

## PLANNING CLUSTER CONNECTING PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES TO RESOURCES: DRAFT REPORT

### Introduction

The academic planning underway at The University of Montana proposes both to connect resources and priorities and to reward units for wise and efficient use of their resources. This represents a substantial and dramatic departure from past practice.

Any new procedure will doubtless proceed incrementally and by successive approximations. While experience gained with the process is likely to suggest improvements, there are several areas of concern that are not directly addressed in this report. These are shown in Appendix A and represent problems foreseen where the solutions are unlikely to be developed until the process is under way.

### Overview

The new procedure will consist of academic officers stating short-term goals and units (departments and programs) responding with statements of their own goals and resources. These latter, in turn, are to be commented on by the academic officers. With this feedback, units will establish priorities among their goals, identify resources requisite for their accomplishment, and participate in an assessment of program outcomes. Subsequent resource allocation will be made on the basis of the degree of success in meeting goals. General considerations and detail on the process are shown below and an implementation plan is provided in Appendix B.

For such a process to succeed, all participants—faculty, program directors, unit chairs, deans, the Provost, and the President—must work to establish trust. This necessarily entails making relevant information available at all levels. Simply put, for this process to achieve its considerable promise, it must not only be a fair and open system, but it must also be perceived to be one by those involved.

### Planning Cluster Charge

In this second year of the planning process, the task is further shaped by the establishment of planning clusters and by broader participation in the process. Nine planning clusters are currently drafting reports. In establishing the present planning

cluster, that concerned with connecting performance and priorities to resources, the Provost gave a threefold charge:

- \* develop a model for assessing performance of programs and units using assessment data, program review and other information;
- \* recommend strategies to reward high performance of units and ways to support progress toward identified goals; and
- \* identify strategies that will facilitate accomplishment of trajectories as part of priority setting.

These specific charges are addressed in the following sections. Given the preliminary nature of the planning process, our recommendations vary in development and specificity. In this document we have identified information and processes deemed necessary to address the terms of our charge.

### Model for Assessing Performance

The process should start with inviting units to prepare a prioritized statement of goals in response to formal and specific goals statements provided by academic officers (deans and the Provost). These goals statements should address not only unit aspirations and UM goals statements, but also include traditional goals of the academy—teaching, scholarship/performance/creative activity, and service. The goals should be specific and indicate how success is to be measured.

In the area of teaching, a unit might address improvement in retention rates among majors, participation in general education, strengthening of graduate programs, or improvement of service offerings to other units. Other goals might be enhanced effectiveness of faculty service to the University and to the larger community and/or increase in the level and quality of research, scholarship, and creative activity by the faculty.

To facilitate the link among a unit's high-priority goals and resources, unit statements should also indicate resources needed to accomplish the goals. These are not necessarily the same for each unit or for each goal of a given unit. The important resources are likely to be faculty lines, graduate teaching assistantships, funds for clerical and operational activities, equipment, support for faculty travel, and space. The goals statements should also include a statement of desired or expected outcomes, how these are to be measured, and an assessment plan. It is crucial that the validity and reliability of data sets used in assessment be established before consequential actions flow from them.

Issues of national discussion about which individual units may have little or no information often influence the setting of higher education agendas. A current example is the emphasis on “student engagement.” In preparing goals statements, units should be invited to respond to themes of national importance so they may be addressed if it is reasonable to do so. Senior administrators have the responsibility to communicate such themes regularly to units. Such national trends, however, should not be allowed to dominate the stating of goals nor the allocation of resources.

As shown in Appendix B, unit goals statements are shared with each successive administrative level. At each level written feedback is provided to all parties involved. This feedback is used to come to a common understanding of what the goals statement and assessment plan is for each unit.

In evaluating progress toward goals, a variety of institutional data bases will doubtless be consulted. In making goals statements units should identify what data will be used and similar identification should be offered at each successively higher level of administration.

