

Questions Received from RSVPs to Program Prioritization Initiative Forum

Q: Can we see the rubrics and provide feedback?

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the rubrics that have been developed to guide the effort. The rubrics include items from the BoV policy for reviewing programs. Weights were determined based on the way members of the task force prioritized each criterion. Note that the rubrics are simply guides and are not the sole tool used by the task force to make recommendations. Rather, the task force is considering context and dynamics that provide deeper insight into programs. Feedback about the rubrics is welcomed. WEAVE reports were especially helpful in reviewing the administrative programs and making overall recommendations about those units.

Administrative Unit Rubric			
Area	Item	Data Sources	Categories
Essential for meeting needs of groups (35%)	Student needs	Surveys of directors, chairs and deans, WEAVE report	Unit is essential, mostly essential, somewhat essential, and not essential.
	Faculty needs		
	Academic needs		
	Other unit's needs		
	University mission		
Efficiency (25%)	Unit offers distinct services		Exceeds, meets, approaches, does not meet, unable to rate
	Appropriate number of personnel		
Unit Costs (30%)	Duties could be provided by others	Surveys of directors, chairs and deans and data provided by AA central.	Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
	Budget is appropriate		
	Services could be streamlined		
	Costs are aligned with other units		
Unit Spending (10%)	Spending by Unit	Data provided by AA central	Increased notably, remained stable, decreased over 3 years.
	Spending per SCH by Unit.		

Academic Program Rubric

Area	Item	Data Sources	Categories
Impact on Students (35%)	Future Jobs	BLS Data	Exceeds expectations, Meets expectations, Approaches expectations, Does not meet expectations, Unable to Rate
	Student Satisfaction	20+ items from Senior Survey	
Academic Quality (25%)	Program Retention Rates	Alignment with univ.	Exceeds expectations, Meets expectations, Approaches expectations, Does not meet expectations, Unable to Rate
	Student Learning	Assessment Data	
	Specialized accreditation or ranking	Web and Chair surveys	
	Program Concentrations	Enrollment data	
Enrollment (5%)	Enrollment	Enrollment data	Increasing, stable, decreasing, unable to rate
Productivity (10%)	Student credit hours	ODU Factbook	Top 20%, Above Average, Bottom 20%, Unable to rate.
	Degrees conferred	ODU Factbook	
	Research funding	Office of Research	
Unit Spending (10%)	Spending by Unit	AA Administration	Increased notably over 3 fiscal years, remained relatively same, decreased notably
	Spending per SCH by Unit	AA Administration	
	Faculty Salary by SCH	AA Administration	
Dean's Response (5%)	Responses provided by deans to survey	Dean Survey	Identified as top and distinctive, as distinctive, or not identified.
Chair's Response (5%)	Program distinctiveness	Chair's survey	Exceeds expectations, Meets, Approaches, Does not meet, Unable to Rate
	Services or programs for the community	Chair's survey	
State Demand (5%)	State offers additional funding for programs in certain fields. Is this program on that list?	State data	Yes or No

Table 3. Additional Items on Rubrics

Academic Units	Administrative Units
Do you think ODU should invest additional resources in this program? Please explain why or why not.	What modifications to the unit might increase impact, efficiency, or costs?
Given the size of the academic program's curriculum, population, faculty, and current budgeting levels, are there opportunities to reallocate resources from this program to support other programs in the department or college?	What investment might be made to the unit to increase impact, efficiency, or costs?
Committee members asked to make comments on each area.	
Describe the opportunities for this unit to collaborate more with other areas on campus.	
What is your recommendation for this program/unit? a. Consider providing support to the program/unit. b. Consider reallocating funds to other programs or areas. c. No action, keep as is.	

Q: What are the criteria for prioritization and does efficiency of input and output count for anything? Or is it simply gross figures rather than net outcomes?

The criteria include those items shown in the rubric. For academic programs, these include impact on students, academic quality, enrollment, productivity, unit spending, dean's response, chair's response, and state demand. For administrative programs, these include essentiality for meeting groups' needs, efficiency, unit costs, and unit spending. The review will not be about

gross figures, but about the context and evidence of sustained outcomes for the future. Efficiency certainly matters, even more so for administrative programs.

