

M O N O G R A P H

HOW TO ENGAGE FACULTY IN ACADEMIC PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION

By

Robert C. Dickeson

President Emeritus

University of Northern Colorado

HOW TO ENGAGE FACULTY IN ACADEMIC PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION

By

Robert C. Dickeson

President Emeritus

University of Northern Colorado

This Academic Impressions monograph is licensed to the person or organization who purchased it. The copy is intended for individual use by the purchaser. Academic Impressions restricts the purchaser from redistributing it via electronic means (email, intranet or internet posting, etc), or via print redistribution.

Copyright © 2014 CR Mrig Company. All Rights Reserved. | 4601 DTC Blvd., Suite 800, Denver, CO 80237

TO ORDER ADDITIONAL COPIES

Please call Academic Impressions' office at 720.488.6800 or visit <http://www.academicimpressions.com/monographs>

AUTHOR

ROBERT C. DICKESON

President Emeritus

University of Northern Colorado

Robert C. Dickeson provides counsel from multiple leadership perspectives: chair of the governor's cabinets in two states, university president, business CEO, and foundation executive. Dickeson served as the director of the department of administration and chair of the cabinet of Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt; and chief of staff, executive director of the office of state planning and budget, and chair of the cabinet of Colorado Gov. Roy Romer. He served in administrative posts at three universities and was president of the University of Northern Colorado from 1981-91. He served as president and CEO of Noel-Levitz Centers Inc., division president of USA Enterprises Inc., and senior vice president of USA Group Inc., heading the USA Group Foundation. From 2000 to 2005, he was co-founder and senior vice president of Lumina Foundation for Education.

While at Lumina Foundation, he led the national initiative on college costs, based on his monograph, *Collision Course: Rising College Costs Threaten America's Future and Require Shared Solutions* (Lumina Foundation, 2004). His book, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999, 2010) was based on his extensive consulting experiences including serving several hundred two- and four-year colleges (private and public) and corporations ranging from hospitals to bank holding companies. During 2006, he served as senior policy adviser to the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

FOREWORD

A 2013 Academic Impressions survey of over 100 academic and administrative leaders revealed that by far the number-one anticipated challenge to effective program prioritization was resistance to change and lack of faculty buy-in. Digging deeper, we learned that most institutions are either engaging faculty very late in the prioritization process, or engaging them in only limited ways.

Yet, when faculty are fully engaged and committed to the process, there will be greater ownership (and therefore more successful implementation) of the decisions reached; it is also more likely that the decisions reached will be most supportive of the institution's academic mission and strategic objectives.

To help institutions achieve this, we turned to Robert C. Dickeson, who literally wrote the book on program prioritization (see *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*, Jossey-Bass, 2nd ed., 2010).

In this monograph, Dickeson offers a practical and thorough review of the problem, helping institutional leaders and prioritization task forces understand the sources of faculty resistance, and equipping them with a **checklist of 28 steps and tools** to engage faculty meaningfully in the prioritization process, in ways that build trust across your institution and ensure that your prioritization will be both rigorous and effective.

HIGHER ED IMPACT

Delivered free to your inbox, Higher Ed Impact provides you with a full tool kit to help you monitor and assess the trends and strategic challenges likely to have an impact on your institution's health and competitiveness.

DAILY PULSE

Scan current events, timely research, and notable practices at other institutions.

WEEKLY SCAN

Review the week's most significant events and the most timely research in higher education, with key takeaways suggested by higher education's leading experts.

DIAGNOSTIC

Get an enterprise-wide and in-depth look at a current, strategic challenge; identify steps to take and critical questions to address.

Learn more or sign up to receive Higher Ed Impact at: <http://www.academicimpressions.com/news-sign-up>



ABOUT ACADEMIC IMPRESSIONS

We are an organization that exclusively serves higher education professionals. We offer focused and intentionally crafted learning experiences to help you address your most pressing challenges.

Our work addresses a range of issues related to student recruitment and retention, faculty support and development, alumni engagement and development, and increasing organizational productivity.

Learn more at www.academicimpressions.com.

Copyright © 2014 CR Mrig Company. All Rights Reserved. | 4601 DTC Blvd., Suite 800, Denver, CO 80237

OTHER MONOGRAPHS YOU MAY ENJOY

Strategic Planning: 5 Tough Questions, 5 Proven Answers

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/monograph/strategic-planning-5-tough-questions-5-proven-answers>

We asked academic and administrative leaders to name the 5 most significant concerns they have around strategic planning. This resource-packed monograph from Academic Impressions provides answers to those 5 questions—including how to make strategic planning effective in a low-trust environment and how to deal with a micromanaging board.

Fundraising for Deans: A Guide

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/monograph/fundraising-deans-guide>

Deans are expected to engage alumni and fundraise actively for their college; yet, most have received little training or support in that endeavor. In this monograph, Jim Langley demystifies fundraising for deans and offers a practical guide for how deans can manage their involvement in every stage of the fundraising effort to attain significant gifts for their institution.

Core to Langley's approach is the philosophy that the dean's primary role in fundraising is not exclusively to ask for money but to create the conditions that attract significant philanthropic investments.

Fundraising for Presidents: A Guide

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/monograph/fundraising-presidents-guide>

This monograph from Jim Langley redefines the president's role in each area of institutional advancement. Langley details how the president can take a lead role in defining the case for support and identifying inspiring projects defined by specific objectives rather than categories of institutional need, and offers strategies for onboarding a new president in ways that strengthen rather than stall the work of fundraising.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. THE BENEFITS OF OPTIMUM FACULTY PARTICIPATION	13
II. ANTICIPATING FACULTY RESISTANCE	14
III. UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCES OF RESISTANCE	17
IV. OTHER COMPLICATING FACTORS	22
V. CHECKLIST: 28 TOOLS FOR ENGAGING FACULTY	30
CONCLUSION	58

I. THE BENEFITS OF OPTIMUM FACULTY PARTICIPATION

To be successful, academic program prioritization in higher education requires optimum faculty participation. There are several reasons for this assertion:

- Academic programs have been created and operated by faculty over the years and there is a concomitant expectation that faculty should also be involved in program assessment, review and prioritization.
- Mature faculty who are properly engaged, informed and motivated are fully capable of recommending program rankings that align with institutional, rather than individual, interests.
- The eventual program decisions that result from the prioritization process are more likely to attain a sense of legitimacy if faculty are engaged in recommending such decisions.
- People tend to support that which they help to create; therefore, faculty participation and involvement should result in a greater sense of buy-in and ownership. This phenomenon is especially important if institutional reforms are to endure.

That said, there certainly are examples of program prioritization where institutional administrators have mandated a top-down approach that did not invite faculty participation. There is no inherent requirement that faculty participate. But it's been my experience that such processes lack the significant benefits obtainable by faculty involvement.

II. ANTICIPATED FACULTY RESISTANCE

Academic program prioritization has been around for a long time, as campuses for decades have wrestled with the issues of program demand, quality, and productivity. In 1999 I wrote a book which outlined a prescribed process for undertaking prioritization.¹ By 2010, when an updated version of the book appeared, the timeliness of its subject matter was more critical, as colleges and universities faced severe financial shortfalls and external demands for accountability.

