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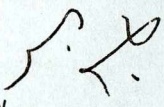
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Edwardsville Bulletin

To the Faculty and Staff of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Vol. 12, No. 13
June 23, 1980

MEMO TO: The University Community
FROM: Earl Lazerson 
SUBJECT: Program Review

You are all aware that reviews of our academic programs take place almost continuously, and I believe there is wide-spread understanding and appreciation of the process as a means of assuring program quality and effectiveness. However, some questions have arisen pertaining to the roles of external agencies and to the manner in which results of reviews are applied. I shall try to address these concerns in the comments that follow.

Our desire to attain or sustain accreditation leads directly to program review. Accreditation, whether it be directed to an entire institution, a school, or a single program, is accomplished through an examination of programs by an external agency. Through this process, SIUE has become fully accredited by the North Central Association to offer baccalaureate, masters, and specialists degrees, and a doctorate in Education.

Professional organizations other than regional accrediting agencies sometimes accredit all programs within a particular school. For example, the baccalaureate offerings by the School of Business are accredited by the American Assembly of the Collegiate Schools of Business, and similar accreditation at the Masters level has recently been granted. Specific program accreditation or certification by professional societies also occurs.

Examples of such accreditation in this institution are the baccalaureate majors in electrical and civil engineering and in the teacher education programs. Again, the judgments of these societies are based on demonstrated program quality, including of course, evaluation of the professional attributes of faculty and the adequacy of resources committed to the program in question.

Another type of review is that which is conducted by the staff of the IBHE on a statewide basis. Such reviews are directed to all degree programs within a discipline or set of similar disciplines. They focus primarily upon policy and program issues within the program area. The Board staff identifies program areas to be studied at the State level, and notifies institutions in advance of the planned review. Programs are chosen for review because of conditions and trends such as market demand, the identification of State problems that may be addressed through new or expanded educational programs, enrollment shifts, cost studies and other factors. The first study of this nature focused on business programs. It has been completed and the resulting report offers a series of recommendations relating to policy and planning. It does not contain any implementation requirements for specific institutions.

The almost continuous evaluation carried on internally both meets our institutional needs and provides a point of departure for our principal involvement with the IBHE. The reviews direct attention to matters that may not have received adequate consideration in the past. They provide a rationale for a shifting of resources to meet special needs and thereby improve program quality. They also provide justification for requesting supplemental funds in support of operations and facilities. Thus, even if there were no other involvement, SIUE would still have an obligation to conduct thorough reviews. We must be able to make those changes appropriate to the attainment of our mission, and we must have reliable information upon which to make necessary decisions.

For at least a decade program evaluations for the purpose of academic improvement have been conducted by the Graduate Council. These evaluations and those initiated for undergraduate programs three years ago concentrate on each program at least once every five years. They are concerned with equality of educational opportunity, with the nature and adequacy of the curriculum, with the research and teaching skills of the faculty, and with other elements of program quality. Some reviews have resulted in the curtailment of certain programs. In a far greater number of instances, however, the reviews have assisted us in reaching decisions to modify specific curriculum, research, and service activities. Once these internal graduate and undergraduate program reviews are completed (together with evaluations of non-academic programs also conducted on a five-year cycle), the reviewing bodies develop a series of recommendations and a rationale for them. These are incorporated in the RAMP document. At this point interaction with the IBHE begins.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education has a responsibility "to review periodically all existing programs of instruction, research, and public

service at State universities and to advise the appropriate board of control (in the case of SIUE, our Board of Trustees) if the contributions of each program is not educationally and economically justified" (Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapter 144, Section 187). The interests of the Board are in improvement of programs and services, reduction of programs and services which are no longer needed at current levels, and initiation of programs when the need for them has not been addressed by the universities (RAMP Manual, Fiscal 1982, Page IV-2).

When the IBHE staff receives information concerning our program reviews, as presented in RAMP, its members analyze our recommendations and in most cases accept them. If the staff has questions or concerns based on the institutional summation, it makes additional inquiries and the University responds to such questions. Then, based on the RAMP information, supplemental materials supplied by the institution, and the general programmatic and institutional data maintained by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the staff develops its own recommendations. Each institution is informed of these recommendations and is given an additional opportunity for response.

This year the IBHE staff initially recommended that SIUE terminate four programs. In two cases, the involved departments agreed with the recommendation. In a third instance, the staff, after discussion with us, rescinded its original recommendation. With respect to the remaining program, the SIU Board of Trustees has been asked to report on its viability at the end of the next year. If after a year the outlook for and the contributions of the program do not appear to justify its retention, elimination, through interaction between the University and its governing board, may be appropriate. The important point here is that if such action should be taken, the decision would be made locally and not by IBHE.

The excellence of our programming is of paramount importance to our continuing development. The IBHE staff is also concerned with quality. That it additionally considers costs and numbers of majors and graduates is in keeping with its mandate. While it is true that ultimately we as an institution will manage our own program inventory, we must obviously do so in a responsible fashion, examining every significant factor including enrollment and commitment of resources. Guidelines for the preparation of RAMP make it clear that the preliminary responsibility for the initiation of reviews, for the conduct of the review process, and for the development of recommendations resulting from the review lies with the institutions. We have accepted that responsibility. Our self-study and peer review meet both our internal needs and those of State coordination.