Q: What data are being collected to inform the recommendations of the team?

Data that are being used to guide our discussions include BLS data, exit survey data, assessment data from WEAVE, enrollment data from institutional research, degree production data from institutional research, research award funding data from the Office of Research, financial data provided Academic Affairs administration, state-level data on high-demand programs, and survey data collected from chairs, program directors, deans, and directors of administrative support units.

Q: Is there a formula that will be used to reallocate funds, staff and faculty to prioritized programs and divest those resources from those programs lower on the priority list?

No. The process is contextualizing use of resources. Relying on a formula would potentially limit the ability to understand and interpret nuances between programs.

Q: How are administrative units being assessed versus teaching and research units?

Different criteria are being used to assess the different types of unit. The review of administrative programs is focusing more on essentiality for meeting groups' needs, efficiency, and unit costs. The emphasis was also on ensuring synergy and stronger connections between administrative programs and with academic programs. Unit spending is weighted less for academic programs. Impact on students and academic quality are the two most important criteria for the review of academic programs.

Q: What type of data will be the output of this program?

The final report will identify those areas/programs that the task force believes should be provided additional funding. The task force will also identify programs that should be considered for either reduction, realignment, or curtailment. It is important to reiterate that the task force is only making recommendations. Decisions about whether to follow any of the recommendations will be made through the existing shared governance process. The hope that is the final report will help the university to chart its course into the future.

Q: What are the specific metrics which programs are expected to meet in order to not be considered for merger or elimination?

There are no specific metrics being used. The criteria will be reviewed and members of the task force will consider the context and meaning of the evidence. Numbers by themselves won't be used to make recommendations. A low-performing program, for example, might be able to be

successful if additional funds were available. Focusing specifically on metrics would potentially obscure such patterns.

Q: What are the specific "data driven" metrics this initiative wants to use to evaluate programs?

The task force is reviewing metrics including future jobs, student satisfaction, program retention rates, student learning, rankings, strength of program concentrations, student credit hours, degrees conferred, annual assessment of outcomes, research funding, spending by unit, spending per SCH, faculty salary by SCH, and data provided by chairs, directors, deans, and administrators.

Q: How are we defining quality?

Different types of quality exist. For academic quality, the focus is given to program retention rates, student learning, specialized accreditation/rankings, and strength of program concentrations. For program quality, the definition would be operationalized by bringing together all of the items included on the rubrics above.

Q: Since placement and employment opportunities are included as a factor, can programs be evaluated on their career development infusion?

A: The task force is focusing on labor outlook and student satisfaction. Part of the student satisfaction measure includes questions from the exit survey about preparation for one's career.

Q: We still have not been told how we can provide input unique to our program. Will that be explained?

A: Chair's and program directors have been sent surveys asking for input about their programs. Anyone can submit information anonymously at any point to the task force on the Program Prioritization Task Force website. All information provided on the website is shared with the task force.

Q: Does the recent better-than-expected budget change the calculation or rationale of the PPI? Part of the initial rationale was a budget shortfall from the COVID crisis, but that has not materialized and I'm wondering if you are changing the premise of the initiative and if so how.

The initiative would have occurred regardless of the COVID crisis. A future-focused effort will benefit the ODU community. The focus is both on possible investments for growth and being prepared for anticipated enrollment shortfalls in 2025. Changes in enrollment trends coupled with a steadily increasing reliance on tuition revenue for sustainability require that institutions look closely at strategies for sustained growth. Some experts predict that half of all high

education institutions will be in dire financial straits by 2030. These predictions were offered pre-COVID. Rather than waiting for 2030 and reflect on what we could have done in the past to deal with enrollment changes and fiscal uncertainties, it is important to review what we are currently doing to see whether opportunities for strategic investments can be made to make the institution stronger. At the same time, it is important to determine whether additional opportunities for efficiency exist. The simple questions we have to ask are whether we can continue to support all of our academic and administrative programs at their current levels and if we make no changes, what financial shape will we be in a decade from now?