In early 2011, I reported on feedback obtained from 550 higher education officials from approximately 300 institutions in the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico.² Respondents varied in terms of their experience with program prioritization: some were exploring the desirability of conducting a program prioritization process; others were mid-process and had questions about important next steps; and still others had completed the process and were contemplating undertaking a repeat of prioritization. These respondents offered feedback on six items: the driving force behind prioritization, expectations, criteria, data, challenges, and other concerns.

1 Dickeson, R.C. *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers. 1999. Revised and Updated, 2010.

2 Dickeson, R. C. "Report: What Higher-Ed Leaders Are Saying About Program Prioritization." Academic Impressions, 2011. <http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/report-what-higher-ed-leaders-are-saying-about-program-prioritization>

Respondents anticipated that three types of challenges would emerge on their campuses as they approached the subject of prioritization: resistance by the faculty, campus dynamics, and implementation issues. With respect to the resistance issue, five anticipated issues emerged:

- Buy-in by the faculty
- Fear of job loss
- Tenure issues
- Unions
- Program resistance: “How can you be a university without XYZ program?”

Similarly, in her 2012 research into factors that impede adaptive change in higher-ed institutions that undertook academic program prioritization, Anne Milkovich found that faculty resistance was a key component of “institutional resistance.”³ When resistance manifested in the organization, Milkovich found, the leadership often backed down, resulting in a lack of good results in spite of institutional strategic intent. Thus, success with prioritization often depended on the strength of leadership in the culture.

In the same vein, Academic Impressions surveyed over 100 academic and administrative leaders in 2013 to learn about their commitment to program prioritization and the challenges they were encountering or anticipated encountering. Most leaders surveyed indicated that the most significant barriers they saw to successful program prioritization were lack of faculty “buy-in” and a lack of courageous leadership.⁴

3 Milkovich, A. *Patterns of Academic Program Prioritization Among Institutions of Higher Education*. Unpublished research report, Montana State University, 2012.

4 Mrig, Amit. “Meeting the Challenge of Program Prioritization.” Academic Impressions, 2013. <http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/meeting-challenge-program-prioritization-full-report>

From the above-referenced works, one can infer certain strategies that might ameliorate faculty resistance to program prioritization. These strategies may include:

- Getting faculty involved early on
- Educating the institution about the “big picture”
- Sharing the data openly
- Translating data into useful and understandable information
- Communicating continuously

III. UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCES OF RESISTANCE

Before we tackle the efficacy of these or any other strategies, it might be useful to understand the sources of faculty resistance. By examining the sources, we may be able to tailor solutions more effectively. There are five primary forces at work that breed faculty resistance.

1. Academic Identification Equals Personal Identification

A professor in an academic discipline views his or her role in ways that are significantly different from individuals in most work settings. This is not just a job; it's a profession. In some cases, it's a lifelong calling. Academics have devoted their professional lives to a discipline where they are credentialed, and where they teach, conduct research, and perform service. When asked, an academic will likely say, "I'm a professor of anthropology," before saying, "I work at the local university."

The work that academics do is not 9-to-5, punch-the-timeclock kind of work. It takes years of preparation, and with experience comes a sense of personal ownership of the discipline. Keeping up with the latest research in one's field, staying current with the profession, caring for laboratory equipment, overseeing content holdings in the library, advising students and proselytizing them to the discipline, and attending professional conferences all coalesce to a point where the line between the person and the job is indistinguishable. Now, here comes a prioritization process that is focused on the relative worth of academic programs, and you begin to see the threat to one's life work that the process represents. The fact that the

sheltering institution can no longer afford to be what it has become is of secondary concern to the typical faculty member, if at all. An academic's primary allegiance is to their discipline. The discipline is owed the dedication and loyalty essentially because it reflects who the academic is as a person.

You cannot overestimate the power of this person-field connection. It is entirely understandable why some faculty would resist analysis or review of a program with which they are so personally and professionally linked. The thinking goes, "By questioning my program, you are questioning me." With this kind of symbiotic connection, it is difficult to view priority-setting in an abstract way. It gets personal.

2. Demand is Fickle

One of the key criteria by which institutions assess program priorities is external demand. Does anyone want this program? What's the enrollment trend line? Given scarce resources, should budget and staffing allocations go to programs of higher demand? External demand may also include users of research products, or consumers of services provided by the program. Is such demand sufficient to justify a program's continuance? One problem with emphasizing external demand (and all institutions do) is that faculty believe demand to be fickle.

Interest in certain programs, for example, varies from year to year (and decade to decade); what's hot as a major today--from an institutional marketing point of view--may be cold in a few years (and vice versa). To the faculty member delivering a program, this is frustrating, since there is no way to anticipate or control mood swings in student academic appetites. Increasing staff to deliver the breadth and depth required to offer a program is not as ephemeral as the shifts in student preference.

Federal support for some kinds of research also waxes and wanes, depending on congressional whim and bureaucratic caprice. Public policy that was in fashion one year is passé the next, and available funding of projects is cut or deferred routinely.

In sum, a measure of faculty resistance may come from the use of demand as a criterion. In higher education, faculty are not interchangeable parts, as one might see in an elementary school (we need more third grade teachers this year than second grade teachers, so we'll reallocate a teacher or two). But at the collegiate level, it's unlikely to re-tool a humanities instructor to start teaching forensic accounting, for example. Most faculty would just as soon take a "wait and see" attitude in dealing with the vagaries of demand. Demand changes.

3. The Egalitarian Tenet

Not all programs are equal. Some are more effective, some are more efficient, and some are more central to the achievement of institutional mission. This reality flies in the face of an aspect of the higher education culture: *we are all equal*.

Egalitarianism on campus is more nuanced than political or constitutional notions of equal rights, equality of opportunity, or equal pay for equal work. Egalitarianism on campus goes something like this: "You are an expert in your field—have a doctorate in it, taught it, published in it—it would be both audacious and inappropriate of me to try to tell you how to run your program better. Therefore, I'm going to take a hands-off approach concerning your program...And you sure as hell aren't going to tell me how to run my program!"

There is a corollary here to the old adage, "You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours." It's more like, "I won't look over your shoulder; you won't look over mine."

This unwritten covenant of reciprocity means that all programs are treated as equal, when a moment's observation of the facts will reveal that they are not. Yet, resistance by faculty to participating in not only a review but (shudder) a ranking of programs thus is anathema to the egalitarian tenet. While this behavior may be born out of professional respect, it sometimes has the effect of professional irresponsibility.

4. The Expectation of Continued Employment

Many people are attracted to higher education jobs because, historically, there has been a strong pattern of continuous employment. Generally speaking, colleges and universities over the years have not experienced severe episodic swings of boom and bust—as can be seen in many industries. Stability and continuity characterize collegiate personnel patterns. Even the paucity of salary raises in the recent past has not dissuaded most academics from clinging to their positions. For individuals who have achieved tenure, the expectation of continued employment is a reward, and its feeling of security is a paramount consideration. And, depending on the jurisdiction, it has legal teeth.

Because employment security is such a strong value in the academic culture, reforms such as program prioritization and reallocation of resources have the potential to upset the security apple cart. This perceived threat may be a source of faculty resistance.

5. Lack of Trust

Perhaps no other factor is as likely to generate faculty resistance as the lack of trust in the administration, or the governing board, or both. Some institutions have indeed been mismanaged, and some administrators have not treated faculty with appropriate respect. In such places trust has not been earned nor deserved.