Once goals statements and assessment plans are developed, a three-year assessment cycle will begin to determine the extent to which unit goals were met and resources used wisely. Reports of this assessment are to be shared with and commented on by those involved at each level. Allocation of resources for the successive years will be made on the basis on the degree of success and in meeting goals.

While the features of reports assessing outcomes remain to be developed in light of experience, several elements are critical. Reports prepared at all levels should include a statement of absolute gains and losses in resources. For example, if a given department is awarded an additional T.A., that would be shown in the unit report. In the report of that unit’s college or school, that net increase will not only also be shown for the unit, but its source would also be reported (e.g., a reallocation within the college or school or a net increase). It is also important to show any conversions of resources (such as faculty to staff lines or “cannibalization” of a portion of a faculty line to serve some other purpose).

### Strategies to Reward High Performance

The degree of progress toward goals, as well as meeting or exceeding goals, represents high performance. If resources are insufficient to increase the allocation for a high-performance unit, that unit’s support should by all means be at least sustained. That is, such a unit should be the last to suffer reductions in times of general shortages.

Another measure of high performance is the ability of a unit to obtain additional resources from sources external to the university. Such initiative is to be encouraged, and units successful in gaining additional resources externally should be protected in

times of scarcity. Differential opportunities to obtain external support call for clarity in comparing the relative success of units in securing off-campus funds. Procuring such resources in itself does not necessarily indicate high performance. For example, a grant that merely leads to a negotiation of reduced teaching responsibilities of those involved without “buy-out” support represents a net loss to the instructional mission. It should not merit a reward in the form of additional university resources based on procurement of external funds.

Risk-taking should be taken into account in the development of a system to link resources to goals and priorities. If a unit makes substantial changes in curricula, instructional techniques, class size, or the like, and these changes do not have the desired positive effect, the unit should not experience a reduction in resources as a result. Ventures judged worthwhile at all levels may fail. The failure of a venture in itself should not prompt immediate reallocation of that unit’s resources—especially if no additional allocations had been made for the venture.

Moreover, while a unit that succeeds in some new or expanded undertaking should be rewarded, the high performance should not be construed as a new, higher level of “normal” expectation. If achievement of one goal is subsequently found to be at the cost of some other important activity (e.g., increase of retention rates might be enhanced through improved faculty advising while materially lowering faculty research productivity), the unit should be allowed to adjust its efforts without loss of resources.

These examples suggest that assessment should be an ongoing process. While some activities can be examined on a year-to-year basis, a longer interval in which to assess most activities is reasonable. As shown in Appendix B, we propose a three-year cycle.

### Facilitating Accomplishment of Trajectories

All of the trajectories identified in the planning process will doubtless result in proposals that require resources. While there may be some modest absolute increases in university resources, success of the initiatives for the trajectories may well require reallocation of existing resources. In that situation, resource-sharing between units may achieve effective economies and should be rewarded.

If units decide to merge (partially or entirely) in order to affect economies through resource sharing, clear advance agreements should include “rights of return.” Moreover, if a joint appointment is created to share faculty expertise, advance agreements and careful monitoring must assure that the combined responsibilities do not become excessive. In particular, there must be clear understandings about the details of that faculty member’s faculty evaluation process.

Distribution of resources in proportion to program accomplishments implies that

some programs or units may prove too costly and/or too peripheral to general university goals to merit continued support. As this is the possible outcome most likely to produce fear and resistance to the planning process, it is important to make this possibility explicit here. While program elimination (C.B.A., 18.520) is generally seen as an extreme measure, it remains a possibility at any time. The University may find itself unable to continue all of its current programs at the same level while adding new initiatives.

If program reductions or eliminations are indicated, great care and tact are required, as such actions color the campus culture in the long term. Eliminations, or reductions should be undertaken only after careful study and only after the unit affected has the opportunity to prepare a plan in response to perceived problems. If such a decision is finalized, some phased approach should be employed: faculty deserve humane treatment and the final cohort of students deserves high-quality support through graduation.

