Academic Alignment and Innovation Program (AAIP)

Introduction

President Engstrom has requested that the UM faculty, provost, and deans pursue a comprehensive review of all academic programs to assess their alignment with the UM Strategic Plan, “UM 2020: Building a University for the Global Century” and to assess where UM might be innovative in ensuring that its academic programming is responsive to the needs of the 21st Century. In his charge to the Provost and the Chair of the Faculty Senate he identified the need for the “AAIP to examine our portfolio of academic programs, identifying both opportunities to strengthen existing programs and opportunities for new programs that are consistent with our mission and strategic plan.” He specifically requested that the following areas be addressed:

1. *Because our mission is grounded in the liberal arts, how do we ensure that the liberal arts are central to today’s higher education and how should we communicate the importance of the liberal arts to prospective students, parents, teachers, and the general public?*

2. *Design a process for identifying programs across campus that are challenged by low enrollment or perception of relevance. For those programs, what can we do to strengthen them and make them more attractive to today’s students? It is possible that you will identify programs that are no longer viable, but that is not the primary purpose of the project.*

3. *What existing undergraduate, graduate, or professional programs present distinctive opportunities for growth or strengthening because they are already in high student demand and have strong placement opportunities?*

4. *What programs are not yet present on campus, but should be, given our mission and the opportunities that those programs present?*

5. *What new or expanded opportunities exist for interdisciplinary, international, and online offerings?*

Building on the President’s charge to the Provost and the Chair of the Faculty Senate, a mission statement has been developed for the AAIP.

Mission

*UM faculty members will lead a process for campus-wide review of all academic programs. The process will focus on a strong commitment to a curricular portfolio that fits within our mission, aligns with our strategic plan, strengthens our liberal arts identity, and provides opportunities for growth.*

In adopting this mission recent budget constraints are acknowledged, but they are not the focus of the program. In adopting this mission it is anticipated that enrollments will begin to grow in fiscal 2015 and that the financial difficulties of the past two years will be eased.
Process

The AAIP will include a review of majors, minors, options, and certificates at all levels, and general education at the undergraduate level to identify their strengths, challenges, and potential for growth, and to identify opportunities for new programs. This effort will be led by a Faculty Fellow chairing an AAIP Task Force that will use a variety of information sources to assess alignment and opportunities for innovation. The information sources will include institutional data and review documents; new information collected from program sponsors and participants; external data on opportunities for growth and development; and data from comparator institutions, especially state flagship institutions in states with fewer than 2 million inhabitants.

The work of the Task Force will involve data collection, review of data by the Task Force and by each program, initial categorization of programs into at least three groups such as strong programs, good programs, and programs facing significant challenges, development of qualitative narratives for academic programs for which additional information is needed, especially for programs that appear to have significant challenges, and preparation of a report with implementation recommendations for broad review and discussion across the campus. It is anticipated that the report will be completed by mid-spring semester 2015 so that campus-wide discussion will occur during the second half of spring semester and implementation will begin in fiscal year 2016.

Timeline

Summer 2014

- Identification of a Faculty Fellow
- Nomination of task force membership from the Faculty Senate, ASUM, Staff Senate, and the Academic Officers
- Appointment of Task Force
- Preliminary assembly of institutional data by the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis

Fall 2014

- Further assembly of institutional data
- Review and analysis of institutional data
- Initial categorization of program status
- Solicitation of program narratives from specific academic programs identified in initial categorization
- Collection and analysis of external data on needs and opportunities
- Collection and analysis of data on comparator institutions

Spring 2015

- Review and analysis of all information collected
• Development of a comprehensive report, including recommendations for implementing actions to ensure that UM has the strongest academic portfolio that can be developed given its human, organizational, and financial resources.
• Campus discussion of findings and recommendations

Fiscal Year 2016

• Implementation of recommendations