Trust is a commodity that is difficult to attain and easy to lose. As in most relationships, building trust takes working at, over time. A new administration of a college or university may find that it has inherited a gap in trust between faculty and administration, one that took years to develop and which cannot be bridged overnight.

Faculty typically have extraordinary memories. My own experience is that some faculty will be willing to grant the benefit of the doubt to administrators, especially new and untried ones. Other faculty harbor resentments for transgressions, real or imagined, experienced decades ago. It is probably wise, therefore, to assess the level of trust on a particular campus prior to engaging in prioritization. In all cases, for higher education to work effectively, we need to focus on the issue of trust and develop consistent practices to earn and to maintain it.

IV. OTHER COMPLICATING FACTORS

While higher education is replete with the lore of the past and riddled with legacy, institutional leaders must overcome those aspects that are neither practical nor honest. Today's leaders should focus actively on correcting myths and building the strengths of the institution for the future.

Here are some examples where informed leadership can make a positive difference.

1. Limited Understanding of Fiscal Realities

Because they are focused primarily on their academic disciplines, faculty usually do not know nor care about an institution's finances. As long as the payroll department issues paychecks or direct deposits, more or less on time, faculty are happy, insofar as institutional finances are concerned. This attitude neatly comports with the tendency of many administrators to keep financial information close to their vests. For much of the recent past in higher education, particularly in the private sector, budgeting and resource allocation were handled by the chief financial officer and the president. Public colleges and universities, by contrast, were more typically open about fiscal issues because, in many states, such information was public. For independent institutions, even today, it is the norm for faculty not to know individual salary data about colleagues. Most public institutions, however, publish individual salary data.

Today, institutions are more likely to open budget processes to faculty input and involvement. Institution-wide budget committees now routinely include members from the faculty. Faculty senate and other governance tribunals may have budget committees or other means to secure information about how well the institution is doing fiscally.

Generally speaking, however, most faculty assume that institutional finances are well taken care of and someone else's responsibility. Small wonder then that when a fiscal crisis arises and program cuts need to be made, faculty are caught off guard, and "How could this have happened?" becomes the frequently asked question.

2. Noble Lying Equals Miscommunication

To some extent, faculty are unaware of the fiscal realities an institution confronts because they've been lied to. Noble lying goes something like this: "You are not to worry; your fine administration is on top of things. We'll take care of you as we always have. You stay with your academic duties and leave the management of things to us." However noble the intent, it's still a lie. The financial model undergirding higher education today is broken. All sources of revenue are eroding. Costs are out of control. Tuition increases and the misbegotten discounting system to offset the increases are at absurd and unsustainable levels. Deferred maintenance of the nation's higher education infrastructure is at historic highs—a trillion dollars?—and can never be fully corrected. Most institutions are at systemic risk, due to arcane practices, legacy personnel systems, and over-programming.

Until there is a candid and open discussion about these fiscal realities that involves all stakeholders of the institutional community, misunderstandings and miscommunication are inevitable.

3. Irony of Participation Versus Accountability

“Shared Governance” is an odd and logically unsupportable principle. Unique to higher education, shared governance seeks to involve faculty in administrative decision-making. Faculty routinely sit on all kinds of committees, participate in administrative councils and even get appointed or elected to governing boards (although usually without a vote). Faculty senates may have been delegated authority over certain matters.

The problem with this politically motivated and largely ephemeral authority is that it is not accompanied by concomitant responsibility or accountability. Administrators may secure advice, counsel and feedback from many groups, but only the administrator is fully accountable for the final decisions made. It’s the administrator’s job that’s on the line. To hold the notion that somehow governance is really shared is a chimera. The vote of no confidence is directed at one person; it is not shared. A firing or forced resignation likewise is not shared. No faculty senate votes to absolve an administrator because the senate had provided bad advice.

In institutions where there are faculty unions, the anomaly deepens. Some administrators involve faculty unions in matters other than collective bargaining, and the wisdom of doing so is questionable. Unions, by their very nature, are charged with representing faculty on matters of wages and conditions of employment. To engage unions in policy development or program prioritization matters crosses a line that probably should not be transgressed.

In all cases, information should be shared. Alternative strategies to tackle institutional problems should be developed jointly with key stakeholders, including faculty. Faculty should weigh in on fundamental issues confronting the institution. But it may be time for some straight talk about what “governance” in higher education really means; “consultative governance” may be a more apt term.

4. Gross Misunderstanding About Academic Freedom

As the sidebar on pages 27 - 29 notes, there are four facets of academic freedom, and their distinctions about what constitutes protected and unprotected speech should be better known on campuses across the country. One example that suggests the confusion about this subject occurred a few years ago. I was working with a provost at a midwestern university where the quality of academic programs was uneven. I suggested to the provost that he might want to place an offending department on “academic probation,” with suggested conditions about how to improve its status. “Oh, no, Bob,” he responded in horror, “Wouldn’t that be a violation of their academic freedom?” This provost’s misunderstanding about a key concept was fueling an abrogation of his needed academic leadership.

Other examples abound. Clarity about this important subject would permit a deeper understanding of what academic freedom is and what it isn’t.

5. Over-delegation by Governing Boards

I contend that many governing boards, whether due to ignorance or internal political pressure, have over-delegated their authority. This phenomenon occurs in two areas, primarily.

First, boards have delegated authority to faculty (or to faculty governance entities) over all academic matters. This is a mis-delegation and needs to be corrected. Faculty certainly know more about and have prominence in academic matters. But it’s the board that owns the place and has responsibility for its well-being and should therefore have final authority.

Many of our problems in higher education can be traced to lack of board engagement. Board members sometimes intrude into matters that cross the line between setting policy and administration, a practice that is also to be avoided. At the same time, well-informed boards need to reassert their voice of finality about adding and deleting academic programs, which rely on institutional resources.

Second, some boards have delegated authority, often inadvertently, to external groups. The best example is historic. Many, if not most, governing boards adopted in toto the principles and practices associated with the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, propounded by the American Association of University Professors and several other national higher education groups. However, several boards also added the phrase, "...and as may be amended in the future." Flash forward a few decades, and institutions find themselves subject to a policy they didn't adopt, except via this reference. It's probably not a good idea to adopt any policy by reference, and a healthy housecleaning of board policies might reveal examples where these practices can be corrected.

6. "We tried something like that and it didn't work"

Part of the inherent cynicism in faculty attitudes may stem from past administrative ventures that exacted time and energy from the faculty and yielded nothing in return. Some of these misadventures may have been in response to causes *du jour* – TQM is the way we will manage things; or RCM is our future; or MBO will show us the way—that, having been tried and found wanting, left a skeptical set of participants in their wake.

There are also cases where program prioritization was attempted but, due to the lack of courage on the part of the president (or the board in some instances), no action resulted. Performance-based budgeting is a current trend being debated, but, as experience in Tennessee and elsewhere demonstrates, unless real money is at stake, the performance benefits are marginal.

The accumulation of past projects and unfulfilled initiatives leads to the ultimate symbol of cynicism: “I’ve outlasted administrators before you, and I’ll outlast you.”

Prioritization done well can yield positive institutional transformation, but it must be completed for the benefits to surface. Half-baked recipes, by contrast, are known to leave a bad taste.