Q: Are there any checks and balances incorporated into the provost's enacting of the PPI's recommendations? If so, what are they?

The process is guided by shared governance ideals. Draft and final reports will be distributed to all parties at the same time. No decisions on the recommendations will be made without going through the relevant shared governance policies.

Q: How will the program prioritization plan support existing advising needs in the colleges?

The administrative subcommittees are reviewing how advising can be addressed across Academic Affairs.

Q: How does this initiative factor graduate level courses that have small enrollment numbers?

The task force is not looking solely at numbers. Instead, the review focuses on understanding the context around the numbers. As the university strives to increase its research reputation, the task force recognizes that some small graduate programs are warranted and necessary. The task force will be looking at various aspects of the graduate program including contributions to the discipline, amount of external funding, recognition by peers, and degree production (not the number of degrees produced but the ability of the students in the program to complete the degree in a timely manner).

Q: Will there be any departments closed?

There might be. No recommendations have been made yet. If they are, recommendations would be made to re-align the units and resources in another part of Academic Affairs.

Q: What are the specific plans for the university to support faculty research effort?

A: This is beyond the scope of the Program Prioritization Initiative. Our focus is only on Academic Affairs. However, factors such as support for faculty research are considered in the review of administrative programs to the extent that such support is provided within Academic Affairs. You are encouraged to reach out to your dean and vice president for research if you would like to discuss further.

Q: When will the university assemble a multidisciplinary faculty committee to build the university research infrastructure, and to safeguard and support federal funded research programs to ensure that they would not be disrupted and destroyed?

This is beyond the scope of this initiative. Your question will be forwarded to the VP for research.

Q: When will you make first (draft) recommendations available?

We plan to hold another forum in April. We hope to have a draft report ready in early to mid-May. Members of the university community will be asked to provide feedback on the draft by September 1. The task force will reconvene in September, review the feedback, and/or make changes to the report or add appropriate addendums.

Q: How will multidisciplinary programs be addressed? For example, MonarchTeach bridges both College of Education and College of Sciences, but smaller-scale multidisciplinary ventures between departments also exist.

For such programs housed in the academic colleges, attention is given to where the program is fiscally-housed and the focus is given to the academic degree program (rather than the partnership between the Colleges). For multidisciplinary programs housed outside of academic colleges, the unit is being reviewed in comparison to programs from the program director's home college. For example, the Biomedical Research graduate program is being reviewed in comparison to unis from the College of Sciences.

Q: Are we engaging with business, industry, and government leaders to determine external demand for a program?

We are using official data to determine demand. Chairs, directors, and deans were also given the opportunity to identify demand. Market data from prior studies with business, industry, and other sectors was also made available to the task force.

Q: Some university academic programs struggle with enrollments year after year and nothing happens in terms of meeting enrollment goals, etc. Other programs have high enrollments year after year and they are under staffed, under funded, etc. ODU does not seem to follow the data. Specific goals to me are not set for programs to meet and the cycle

continues. If programs are not performing year after year, why is nothing done? These programs hurt the programs that can excel because they draw resources from them.

The Program Prioritization Initiative is focusing on opportunities to strengthen programs that have the capacity to grow. Appropriate recommendations for under-performing programs will be made.

Q: What strategies other than bureaucratic response (i.e., create a new office for that) are considered when the goals require cultural change or academic leadership to achieve?

A: The Program Prioritization Task Force will not recommend a new office in its recommendations, but may recommend reorganization or restructuring of existing academic programs. It is hoped that engaging in a transparent prioritization process that embraces shared governance and is grounded in evidence will help to promote cultural change that rewards excellence and focuses on future enrollment trends and opportunities.

Q: Given the increasing prominence of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, what is the role of Humanities programs/departments on an academic playing field that is strongly tilted toward STEM?

