

## DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

### Self-Study Template

These notes follow an outline for the review of baccalaureate programs published by the American Association of Physics Teachers. The notes are generic in nature and may be used with some modifications to structure a departmental review in other disciplines. The outline is in the form of a series of questions which a department should attempt to answer for itself or for an external reviewer.

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- 1) What is the mission of the department?

Clarify the mission of the department before beginning the review. Different programs will differ in the emphasis given to 1) the preparation of students for graduate work; 2) preparation for immediate employment; 3) preparation for teaching 4) course work in service to students majoring in other fields 5) General education requirements.

The department should clarify the relative importance of these or other functions as the review is developed.

- 2) Who are your majors? What attracts them to your programs?  
Can you identify the sources of potential majors in the student body as a whole? Are they more or less able than the average undergraduate student? What is the average GPA (SAT) of the students who elect to major? Is there a “typical” profile of your majors? Answers to these questions may be largely anecdotal in nature but some hard statistics should be available if one averages over a 5-year cohort of majors.
- 3) How many majors are there in the program? How does this compare with recent years? Is the enrollment in the major program stable? Growing? Declining? What trends have been identified?
- 4) What have recent majors done after graduation? Cite numbers for the past five years. If possible, comment on any noteworthy accomplishments of your alumnae. Relate this information to any available national norms or averages for comparable colleges.

#### CURRICULUM

- 5) Describe the curriculum. What is required of majors and what courses are available or recommended as electives? What does a “typical” sequence of courses look like? In many cases it may be adequate to provide catalog copy for the reviewer and note in accompanying text any less than obvious connections, apparent “gaps”

or sequences which are defined by the prerequisite structure. Syllabi should be provided to the reviewer (s).

- 5a) Describe any innovative or novel features of the major program.
  - 5b) Describe collaborative departmental programs that have a significant relationship with the curriculum for majors.
  - 5c) What steps have been taken in recent years to modify the curriculum? Have they improved it? What were the tradeoffs?
  - 5d) In the case of laboratory sciences, the department should justify the importance of laboratory work. To what extent does the curriculum depend on computers, equipment or specialized facilities. Are there special unmet equipment needs?
  - 5e) Is the major heavily dependent on special, directed or independent studies? Are these needed to give it coherence?
  - 5f) Is the course teaching load uniformly distributed among the members of the department? Is the same true for internships, special, directed and independent studies?
- 6) How is advising done? Is there an explicit procedure, course requirement, or grade point average required for admission to the major? Is there periodic communication with other departments and freshmen advisors concerning course structure, prerequisites and levels?

## **PERSONNEL**

- 7) What is considered proper preparation for a faculty member who teaches in the program? Comment both on the current situation and on conditions five to ten years from now. How would the educational and experiential requirements be written in the next faculty vacancy announcement? What specialties would be important to replace in the next round of retirements? Up-to-date vitae should be provided for the reviewers.
- 8) What provisions are there for the professional growth of the faculty? How much travel support is available? What is the institutional practice for sabbaticals? What activities have professional staff engaged in during recent leaves?
- 9) What in-house faculty development programs are there? Are internal resources available to support research? Teaching innovations?
- 10) To what extent have departmental staff taken advantage of opportunities for professional growth?

- 11) What technical and clerical personnel are available to directly support the program?

### **BUDGET**

The budget may be divided into several categories: personnel, equipment, library resources, student support etc. You should attempt to characterize the level of support in these areas.

- 12) Are the library holdings adequate? Is the library acquisitions budget adequate? Does the department have access to appropriate audio-visual and other instructional materials?
- 13) Is undergraduate research –participation supported? Attendance at the appropriate conferences?

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS**

- 14) What opportunities do you see for improvement of the major?
- 15) What are the most critical problems that you face in administering this major?
- 16) If additional resources could be devoted to this major, in what order would you address the opportunities and problems identified in the preparation in this program review?