November 9, 2017

Dear campus community,

The APASP Task Force has reviewed more than 400 academic program and administrative services reports and placed each unit in one of four prioritization categories:

* Priority for development and growth
* Consider for development and/or modification
* Priority for substantial modification and
* Insufficient evidence.

The categorization of all units is posted on our [prioritization webpage](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/prioritization/default.php). Programs and services were placed in one of these four categories based on the reports submitted, the reviews conducted by teams of three reviewers, the scores assigned by each of the three reviewers, preliminary votes made by members of the Task Force, and additional discussion and another round of voting if there was not strong consensus in the first vote. Throughout the process, individuals with conflicts of interest refrained from participating in reviews and votes.

As we move into the phase of developing unit-level recommendations, we are mindful of the questions, concerns and anxieties surrounding APASP and its outcomes. In this communication, we want to address a few of those questions, talk about next steps in the process, and clarify the opportunities for formal campus input into the process.

**What do the categories mean?**

The formal descriptions of the prioritization categories can be found on the [APASP website](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/process/categories.php). Units placed in the “priority for growth and development” category not only demonstrated strong past performance and mission alignment, but also had the most compelling arguments for growth and plans for using additional resources. Units placed in the “priority for substantial modification category” raised concerns among Task Force members about past performance, essentiality, and long-term sustainability.

The Task Force wants to emphasize that placement in the “priority for substantial modification” category at this stage is not an automatic recommendation for discontinuance. Instead, it flags those units as a priority for feedback from the responsible dean or sector head. This feedback will be crucial for informing further Task Force discussion about recommendations for those units. Dean and sector head feedback will inform our recommendations, but it will not change the categories in which we placed programs and services.

As anticipated, we placed the majority of units in the “consider for development and/or modification” category. Many of these units deserve more resources; they are performing well but have been hindered by personnel and budget reductions. Although these units did not emerge as the top priorities for action, we hope that the information generated by APASP will stimulate further discussion between units, deans, and sector heads about opportunities for further development and/or modification.

**What input will deans and sector heads provide?**

Before we determine our recommendations, we are asking deans and sector heads to review the categorization, discuss their units in the “priority for substantial modification” category, and address possibilities for collaboration and restructuring. As stated above, these responses will not change the categorization of programs and services. Instead, they will provide an important perspective on programs and units in their respective schools, colleges and sectors that will inform the Task Force’s recommendations to the President and Cabinet.

**How will the Task Force make recommendations?**

Those of you who attended the categorization meetings have heard many of the challenges the Task Force is facing in making sound and defensible decisions under the existing time constraints. As we develop recommendations, we will need to recognize the limitations of our methods and processes. Among them are data challenges, insufficient training of reviewers, inter-rater reliability, lack of clarity surrounding the University’s vision, and the capacity of the Task Force to fact-check reports and reviews and mitigate emerging problems. Despite the challenges, the Task Force has worked hard to perform our charge with fair-mindedness, conscientious attention to detail, and transparency.

This exercise has been a significant learning process for the Task Force, and we recognize that our own process should receive the same level of scrutiny as the units we are examining. As a result, the Task Force will focus on re-examining the reports and data from units in the “priority for substantial modification” category as we prepare recommendations. We continue to deliberate about how to handle recommendations for units in other categories. The scope of our task, the timeframe, and the limitations of the process will require us to have some humility in developing recommendations.

**What other information is available about APASP?**

The [APASP Process section of our](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/process/default.php) website contains several documents that outline the criteria, metrics, and rubrics used for evaluating the reports that units submitted. In addition, all unit reports are now available to you via UMbox. Please visit our [website](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/reports/default.php) for access to all reports. Only individuals with a UM netID and password will be able to view them.

We will post redacted reviewer comments, reviewer scores, and Task Force votes on our website as they become available.

**What opportunities exist for further campus input on APASP?**

First, APASP report authors can formally respond to their placement in one of the four categories between now and Nov. 29. The Task Force will append all author responses to our recommendations to the President and Cabinet. To submit an author response, please upload a document to the [author response page](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/response/authorresponse.php) on the APASP website.

Second, report authors may want to confer with deans / sector heads about their responses as described above.

Third, all shared governance groups have been encouraged to hold meetings and respond to APASP’s final recommendations in early December. Please visit the [ASUM](http://www.umt.edu/asum/), [Staff Senate](https://www.umt.edu/staffsenate/), [Faculty Senate](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/), and [UFA](http://montanafaculty.org/) websites for meeting information. This is an important time for the campus to weigh in prior to the President’s final decisions.

We’d like to thank you for your continued engagement with APASP. To submit general feedback about prioritization, we invite you to [submit your comments via our website](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/feedback/default.php). If you have specific questions or concerns, please email [apasp@umontana.edu](mailto:apasp@umontana.edu). We will continue to post updates on our website, including [meeting agendas and minutes](http://www.umt.edu/apasp/about/Meetings,Ag,Min.php).

We thank you sincerely for your engagement with prioritization at UM.

The APASP Task Force