THE FOUR FACETS OF “ACADEMIC FREEDOM”

1. Academic Freedom

Academic Freedom is the ability of the faculty member to seek the truth in his/her teaching, research, scholarship, and other creative endeavors without interference from external forces. This freedom is important for the institution to protect so that the pursuit of the truth can be maintained, fostered, and encouraged. Without this protection, we are subject to dogma, which cannot be defended or accepted in a free and open society. Thus, academic freedom is necessary for the full practice of democracy. Academic freedom is typically associated with the granting of tenure. In other words, only those faculty who enjoy tenure have academic freedom. It would seem, however, that any higher education institution would protect all of its faculty in this important matter. There are many examples historically where governments, public policy makers, religious forces, and other social arbiters try to silence faculty pursuit of the truth, especially when that pursuit yields unpopular or unconventional conclusions that do not hold current public sway. There are always opponents of academic freedom and they can emerge at any time. Academic freedom is therefore a critical and essential characteristic of higher education and must be protected by the institution.

2. Employee Speech

When a faculty member criticizes the administration or verbally attacks an institutional officer, or becomes a chronic complainer, or speaks out against an institutional policy, such behavior is usually not a part of academic freedom and may not necessarily be protected. Employees of all kinds—including faculty—are subject to regular employee/employer relationships and obligations. One does not criticize one's boss in the workforce with impunity. Speech often has consequences, and it may be that employee grouching about personnel matters, work conditions, and management decisions can lead to discipline and even separation. Employee speech may not be protected. As of this writing, a few higher education governing boards in the United States are granting faculty certain "rights" to criticize. The fact that such extensions are subject to board authority should remind us that these permissions are transitory, and not "rights" in the usual sense.

3. Free Speech

Each of us, as a citizen, has the right to free speech—to speak out on matters of public policy, to criticize the government, to opine on public matters, and to exercise the freedom of speech guaranteed in our Constitution. But such speech is not absolute (e.g. shouting "fire" in a crowded theater), and generally this freedom ends where another's rights begin. Faculty do not cede their right to free speech when they become employees. But the distinction between free speech and employee speech must also be noted. The courts will enforce prohibitions against certain employee speech but will also enforce rights associated with free speech. Free speech is sacred; employee speech is not. Faculty, when exercising their free speech rights, must be careful to note that their views are their own, and not necessarily those of the institution with which they are affiliated.

4. Administrative Oversight

Colleges and universities have rules and regulations for the conduct of business, and all employees are subject to following them. Such rules and regulations may involve academic matters: a required teaching load, maintaining office hours, following a standardized syllabus, adhering to a prescribed curriculum, and meeting other management expectations. Academic programs and academic departments are subject to institutional sanctions and expectations.

One cannot argue that adherence to such necessary matters violates one's "academic freedom." What such an argument presupposes is "academic license," which is not guaranteed, protected, or encouraged. Work has to be accomplished and it must be accomplished in ways that meet organizational needs. Organizations are under policy, contract, accreditation, and other management obligations to conduct work in certain ways; it does not suffice to have a faculty member follow his/her own whim about whether or not to adhere to the rules pursuant to that work. Such a posture is not a violation of academic freedom; indeed, to argue otherwise demeans the true meaning of academic freedom.

V. CHECKLIST: 28 TOOLS FOR ENGAGING FACULTY

What follows are twenty-eight items that have been proven to work in the hundreds of institutions that have undertaken academic program prioritization. There are no guarantees that using these or other engagement practices will result in a fully satisfied faculty; however, the chances of securing a more engaged faculty would seem to be enhanced by including—and implementing—these suggestions.

1. Bring faculty into the realities and specifics of the full fiscal picture

Because higher education today is operating on a financial model that is broken and no longer sustainable, it is more important than ever that faculty, who have staked their lives, reputations, and futures on their roles within your institution become fully acquainted with these new realities. Job security is tenuous. There are fewer and fewer guarantees in life. While I am not trying to scare people into packing up and leaving unnecessarily, an honest appraisal of the institution's future is important for two reasons: one, it is the truth and most of us would rather be confronted with it than be misled; and two, fully engaged faculty can be extraordinary sources of creative solutions to our problems, if given a chance.

Perhaps administrators are reluctant to fully disclose financial matters because doing so would reveal some perceived weakness on their part for not having solved all the problems. Perhaps non-

disclosure is simply the way things have been done for years and to now reveal the warts would somehow dishonor the legacy of lying. In any case, the “new normal,” in part, means that we are all in this leaking boat together, and we ought to use all hands to bail. By bringing faculty fully into the fiscal picture, that understanding will be deeper and should animate faculty to engage in purposeful solutions.

✓ 2. Encourage full faculty involvement in budgets, especially at department levels

As I visit campuses, I am continually amazed at the lack of knowledge about and participation in budgets and financial practices so essential to the operation of the organization. In some places, department heads are handed an expense budget, with all personnel costs hidden, and told to stay within dollar limits that may or may not make sense for the year’s activities and operations. Permission to deviate from a line item is required, and one wonders what kind of management mentality sustains these arcane practices at a time when all management elsewhere is being told to be nimble and to adapt to changing situations that might yield opportunities.

Budgets represent the values of an organization. They should be developed openly and with input from the participants who should be responsible for implementing them. By continuing the historic separation of budget development and budget execution, we have created a culture that wants to game the system. The tenets of gaming would include: asking for far more than is needed on the assumption that a compromise number will result in a number that achieves what we wanted in the first place; spending wildly in the fourth quarter because the dollars might be lost to reversion; or spending according to the lunacy of a line item simply because flexibility to spend between lines was not permissible.

Because faculty are not intimately involved with budgets, there results a sense of mistrust. “I know the chair—or dean, or president—

has a secret slush fund” is a common myth and misassumption about the real fiscal picture. By contrast, involving faculty in developing budgets can lead to a greater sense of responsibility about making sure expenditures are justifiable, just as one does with one’s own personal budget. Because we have identified (above) the issue of trust as crucial to positively setting priorities, budget involvement is one step toward building that trust.

3. Train department heads, committees, senates, others on costs

Several institutions where I provide some counsel realize, too late, that they need to do a massive communication catch-up to bring the faculty into understanding costs. Crash meetings are held across campus involving the chief financial officer trying to educate participants in such meetings about basic financial facts affecting the institution. It would have been far better to have included such training as a part of orientation to administrative responsibility.

It is one of the wonders of higher education administration that we turn over to department heads about eighty percent of the operational decisions of the institution, and those heads have no training, education or practice in management. No other organization would behave this way. I have lectured at two different national organizations that have tried to address this gross omission in higher education management, but such groups reach a small fraction of the thousands of department chairs. Furthermore, I know of no organization that trains senates. A forward-looking institution would provide routine training programs for chairs and senate members and committee heads on the basics of planning, budgeting, human resources, legal issues, and assessment that emerge as minimal expectations to run today’s complex higher education institution. Leadership of higher education is a distributed phenomenon; it does not reside solely at the top of the organization chart. Why don’t we acknowledge that fact and educate all leaders at all levels on what it takes to manage more successfully?

