August 30, 2010

To: Academic Deans

From: Paul M. DeLuca, Jr., Provost

Subject: New Program Review Guidelines – Expectations for Deans and Departments

During 2009-10 the University Academic Planning Council reviewed guidelines governing academic program review (adopted in 1995) and adopted an updated version. The new program review guidelines are attached. They are also posted along with additional information at http://www.apa.wisc.edu/acad_plng_ProgramReview.html. The guidelines apply to degrees, majors, and certificate programs.

Please familiarize yourself with the full program review guidelines and make sure that the people in your unit who are responsible for enacting academic program review are aware of the policy and the expectations.

Program review offers the opportunity to set priorities, to articulate a case for those priorities, and to develop strategies for a program to stay at or move to the forefront of its field in any budgetary environment. The value provided by documenting program strengths and challenges, celebrating accomplishments, and planning for the future is reason enough to engage in meaningful and productive program review. In addition, regular program reviews are mandated by the Board of Regents and are required by federal financial aid regulations.

Please pay attention to these newly emphasized features of program review:

- The major steps of program review - the self-study, the review committee, the school/college review, and a final summary report documenting the findings and recommendations of the review – are more explicitly described in the new guidelines.

- The summary report, which will bring closure to the program review, is to take the form of a memo or letter from the dean to the program leader (department chair, program director). A copy of this document is to be sent to the provost’s office. Some units already provide programs with such a summary report; it is such a valuable practice that it is now a requirement for all program reviews. If your school/college does not formally document the outcomes of program review in this way, you will need to add the final step to your process.

- Program review self-studies and reports should explore how program priorities and goals align with UW-Madison strategic priorities.

- Program review should include a focus on student learning outcomes and give explicit attention to the Wisconsin Experience and the use of high-impact practices. Program reviews are aided by regular attention to assessment of student learning and there is an expectation that student learning is evaluated regularly. Campus resources are available to support program-level assessment of student learning (http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/).
- The new guidelines provide expanded guidance on the structure of the self-study. A full set of self-study guidelines are provided for units that choose to adopt these guidelines for their school/college.

  Some key features of program review haven't changed.

- Deans are primarily responsible for scheduling program reviews and for ensuring that reviews are conducted to maintain or improve program quality.

- Program reviews are required at least every 10 years.

- The Office of Academic Planning and Analysis will request an annual report on program review from deans, including details on completed reviews and those that are in progress or due to be initiated.

- The Graduate School should be included on review committees for reviews that include graduate programs.

- Low-enrollment programs require a review in the year in which they become low-enrollment. A notice will go to dean’s offices from the provost’s office if a program is identified as low-enrollment and needs attention. The notice will specify a time frame for a response. (Low enrollment is defined as fewer than five degrees in five years, or for undergraduate programs that have counterparts at more than half of all UWs the standard is fewer than 25 degrees in five years.)

Please let me or Jocelyn Milner (jmilner@wisc.edu) know if you have questions about program review.

c: Jocelyn Milner, Aaron Brower, Steve Stern, Damon Williams, Mo Noonan Bischof, Eden Inoway-Ronnie, Susan Fischer, Joanne Berg, Department Chairs, Council of Associate Deans