

Academic Portfolio Working Group Final Report

Committee Members

1. Emily Berg, Director of Office of Institutional Research and Analysis
2. David Bertolini, Dean of College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
3. Jeff Boyer, Director of Assessment and Accreditation
4. John Buncher, Associate Professor of Practice in Dept. of Physics
5. Ben Duncan, Former Interim Dean of College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies
6. Karla Haug, Assistant Professor of Practice in School of Nursing
7. Kirk Howatt, Associate Professor in Dept. of Plant Sciences
8. Jenny Linker, Associate Professor in Dept. of Health, Nutrition & Exercise Science
9. Michael Kessler, Dean of College of Engineering
10. Joe Szmerekovsky, Associate Dean of College of Business

Charge

NDSU needs to develop a process for evaluating its current academic programs (both undergraduate and graduate), in order to determine where growth or program revitalization opportunities exist and ascertain sunseting needs.

Introduction

The Academic Portfolio Working Group (APWG) acknowledges that developing a process to review an institution's academic portfolio is a complex issue. One key decision was to determine whether an academic department or an academic program is the appropriate unit of analysis for a review process. APWG's recommendation is to review data at the program level.

The APWG has considered numerous possible metrics that could be used during a review process. Huron's cost-to-educate calculations were debated in great detail, and the APWG recommends using 'margin per credit hour' as a cost metric in the review process. However, further review of this metric may be warranted in the future. The APWG recommends that enrollment and enrollment change over time also be used as metrics in the process. In addition, doctoral completions should be considered for graduate programs since they contribute to NDSU's Carnegie classification.

Recommended Process

The APWG proposes a two-phase process for evaluating NDSU's academic portfolio. In *Phase I*, academic programs with lower enrollment, enrollment trends, margins, and completions are identified. These programs are then moved to the *Phase II* review process, where additional contextual factors will be considered.

Academic Portfolio Working Group Final Report

Phase I

The intent of the *Phase I* review is to identify current academic programs in need of further consideration. The Office of Institutional Research & Analysis will provide the following data for academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels on an annual basis:

1. Total student headcount in most recent fall semester
2. 5-year student headcount compounded annual growth rate (CAGR)
3. Margin per credit hour
4. Total doctoral completions over the last 5 fiscal years (graduate level only)

During *Phase I*, a 'Yes Test' will be applied to each academic program's data. That is, a 'yes' or 'no' will be assigned to each metric for each of the questions identified in the 'Yes Test' sections below.

Prior to applying the 'Yes Test', program data are prepared as follows

- Undergraduate pre-majors are combined with associated majors.
- B.A. and B.S. degree plans are combined and considered as one program for each academic program.
- Primary and secondary majors are combined in enrollment and completion counts. Secondary majors are not included in cost data.
- All teacher education programs are combined into one program.
- When appropriate, graduate programs with both a master's and doctoral program are combined because they often share resources (primarily faculty).
- In future years, online-only academic programs will be separated out from the programs they are currently merged with in this data set. These programs were not separated in the 2021-22 analysis as the coding system for these programs was only instituted in recent years, and online programs were not yet identifiable.

Undergraduate Programs Yes Test

If a program's total student headcount in the most recent fall semester is 20 or less, the program automatically enters the *Phase II* review. Otherwise, the following questions are included in the 'yes test':

1. Is the program's total student headcount in the most recent fall semester greater than 30?
2. Is the program's 5-year student headcount CAGR in the top 80% of all CAGRs for the same academic level?
3. Is the program's margin per credit hour in the top 80% of all margins for the same academic level?

Programs with one or zero 'yes' outcomes on these three items enter the *Phase II* review.

Academic Portfolio Working Group Final Report

Graduate Programs Yes Test

Combined Doctoral & Masters programs (includes Doctoral-only programs)

1. Is the program's total student headcount in the most recent fall semester in the top 80% of all headcounts for the same academic level?
2. Is the program's 5-year student headcount CAGR in the top 80% of all CAGRs for the same academic level?
3. Is the program's number of doctoral degree completions in the last 5 years at least 5?
4. Is the program's margin per credit hour in the top 80% of all margins for the same academic level?

Programs with two or fewer 'yes' outcomes on these four items enter the *Phase II* review.

Masters-only programs

1. Is the program's total student headcount in the most recent fall semester in the top 80% of all headcounts for the same academic level?
2. Is the program's 5-year student headcount CAGR in the top 80% of all CAGRs for the same academic level?
3. Is the program's margin per credit hour in the top 80% of all margins for the same academic level?

Programs with one or zero 'yes' outcomes on these three items enter the *Phase II* review.

Phase II

The Provost oversees the *Phase II* process. Programs that enter *Phase II* should be evaluated holistically in order to consider valuable characteristics that are not captured by *Phase I* metrics. Program leaders should be included in *Phase II* discussions and are encouraged to provide additional evidence that supports increased understanding of a program's status.

The following items must be considered during the *Phase II* program review:

- Research and creative activities funding
- Revenue generated by General Education and service credits to other programs and cost per credit hour to produce them
- Extension and outreach activities to communities in North Dakota

Other items that may be considered during *Phase II* program review include (but are not limited to):

- Alignment of program with mission and vision of NDSU and Colleges
- Needs of the state (labor market, job placement rates)
- Cost of instruction exclusive to the program
- Impact on research activity if program was cut
- Six-year undergraduate degree completion rate
- Average time to degree completion
- Production of minors and certificates supported by program faculty
- Student credit hour generation

Academic Portfolio Working Group Final Report

- Concrete plans for addressing low-performing metrics identified in *Phase I*
- Changes in program resources (fiscal, staffing, or other) that have impacted program performance
- Student demand, interest, and recruitment

Possible *Phase II* Outcomes:

1. The academic program is determined to be sustainable. The academic program is exempt from *Phase I* review during the next review cycle. *Phase I* review is required again in 2 years.
2. The academic program is determined to need improvement. A 1-5 year improvement plan is developed. During this time period, the academic program does not return to *Phase I* and must meet milestones identified in the improvement plan as reported in an annual update. If milestones are not met, a divestment occurs (e.g., resources are reallocated, faculty loads are adjusted) or sunset of the academic program occurs with a teach-out arrangement for current students.
3. The academic program is determined to be unsustainable. A 1-5 year plan is developed to sunset an academic program with a teach-out arrangement for the current students.

Investment Opportunities

A grass-roots process should be considered for investment opportunities. This process should allow groups on campus to present proposals to a committee for vetting. Investment proposals should have enrollment targets and include an assessment plan to evaluate the success of implementation and return on investment. Investment opportunities may include (but are not limited to):

- Marketing/Recruiting funds - directed toward academic programs that can accommodate more students without additional resources or have a positive rate of return on investment and that have a reasonable chance of attracting more students.
- PhD student stipends - go to academic programs that can accommodate more students without additional resources and have applicants they would have accepted if funding was available. Stipend funding can also be used to increase stipend amounts if programs are having trouble attracting students because of stipend size.
- Faculty lines - targeted at generating more revenue or increasing research and creative activity productivity.