✔ 4. Insist on impact statements for all budget requests

One of the simplest, yet most effective ways to get all faculty and staff to think more practically about resources, their scarcity and their use, is to implement a practice that requires a “Resources Impact Statement” (RIS) to accompany all budget requests above a certain dollar amount. Filling out the form isn’t easy. It requires thought. It imposes on its author the obligation to think about things one normally doesn’t think about. Thus, it teaches all of us the lesson that our parents tried to impose: Money doesn’t grow on trees. Resources are scarce and likely to become scarcer. A sample of such an RIS looks like this:

RESOURCES IMPACT STATEMENT

Name of Idea/Proposal/Program:

Specific way this will benefit the organization:

Resources required to implement it effectively--

A. FISCAL (How many dollars, for what period of time, from what source?)

B. HUMAN (Professional staff commitment, support staff commitment, volunteer time commitment, outside expertise?)

C. PHYSICAL (Space, equipment, systems?)

Do the benefits outweigh the costs to the extent that we should add net new resources to accomplish this?

Do the benefits outweigh the costs to the extent that we should re-prioritize existing programs and reallocate resources to accomplish this?

What are the consequences of our not pursuing this?

✓ 5. Focus on fiscal consequences of all decisions

Nowhere is the issue of fiscal blindness on college campuses more apparent than in strategic plans. The most common pitfalls associated with developing strategic plans at colleges and universities are the following:

- Many plans are merely collections of wish lists; they do not take into account the real issues confronting the institution in its immediate future.
- Plans are not truly strategic; they focus on strengths and weaknesses to the exclusion of threats and opportunities.
- Plans are neither integrative nor comprehensive; they fail to integrate capital plans, fiscal plans, enrollment management plans, academic plans, etc. To be truly effective, plans should not operate in isolation from the whole.
- Most plans are fiscally unrealistic; they fail to acknowledge fully either the costs of implementation or where the resources—human, fiscal, and physical—will come from.
- Most plans tend to meander into areas that are not actually within the mission and scope of the institution.
- Most plans are additive; they fail to identify things the institutions should stop doing.
- Most plans are weak on both implementation strategies and measures of performance.

Since faculty are routinely involved in strategic planning, focusing all participants on these common pitfalls (and working to avoid them) can go a long way toward preparing the campus culture to accept prioritization.

6. Prioritize non-academic programs as well as academic programs

For a variety of reasons, faculty feel that the administrative side of the house wastes a lot of money. It is an understandable and universal response, then, for faculty to say, “Shouldn’t the administration have to prioritize programs, as well?” And the answer is “Yes.” To ensure a truly open and transparent process, all programs that consume resources should be included in the prioritization, ranking, and eventual reallocation.

The president’s office should be included. All sacred cows should be judged. All organizational silos should be attacked. Because we have become more than we can afford, all our past investments need to be re-thought. The criteria for assessing academic programs, however, may not translate so readily to non-academic programs. For that reason, I’m now recommending another set of criteria for evaluating administrative, support, and co-curricular programs:

- A. Key objectives and how they are measured
- B. Services provided and to which customers, internal and external
- C. Position-by-position analysis
- D. Unmet needs and demands
- E. Opportunities for collaboration and restructuring
- F. Opportunities to share skill sets and resources
- G. Opportunities for cross-training
- H. Technological improvements that are cost-effective
- I. Process improvements to streamline operations
- J. Outsourcing exploration to improve service and cut costs

7. Include intercollegiate athletics in the analysis

From time to time as colleges and universities undertake academic and administrative program prioritization, the issue surfaces of whether to include intercollegiate athletics. Some presidents are loath to include this particular program in the mix of analysis, knowing that it is the one program most likely to generate significant controversy.

There is a national precedent for exclusion of athletics from analysis: the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education purposely omitted athletics in 2006 as a subject for review, recognizing that it was too volatile. The thinking was that confronting athletics would overshadow what were considered more important topics.

Yet, to ignore athletics as somehow exempt from comparative analysis and consideration—particularly in tough economic times that affect the entire institution—is to reinforce the idea that this large and growing area is above scrutiny and accountability.

If a campus were to summon the courage to tackle a thorough and comprehensive analysis of athletics, alongside other academic and non-academic programs, it should do so with an understanding of seven key dimensions unique to this program.

A. ATHLETICS AND ENROLLMENT

Hundreds of smaller, tuition-dependent colleges depend on athletes to achieve enrollment numbers necessary to sustain the overall academic program. In many instances a student-athlete will choose a college because he or she can continue to play a favorite sport while pursuing an academic major. College coaches are often the most adept among the institution's recruiters for admissions. Cutting athletics at such colleges could, in many cases, bring down the institution. It is also a phenomenon of enrollment behavior that athletic success, particularly at the championship level, begets an overall enrollment increase. This halo effect is probably fleeting, but nonetheless should be taken into account when assessing the essentiality of athletic programs.

B. ALUMNI SUPPORT

Many institutions justify continuing support for intercollegiate athletics as necessary to maintain alumni interest and support. While this is true for many former students of the institution, it is also clear that a large proportion of grads identify with favorite programs, professors, and fraternal affiliations. Most donors are motivated to contribute to higher education primarily because of a desire to “pay back” to the institution so that future students can also secure a good education. Alumni supporters of athletic programs are often strong and vocal; ignoring their interests could be perilous.

C. GOVERNING BOARD INTERFERENCE

Athletics—how it is managed and how it is conducted—may well be the one area where governing board members cross the policy/management line most often. Boards typically are sensitive about setting policy and then holding the president accountable for management of the institution. Except in athletics. A combination of competitive fervor and love of sports brings about a level of interference in day-to-day management of athletics unheard of in academic or student affairs matters. Historic examples at big-time athletic programs abound: The president of Michigan State University resigns rather than submit to a board-directed mandate about the athletic director. The board at Southern Methodist University usurps the authority of the president and brings about an NCAA “death sentence,” a sanction from which the university is only now beginning to emerge. Scandal at Penn State brings down several officials, including the president. No topic within academic and administrative program priority-setting is as likely to engender board interference as intercollegiate athletics.

D. EXTERNAL REGULATIONS

The administration of athletic programs is not always wholly within the control of the institution. External regulations and commitments may tie the hands of those who would conduct prioritization and reallocation of resources. An institution’s adherence to Title IX regulations, for example, may dictate the number and level of

athletic teams fielded. Making changes in one part of the athletic program may have ripple effects on other parts. Institutions may also have to take into account division and conference membership mandates. Depending upon whether the school is NCAA division I or II, or whether its particular conference membership dictates it, such things as number of sports offered, scholarship minimums, and other costly prescriptions might apply. This practice is somewhat akin to specialized accreditation for academic programs: while it is voluntary, it is always expensive. Flexibility in dealing with the resources associated with athletics, therefore, is somewhat limited.

E. THE MYTH OF FINANCIAL VIABILITY

An astonishing proportion of the public, especially higher education alumni, believe the myth that athletics generates great revenues that help support the rest of the institution. The stark reality, of course, is that the overwhelming majority of athletic programs in this country are financial losers. In all but a handful of instances, the institution subsidizes athletics, not the other way around. As *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported (Libby Sander, June 15, 2011) even in the elite NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision, 82% of the institutions had a median deficit in 2010 of \$11.6 million. No programs in Division I without football or in the former Division I-AA operated in the black.

F. ROLE OF ATHLETICS IN TEACHER PREPARATION

Institutions whose academic program profile includes teacher education need to be mindful of the significant role athletics plays in preparing physical education teachers, coaches, trainers and other school professionals for K-12 education. High school athletic programs, for example, rely on college graduates with credentials and coaching experiences gained by virtue of participation in and observation of intercollegiate athletics. A wise application of this reality would be to inventory K-12 school personnel needs for the immediate future—by sport—and assess the degree to which such needs can be met by collegiate curricular offerings.