## APPENDIX A: AREAS OF CONCERN

A number of topics were considered in the discussions of the planning cluster where, while several points seemed important, it was not easy to offer recommendations that could be immediately implemented. The more important of these are offered below.

- \* The new process is likely to take a substantial amount of time. An implementation schedule should be developed that gradually phases it in and avoids making demands on peak work periods for a faculty and administrators.
- \* To be successful, the process demands not only timely and specific feedback, but also the opportunity to respond to the feedback of others. Thus, and especially at the beginning, it is likely best to err on the side of too much rather than too little communication.
- \* For a variety of reasons (distrust of the process, conviction that resources are already being optimally used, *etc.*) some units may decline to participate. Some system of assessment should be developed for nonparticipating units (and they should be so informed). More importantly, as experience with the process is gained, any "holdout" units should be shown how it is to their benefit to participate.
- \* There are two extreme possibilities in units establishing goals and priorities among them. One is that in order to demonstrate success, some units might establish modest and peripheral goals that are easily achieved. At the opposite extreme, some units might state significant goals at an extremely high level of abstraction, making assessment difficult if not impossible. "Negotiated feedback" on goals statements should help avoid these extremes.
- \* All those involved in a given line of authority (unit faculty, unit chair, dean, Provost, and President) should be provided with copies of each report affecting that unit. It is likely that faculty or chairs in one unit will be interested in the reports (and administrative reactions to them) concerning other units. Since the materials prepared should be considered public documents, there should be ready access to them. However, it is possible that some reports will at least imply evaluation of individuals. Any such "personnel components" should be developed as appendices to assessment reports and be of limited distribution.

\* Administrators, especially unit administrators (chairs)--not just faculty--are likely to influence the degree of success made in achieving goals. Thus, in the review cycle, faculty and administrators responsible for the success of the unit (chairs, directors, deans, and Provost) will:

1. review the goals statements for relevance and achievability.
2. evaluate the efforts of the faculty and administrators relative to their efforts to achieve the goals.

## APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTATION

### PHASE I (FIRST-YEAR TASKS FOR ALL UNITS)

- A. Administration's articulation of goals
  - 1. President prepares a statement of academic goals and priorities for the Provost
  - 2. Provost makes general assignment of responsibilities to the Deans
  - 3. Deans draft goals and priorities for their units/programs (chairs, directors, and faculty)
  - 4. At each step (1 through 3, above), the written statements are forwarded to each successive level (allowing all parties see all statements)
- B. Using the information produced in A (above), units and programs prepare a statement showing:
  - 1. specification of goals for the next three to five years
  - 2. prioritization of the goals
  - 3. Indication of methods for achieving the goals or making progress toward them indicating:
    - a. how current resources will be used
    - b. what additional resources are required or desired
  - 4. identification of outcomes to be assessed
  - 5. assessment plan
- C. The unit/program statements will be provided to the President, the Provost, the appropriate Dean and any collaborative or affected unit or program and these parties, in turn, will provide written comments on the statements for the benefit of all involved in the process
- D. The parties will come to a negotiated understanding in the form of a written statement of each unit's/program's goals and action plan.

### PHASE II (BEGINNING A THREE-YEAR REVIEW CYCLE WITH A THIRD OF THE UNITS/PROGRAM BEING REVIEWED EACH YEAR)

- A. Units conduct assessment and produce a report based on their plan
- B. Unit/program outcomes assessment reports are forwarded to collaborative or affected units, the appropriate dean, the Provost and the President
- C. Written reactions to the reports are prepared at each level and shared with all involved
- D. Based on the reports and reactions to them, the affected parties will come to a negotiated understanding of the degree to which goals were met
- E. Resources will be allocated based on these understandings
- F. At the conclusion of its review, each unit returns to the procedures in phase I to prepare for its next assessment