

Launch of Academic Program Review Fall 2011


From: Jean Morrison
University Provost and Chief Academic Officer
To: Boston University Deans, Faculty, and Staff
Date: May 9, 2011
Subject: Launch of Academic Program Review Fall 2011

In order to accelerate our progress in enhancing the quality of our academic programs and advancing the stature of Boston University, we must have processes that effectively link our decision-making about how we invest our resources to our strategic goals. Thus, one of my highest priorities as I settle into the role of University Provost is to put in place several administrative processes that will enable us to integrate and align our strategic planning efforts across the University.

These processes include the establishment of a set of outcome metrics to gauge the increases in quality and impact of academic programs, the use of these metrics to help inform annual decision-making processes such as budgeting and resource development planning, and the implementation of a systematic and recurring method of external review of our academic programs. Such a formal process of academic program review that engages the input of distinguished faculty from outside Boston University is essential to our ongoing assessment of the quality of our academic programs and their progress over time.

Over the past four months, I have consulted broadly with deans, faculty, administrators, and members of the University Boards of Overseers and Trustees to help develop the parameters of the formal academic program review process at Boston University. As a result of these conversations, we have established an initial framework for conducting systematic and recurring academic program reviews at BU and I am pleased to announce the formal launch of the academic program review process in Fall 2011.

Approximately six to eight separate reviews of academic programs will be conducted each year, with the goal of completing the entire review

process for an individual unit within a calendar year. I will consult with the deans of schools and colleges to select the units to be reviewed each year and each program will be reviewed on an approximately eight-year cycle. Thus, individual programs are not singled out for review, but rather all programs will be reviewed at regular intervals. I am now in the process of identifying the units that will be the first to engage in the review process and a schedule of reviews to be conducted over the next several years will be established.

The review process includes a data based self-assessment prepared by the unit that conforms to a template, as well as an assessment by a team of external faculty with the relevant disciplinary expertise. External review reports will provide a candid appraisal of the unit's strengths as well as identify areas for improvement and offer critical guidance for administrative decisions at all levels – the unit, school or college, and university. I invite you to consider the full guidelines for academic program review at Boston University, which describe each element of the process in detail on the following link to the Provost's Office website: www.bu.edu/provost/ao/apr/

My office will fund and manage the review process and Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives, Nicole Hawkes, will have primary responsibility for leading the effort, working in close collaboration with the academic and administrative leadership of each unit under review.

In addition, a standing, university-level committee composed of senior faculty will be established to serve as a governing entity with faculty oversight of the review process. The faculty committee on academic program review will assess all reviews conducted across the university in a given year and on the basis of this assessment, may advise me of additional recommendations. The faculty committee will also evaluate the review process itself and if necessary, suggest modifications and revisions to the official structure. I will be working with the Faculty Council and the deans of the schools and colleges to identify faculty to serve on this committee.

Finally, a member of the Board of Overseers will participate in each program review by attending and overseeing activities as an observer at the seminal points of each review. Participating Overseers will have the responsibility for reporting outcomes of the individual reviews to the full Board of Overseers and the Board of Trustees.

I am confident that this structure for conducting reviews of our academic programs will help us to measure quality in our instructional and research efforts and will provide the critical information that allows us to make the appropriate investments toward achieving academic excellence.

Cc: Robert A. Brown
Nicole Hawkes
Provost's Cabinet