G. FACULTY RESENTMENT

The primary impetus to confront intercollegiate athletics as a program, using the same criteria and process for analyzing all other programs, comes from the faculty. The excesses of the athletic establishment, especially at the top levels nationally, are indeed egregious and symbolize how the system is out of control. Million-dollar salaries for football and basketball coaches, free cars for assistants, unlimited travel budgets, and other under-the-table perks are incomprehensible to faculty whose salaries may be frozen, lab and equipment budgets are cut, and sabbaticals are eliminated. The tail is wagging the dog, and the system is, in a word, unfair. Our sports-minded culture, where an assistant coach's DUI conviction will garner more ink in the press than a faculty member's election to one of the national science academies, evidences a set of values and preferences hard to endure. The resulting resentment, which is unlikely to subside, will continue to pressure institutional leaders to take some action to correct the large and developing imbalance in resource allocation.

Should intercollegiate athletics be subject to academic and administrative program prioritization like all other programs? Absolutely.

Will such a review require a careful consideration of the seven dimensions identified above? It is to be hoped.

✓ 8. Use the prioritization process to uncover (and correct) policies that don't make sense

In each of the hundreds of consultations in which I've become involved, certain policies, procedures, or institutional practices arise that needed amending, fixing, or eliminating. Inevitably, prioritization surfaces the anomalies that are more historical than logical, such as:

- Our scheduling policy prevents us from truly knowing the actual number of majors we have [fix the bad policy]
- Our fee policy does not reflect accurate program revenues and program costs [amend the fee policy]
- We would make more auxiliary income, but our alcohol policy turns off would-be external customers [change the policy]
- Our procedures about what programs get to use what space don't comport with today's enrollment demands [alter the procedures]
- We don't know the numbers of minors we have because our practice is that a student doesn't declare a minor until just before graduation [modify the practice]

And the list is endless. At the outset of the planning for prioritization, assign someone to identify and monitor the list of offending policies, and check off the changes as they occur.

By consistently engaging faculty in the identification of these arcane practices (Do we really need seven signatures on the requisition?) and by streamlining operations accordingly, a lot of shared trust can be developed over time. And institutions become more effective in the bargain.

9. What's the alternative?

Whether or not to pursue program prioritization is often a debatable topic on the campus where debate is a distinct part of the culture. Once there is full disclosure about the institution's finances, the grimness of its fiscal picture, and the very real threat of the looming storm clouds menacing its financial model, most reasonable faculty can conclude that reallocation of resources is necessary.

For the most vocal naysayers, however, it may be compelling to ask them to come up with viable alternatives. Where else are we likely going to get the resources we need? From increases in federal grants? Not likely. From other public appropriations? That trend line is headed in the wrong direction. From more tuition increases? The market is not going to bear it. Raising more money to build endowment? We need to do so. But to meet today's problems we need to reallocate existing resources. And to do so responsibly means we need to prioritize.

Help me understand a viable alternative.

10. Restate and reinforce the reasons behind prioritization

Institutions undertake prioritization for a variety of reasons. Over the years the benefits of priority-setting have evolved to include one or more of the following eleven reasons:

- ☐ To balance the budget (ranges from 2 to 10 percent, over 1-2 years)
- ☐ To inform future budget decisions
- ☐ To improve overall efficiency and effectiveness
- ☐ To respond to accreditation demands
- ☐ To dovetail with strategic planning efforts
- ☐ To respond to demands from governing boards/public entities
- ☐ To achieve strategic initiatives
- ☐ To tackle specific shortfalls (unfunded liabilities, deferred maintenance)
- ☐ To reinvest in new programs to strengthen the institution for the future
- ☐ To create a contingency and reserve fund
- ☐ To create a database that can be used as a management tool for the future

Whatever the reasons, it is important for all participants, faculty included, to be continually reminded of the process and the importance of moving forward. Focusing on the positive ends of prioritization can help maintain attention on the means.

11. Involve faculty in all of the roles of the prioritization process

Done well, the program prioritization process will involve faculty in multiple roles. It is important to announce these responsibilities in advance, so that the faculty as a whole sees the multiple dimensions of faculty involvement. By placing exceptional faculty on key task forces, for example, continual reinforcement of participation is assured, and the project is more likely to succeed.

12. Faculty on the project team or steering committee

On some campuses, faculty participate as members of the project team, administering the overall prioritization process. Other institutions prefer the steering committee to be composed of administrators, with faculty serving as advisors.

13. Faculty helping decide and weight criteria

Faculty can be involved in helping decide which criteria the process will use, what weights should be assigned to each criterion, and what sources of data should attend each criterion.

✓ 14. Faculty involvement in completing program information forms

As a bottom-up approach, faculty must be involved in the authoring of program information forms and templates at the department level. While some department heads will author these reports for each of the department's programs, other department heads will assign authorship responsibilities to the best writers in the department. Wise departments will involve all faculty in thinking through the essential points and especially the quality data elements to be included in the reports. By doing so, the department as a whole puts its best foot forward in advancing its programs for review.

✓ 15. Faculty should predominate the task force membership

The task force that is charged with ranking academic programs should be populated with faculty. I find that one hundred percent of membership by faculty is ideal; this approach helps cement the academic nature of the activity, and signals to the campus community the importance of faculty involvement. Some faculty should also serve on a task force that is charged with ranking administrative programs, as faculty are key "internal customers" of administrative services. In all cases, appointments to these task forces should be made by the president, after a nomination process that is designed to elicit the very best faculty who have the institution as a whole in their perspectives, and not individuals who are merely representative of a special interest or program. You need individuals who will serve as "trustees" of the institution's interests, rather than "delegates" for their own academic program.

16. Use a nomination process to select faculty for task forces

Some campuses will choose to select faculty to serve on a task force that come from traditional groups (senate, other tribunals) or who are elected from schools and colleges. I don't recommend this approach. First of all, individuals who are elected tend to feel a need to represent the constituency they come from. The expectation is that the delegate will look out for home interests, and will bring home the program bacon. Second, individuals who are elected may not necessarily have the skill sets or perspectives that the institution needs right now for the prioritization process. Far better to employ an open, institution-wide nomination process, in which all members of the campus community—faculty, staff, students—can nominate individuals to the attention of the president, and identify why the nominated individual meets the qualifications and expectations of serving as a “trustee-type” individual rather than a “delegate-type.” A sample nomination form follows, which seeks to identify such individuals for consideration for presidential appointment.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The prioritization process requires the active participation of a special group of faculty who are willing to serve in important roles as members of the academic team.

In the interest of securing the best possible candidates for membership, we ask for you to nominate outstanding faculty for possible appointment by the president. Approximately twelve people will be selected, and their tasks will include the items identified in the draft charter.

In addition, we believe that some desirable characteristics for the makeup of the academic team would include the following:

- Understands and embraces the mission of the institution; is student-centered, and would be an effective member of a team.
- Is representative of the diversity of the faculty, including appropriate balances with respect to gender, ethnicity, school representation, long- and short-term seniority, tenured and tenure-track, teacher/scholar/artist practitioner, and program size.
- Displays personal characteristics such as critical thinking, analytical skills, problem-solving, fair-mindedness, empathy, and openness to differing viewpoints.
- Has earned a high level of credibility as demonstrated by respect of peers, previous leadership experience (and potential for leadership), and professional accomplishment.