In its very first meeting, the task force talked about the belief that every public research institution must have certain pillars. The university's mission statement says that ODU "is a dynamic public research institution that serves its students and enriches the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world through rigorous academic programs, strategic partnerships, and active civic engagement." In order to be a "dynamic" public research institution and "enrich" the community, it is critical that the Arts and Humanities be recognized as one of the pillars that define our institution.

Q: We have some programs that are meeting societal needs and trends and others that are outdated. Are the trends being monitored so that ODU is on the cutting edge of offerings of majors and courses?

A: Yes.

Q: Where does the issue of "intellectual diversity" fit into this criteria?

A: ODU's mission statement identifies the institution as a "dynamic research institution." In order to be dynamic, the institution must offer a wide range of programs and we must foster creativity, inquiry, and ongoing discussions between members of our community.

Q: Since transfer and first year - UNIV courses often improve the success of an at risk student, will these courses be a consideration for all disciplines as a standard?

A: While these courses are valuable, such a decision is beyond the scope of the Program Prioritization Initiative.

Q: How transparent will the findings of these evaluations be? Will faculty/departments be told why they're being cut/reduced/recombined? Will this data be public, institutional access only, departmental access only, task force access only?

Recommendations will be made available to the entire university community. Rationale for the recommendations will be included.

Q: Is there a specific number of programs that will receive special consideration/support?

A: No, with a caveat – the number of programs recommended for increased funding will be offset by the number of programs recommended for less funding.

Q: How are we aligning student recruitment with academic program prioritization to determine internal demand?

A: Those doing recruitment will be updated with any changes after those decisions are made. Information about internal demand should be reflected in the data used for the review.

Q: Why are programs allowed to continue as cash cows in the wrong departments when they could flourish in the correct department? ODU needs to do what is right for the students and not what certain administrators want to keep department enrollments by keeping some majors in the wrong departments. Look at national trends and where these programs are correctly aligned. If certain programs were correctly aligned with the correct majors and the correct colleges -- they would flourish. Instead, they are cash cows for the department they are in. Even the location of doctoral programs hinders certain programs because they are buried deep under majors that are not related. As a result, very few doctoral students apply. Instead of being a leader nationally, some doctoral programs have no student.

A: These are trends and dynamics we are reviewing.

Q: It is unclear what exactly is being prioritized. Is it academic programs to retain and grow, or programs to cut? Please clarify

At this point, we plan to identify the following categories: programs to invest in, programs to maintain, programs to reduce funding in, programs to align with other programs, and programs to discontinue. These will be recommendations. Any decisions would need to be made by appropriate parties following a shared governance process.

Q: How did you make comparisons across disciplines that are totally different, such as engineering versus politics?

We aren't comparing across disciplines. When programs are reviewed and compared, they are done as standalone academic programs and the reviews are organized by their home colleges.

Q: Can we invest in finance and administration support?

Following the charge from the provost, our focus was on the Division of Academic Affairs. This question is beyond our charge. A review of the administrative and financial unit of Academic Affairs is included in the Task Force's work, but this review does not speak to additional investment from external divisions to Academic Affairs.

Q: What does this have to do with the Sentara "partnership"?

Currently, very little. Those discussions are beyond the scope of what the Program Prioritization Task Force is focusing on.

Q: What is the benefit of being identified as a priority program?

It will be easier for those programs to make the case for additional funds and subsequent investments.

Q: We have some programs and majors that have low enrollments year after year and they receive significant funding/resources? Why is this happening?

The Program Prioritization Task Force is reviewing the enrollment trends and expenditures to determine whether examples such as this one are occurring and, if so, whether changes should be made.

Q: Some programs and majors really belong in other colleges within the university. Is realignment being considered along with prioritization? Some programs could thrive in other colleges if they were incorrectly placed years ago.

Realignment is being considered.

Q: Can you please give a brief overview of the conclusions that have been reached with regards to the different current programs in the University by your efforts?

The only concrete recommendation is to close certificate programs that have not graduated more than two students in the past five years. In addition, the group is recommending clear service agreements for administrative units and for regular evaluations of those units.