costs *and* their revenue profile, to assist with assessment of a program's cost-effectiveness.
 - a) Unrestricted and Restricted expenditures are reported separately here, to ensure that academic units are able to demonstrate when a proportion of their instructional activity is supported by external sponsors (e.g. endowed chair positions).
 - b) Maximum Tuition Receipts/Earning Potential - this data point was developed in response to the way in which tuition revenue is distributed to academic units and their individual departments within the UA system; there is no actual data point that can show how much tuition a particular degree program earns as there is not a direct one-to-one relationship between SCH delivery and actual tuition earnings at the unit level due to discounts that are applied to certain tuition costs prior to final distribution to the units.
- 4) Faculty Workload Credit Allocations - this data provides the total number of faculty workload credits devoted to teaching, research, and service for all of the faculty FTEs reported in the department. This metric is intended to help create narratives that are based around the strengths of the faculty who are contributing to the department/program (e.g. high teaching allocations will create higher SCH delivery rates per FTE and tuition revenue, while inversely,

that would likely also create a lower amount of indirect cost recovery, with fewer workload credits allocated to research).

Track 4: Training

Training is critical not just for introducing the new cycle, structure and tools for Academic Program Review, but for setting the tone for the collaborative and formative environment in which reviews should take place. Training was conducted or is planned for the following groups on the timeline indicated.

Data Liaisons - In July/August 2022, these individuals received an in depth overview of the importance that data has in the academic program review process, the types of data provided to programs, and how that data can be used to assess performance. Since this training is the most complex, we anticipate some regular turnover of data liaisons and are working to design the training tracks and materials in a Canvas course shell.

Departments/Programs - In September 2022, the faculty and staff in academic degree programs scheduled for either a full or mid-cycle review received training in using the new technology to access the report template and data, but more importantly, how to approach self-evaluation, reporting and goal-setting for their program(s).

Review Committees - In November 2022, faculty and administrators serving on program review committees in units that have programs undergoing full reviews will receive training on using the review template, evaluating Student Learning Outcomes Assessment plans and activity, evaluating program data and other aspects of the program's report. If the need exists for a university-wide committee to review any programs, that group will be identified and trained in February/March 2023.

Program Review-Related Support and Assistance

- Faculty Accelerator has scheduled a High Impact Practices series to help programs work towards identified areas for improvement, and will continue to add events to the series. Faculty will be directed towards these events.
- The [Academic Incubator](#) is the most conspicuous existing resource to support programs with development and improvement of their curricula; its capacity will need to be monitored and reevaluated to ensure that it can meet the needs of programs working toward recommendations as this revised process continues to unfold.
- An [Academic Program Review channel](#) on media.uaf.edu has been created and will continue to be added to with informational videos for the various tools in use.
- Four faculty fellows have been contracted to work with the office of Accreditation and Assessment in various aspects of support for program review, student learning outcomes assessment, and other accreditation-related processes.

Track 5: Communications/Transitions

The APRIE team did strong work in 2021-22 in communicating with academic unit deans/directors and staff and incorporating their needs and feedback into the program review process changes as these elements were being shaped out. There was also considerable effort to work with Faculty Senate and

the relevant subcommittees (GAC, CAC and Administrative Committee) to garner their support and endorsement of the changes to the structure of program reviews. The work with Faculty Senate resulted in a motion supporting reviews in each college or school.

In spring 2022, presentations to department/program chair groups of each academic unit were conducted, to introduce the upcoming changes to academic program review and set the expectations for a tonal shift in the process. At the beginning of fall 2022, campus faculty and staff received an introductory message about the overall process changes from the provost and vice provost. The Academic Program Review website has been updated with new information, infographics, and links to the new tools for program review, and continues to be updated as new tools and resources are brought online. Department chairs of programs scheduled for full or mid-cycle review received targeted, program-specific communications and hands-on individualized training, providing them with tools and instructions for the academic year. The next phases of communications will go to members of the reviewing committees in the three units that have full reviews scheduled in this academic year, to the deans/directors of those units, and then to department chairs of programs that are in a development year in 2022-23. Feedback forms are embedded in the reporting, review and administrator tools and portals, as well as in the Academic Program Review webpage, so information can be collected about how the changes are received this year.

Next Steps

The 2022-23 Academic Program Review cycle will be instrumental in telling us how many of our goals in revising the academic program review process were realized. Members of the APRIE team continue to work toward specific aspects of Academic Program Review as this year's process unfolds, with respect to their specific areas of responsibility. The group plans to meet again in March 2023 to review process outcomes and feedback, and to prepare a follow-up report to the steering committee and leadership to address the following:

- Impact of changes
- Feedback from stakeholders
- Recommendations for future improvement
- Key lessons learned