Thank you for your assistance in helping shape the composition of the academic team.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

I hereby nominate _____
of the _____ department to be a
member of the prioritization academic team. Based on
the announced criteria for membership, I suggest this
individual for the following reasons (please cite examples):

Date

My name

✓ 17. Faculty roles in subsequent recommendations

Depending on the governance arrangements unique to the institution, faculty may have roles to play subsequent to the ranking of programs. In some cases, an academic senate may have jurisdiction over some academic program changes. Faculty of such groups get to weigh in on recommendations that emanated from the prioritization process; those recommendations then go to the president and/or the board of trustees for final approval. The specifics of such roles will depend on each institution's specific governance arrangements.

Generally stated, academic program prioritization should be a bottom-up process that has, at its base, an institution-wide foundation of faculty involvement. While final decisions will be made by the president and the board, those decisions, as has been pointed out, will be stronger and more enduring if they are fully informed by a consultative, comprehensive process.

✓ 18. Ensure the integrity of the process

The institution will want to ensure that all report formats, data collection, instructions, and related materials are directly tied to the announced purposes of the prioritization process and are standardized and consistently applied. "Data-based" decision-making requires the same level of integrity as one would expect of a team of experts reviewing and making recommendations on a major research proposal. It is entirely appropriate to include qualitative as well as quantitative data, and by so doing, richer and more insightful analyses of programs emerge.

Colleges and universities that apply this principle to the process find that it can become habit-forming; in many cases, a "culture of evidence" emerges that affects this and future decisions at the institution.

✓ 19. Clarify exactly how decisions will be made

Once the process rolls out, questions will arise about who will make what decisions, based on the analysis that unfolds. Anticipating these questions, and answering them in advance, can go a long way toward better understanding and avoiding misfires later on.

Certainly most processes involve decision-making by levels:

- Department heads or chairs. Department leaders usually author the program reports, ideally by involving the entire department in assuring that the program's strengths are included. In some instances, the authorship is assigned to an exceptional writer in the department. Unfortunately, I've also seen examples where the writing of the program report is assigned to an administrative assistant. While this may work in some instances, the academic flavor of the report may suffer, as a result.
- Deans. Deans should at least be involved in the following aspects of the process, once reports have been forwarded to them by departments:
 1. Validity/Certification. The deans provide assurance that program information forms are accurate and honestly reflect the analysis of the programs.
 2. Comment. The deans need to share additional insights into program efficacy which inform the task force about any matters not readily apparent from the program information forms.
 3. Context. The deans should frame each program's role in the overall context of school/college achievement of the university's goals and strategic direction.
 4. Post-Decision Actions. Deans will be expected to administer budget and personnel actions guided by the final decisions, and deans will want to develop one-page program plans for each program, going forward.

- Vice President/Provost. Typically the provost is designated as the “champion” of the prioritization process, and as such, chairs the steering committee or project team overseeing prioritization. It is therefore appropriate for the provost to give his/her opinions about program efficacy only after the task force has acted. This inclusion usually occurs at the time the president is reviewing reports from the task force.
- President. The president has the responsibility to review the reports from the task force(s) and, in the cases where both academic and administrative programs are under review, to reconcile the rankings across the entire institution. The president may wish to involve such other leaders or entities as are appropriate. In all cases, adherence to institutional policies about shared governance or program decisions must be followed. The president’s recommendations are then forwarded to the governing board for final approval.

20. Plan for rumors and rumor control

As with any activity on campus that involves uncertainty about serious matters, rumors will surface. If not anticipated and corrected, the process risks derailment. Part of the communication plan (See #25) should include provision for rumor control.

Some campuses handle this issue with:

- Rumor hotlines. Calls about rumors or emails about questions are sent to a central office, and responses are made as quickly as possible (usually no longer than 24 hours).
- Rumor sections on websites. Rumors—and the correct information—are posted on internal sites on a regular basis.
- Rumor sections in newsletters. If the campus communication plan calls for a newsletter (either print or email) a section on rumors should be included.

- Acknowledgment of rumors at meetings. Every institutional official should start any meeting with a quick update on what's going on in the prioritization process, and include recent rumors and what's really the truth.

By using these techniques, over time—and with the posting online of program reports at each successive level—rumors tend to abate.

21. Post all program reports and subsequent actions online

Technology today permits us to better demonstrate the transparency of an effective prioritization process. I recommend that, once all departments have completed their program information reports, all reports be posted simultaneously on the institution's intranet or internal website. This action has several salient benefits:

- Everybody gets to see everybody else's work product. There are no surprises, no hidden agendas, no Star Chamber proceedings. Everyone can see what the strengths and weaknesses of programs are.
- Experience shows that, by opening this information to campus-wide scrutiny, the resulting rankings and decisions are not all that surprising. The data forecasts the results.
- On many occasions, one can see for oneself that not all programs are equal. Maybe it's your own program that is seen—by all concerned—to be wanting.
- Suspicion that is tied to secrecy is eliminated when the data—both quantitative and qualitative—are open.

Subsequent recommendations—the dean's rankings, the task force's rankings, the president's recommendations and the governing board's actions—should also be similarly posted, exposing both the clarity of the process and the fairness of the results.

✓ 22. Provide “office hours” to facilitate faculty feedback

If the institution is using an outside consultant to help facilitate the prioritization process, consider setting aside one or two hours per day that the consultants are on campus for open office hours when faculty, staff, or students can drop in to discuss what's perceived to be happening on campus. My firm (Academic Strategy Partners) has pioneered this approach and finds it very useful. Faculty, particularly, have concerns and want to get answers. Occasionally there are rumors that need to get squelched. These sessions, often candid, are another open communication channel that can be helpful to all participants.

✓ 23. Provide training on report writing for authors and norming for task force members

As departments complete their information reports for the programs under their jurisdiction, it becomes clear that report writing is an uneven exercise. Some department authors are proficient at explaining programs, and some are not. One president once asked me, “Bob, am I evaluating programs or am I evaluating reports?” The answer, of course, is that programs are to be assessed, using the information in the reports. And that necessitates a more level field of program authorship; convene department heads and others who may be tasked with the report writing responsibilities and conduct training on how to do it effectively. Sample reports can be shared, ideas about what task forces are typically looking for can be offered, and recommendations for focusing on program results without extraneous verbiage can be made.

Similarly, training is recommended for the task force(s), once constituted. Remember that, although members of the task force have been involved with lots of committee work in the past, (a) this group has never met before; and (b) this task is unique. Ground rules for task force behavior are ironed out by this training. What are the recusal rules? What constitutes consensus? How do we assure inter-rater reliability? How do we assure strict confidentiality in our deliberations? These key decisions are best facilitated by a third party with experience in such training.

24. Identify—and live up to—the stated values of the process

When the president announces the prioritization process, it is advisable to articulate, up front, the values by which the process will proceed. A typical list might include the following:

- A. The process shall be fair, honest, forthright, and responsible. It will follow the best examples of development and implementation undertaken by other universities throughout the nation.
- B. The process shall be open and transparent, with no *a priori* decisions having been made, and with decisions made based on the published criteria.
- C. In order to set realistic priorities, it will be necessary to rank all programs, academic and non-academic, by quintiles.
- D. The process will offer the opportunity for enrichment of programs, as well as the possibility of diminution.
- E. To achieve greater accountability, the process will fix responsibility appropriately on the officers of the university.
- F. While retaining our long-held culture of compassion, we must also embrace a culture of evidence, one that ensures that program decisions, now and in the future, will be data-driven.
- G. To enable better decisions in the future, the large database established for prioritization will be maintained.

The entire prioritization process will be undergirded by trust—trust between and among the various stakeholders of the institution. As such, all stakeholders become auditors to the degree that the process follows the spirit and the letter of the announced values.

25. Communicate consistently

As the communication plan in my book *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* advises (see Resource F), it is critical during prioritization to anticipate questions and to devise a plan that constantly assesses who needs to know what, and when. It would be advisable to include faculty who are positioned at the nexus of communication networks to serve on a communications team assigned to the prioritization process. By so doing, rumors can be reduced, the right information can be shared, and the entire institutional community can be assured that things are proceeding according to plan.

26. Engage faculty in other reform efforts

It has been my experience that prioritization is not the only reform effort being undertaken by institutions that are concerned about their futures. As the higher education landscape is changing, and as institutions that are nimble respond to future opportunities, several initiatives may be undertaken, more or less simultaneously.

While some faculty complain about all the time and energy required to serve on multiple committees and task forces, it should be remembered that it is disingenuous to complain about not having a say in major matters while complaining about the time it takes to do so. Faculty should be integral to the efforts of the institution to help shape the future, and such efforts will require our best and brightest to make sure we get it right.

27. Develop an engagement plan

The field of project management can be consulted to give us tools and tips for successful prioritization projects.

For example, project management often includes the RACI concept or matrix. RACI (the “Responsibility Assignment Matrix”) can be useful in clarifying roles as tasks are completed for a project or for organizational success.

RACI stands for:

- **Responsible** (Those who do the work to achieve the task)
- **Accountable** (The one ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the task—and who delegates the work to those who are responsible)
- **Consulted** (Those whose opinions are sought, typically subject matter experts, and with whom there is two-way communication)
- **Informed** (Those who are kept up-to-date on progress, often only on completion of the task, and with whom there is only one-way communication)

A corollary approach would be to build an engagement plan around stakeholder roles:

- Driving – including key vice presidents, the project steering committee
- Advocate – including president, task forces, senate, others
- Active Participants – including department heads, deans
- Willingness – governing board, faculty relations officers
- Understanding – alumni, donors, students, parents, media, accreditation bodies

In either case, identifying stakeholders and spelling out both roles and expectations for each—in advance—can help clarify roles, responsibilities, and communication needs going forward.

28. Use the same criteria for considering new programs

There are ten criteria for measuring academic programs as a part of the prioritization process:

- History, development, and expectations of the program
- External demand for the program
- Internal demand for the program
- Quality of program inputs and processes
- Quality of program outcomes
- Size, scope, and productivity of the program
- Revenue and other resources generated by the program
- Costs and other expenses associated with the program
- Impact, justification, and overall essentiality of the program
- Opportunity analysis of the program

By using the same criteria for evaluating the efficacy of new programs, a strong signal is sent to the faculty community that the institution is consistent in its application of evidence-based decision-making.

CONCLUSION

This publication has attempted to analyze the sources of faculty resistance to academic program prioritization, to assess the reasons why faculty participation in such processes is essential, and to share several suggestions for engaging faculty in meaningful ways. It is hoped that solid engagement will not only benefit the program prioritization project, but will set the stage for more positive engagement going forward. Our institutions and their noble purposes deserve nothing less.



SELF-PACED TRAINING

PRIORITIZING ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS 101

Available for 1 year from date of purchase

Learn the basic concepts of academic and administrative program prioritization as you hear advice from two of higher ed's experts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert C. Dickeson is president and principal of Academic Strategy Partners, LLC, and senior executive of Education Metrics, LLC. He can be reached at rdickeson@beyondbb.com.

Robert C. Dickeson provides counsel from multiple leadership perspectives: chair of the governor's cabinets in two states; university president; business CEO; and foundation executive. He received his PhD in political science from the University of Missouri, and he has served on the graduate faculties of four universities. Dickeson served as the director of the department of administration and chair of the cabinet of Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt; and chief of staff, executive director of the office of state planning and budget, and chair of the cabinet of Colorado Governor Roy Romer. He served in administrative posts at three universities and was president of the University of Northern Colorado from 1981-1991. He served as president and CEO of Noel-Levitz Centers, Inc., division president of USA Enterprises, Inc., and senior vice president of USA Group, Inc., heading the USA Group Foundation. From 2000 to 2005 he was co-founder and senior vice president of Lumina Foundation for Education.

A national leader in higher education, Dr. Dickeson has chaired blue-ribbon commissions appointed by three governors in two states, has been an officer of 80 corporate, government, foundation or public affairs organizations, and served as commissioner from Colorado to the Education Commission of the States. He was a charter member of the President's Forum on Teaching as a Profession, an elected member of the President's Commission of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, a member of the National Commission on Minorities in Higher Education, a National Consultant with the Office of Women in Higher Education, and chaired the Council of Doctoral-Granting Institutions of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. He is a past president of the Association of Public College and University Presidents, a seminar faculty member and mentor for the Fellows Program of the American Council on Education, and co-founder of the Renaissance Group of Universities.

His national awards include: “Outstanding Service Award” (American Council on Education); “Outstanding University President” (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education); “Meritorious Service Award” (American Association of State Colleges and Universities); “Support to Women in Government and Higher Education Award” (Women in Government); North Central Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Hall of Fame; “Faculty-Alumni Award” (University of Missouri); and “Distinguished Service Award” (Sigma Alpha Epsilon International Fraternity).

The author of more than 175 publications in the fields of higher education leadership and policy and public administration, Dr. Dickeson taught annually for 24 years in addition to his administrative or governmental duties. He has been an adjunct professor or visiting scholar in several doctoral programs. While at Lumina Foundation he led the national initiative on college costs, based on his monograph, *Collision Course: Rising College Costs Threaten America's Future and Require Shared Solutions* (Lumina Foundation, 2004). His book, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999, 2010) is based on his extensive consulting experiences including serving several hundred two- and four-year colleges, universities and governing boards (private and public) and corporations ranging from hospitals to bank holding companies in North America. During 2006 he served as senior policy adviser to the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education. He is listed in *Who's Who in America* and *Who's Who in the World*.

A 2013 Academic Impressions survey of over 100 academic and administrative leaders revealed that by far the number-one anticipated challenge to effective program prioritization was resistance to change and lack of faculty buy-in.

In this monograph, Robert Dickeson offers a practical and thorough review of the problem, helping institutional leaders and prioritization task forces understand the sources of faculty resistance, and equipping them with a **checklist of 28 steps and tools** to engage faculty meaningfully in the prioritization process, in ways that build trust across your institution and ensure that your prioritization will be both rigorous and effective.

ABOUT AI

Academic Impressions serves colleges and universities by providing research, publications and training on critical issues facing higher education. Our work is distinguished by its focus on practical strategies. In the last 12 years, we have been honored to serve over 50,000 administrators across more than 3,500 institutions across North America and the world.

