

3 November 2014

To: Members of the Faculty Executive Board
Rafael Bras, Provost
Donna Llewellyn, Associate Vice-Provost for Learning Excellence

Re: Annual Report: Faculty oversight of Academic Program Reviews

Background. In the past two years Georgia Tech changed the Academic Program Review process, in part to put information from such reviews where it needs to go (faculty, chair, Deans, Vice-Provosts, Provosts). However, the faculty still have an oversight process. The Faculty Executive Board is charged with making “recommendations as appropriate on conclusions and plans emanating from academic program reviews that have been completed.” This is the first time we have attempted to exercise this oversight process since the APR process has been changed.

Process. An ad-hoc subcommittee was formed consisting of a subset of members of the Faculty Executive Board. Each APR report from 2012-13 and 2013-14 was reviewed by at least two committee members. There were a total of eleven programs reviewed. For those reviewed in 2012-13, the Action Plan Updates were also evaluated. Each reviewer was asked to identify a small number of key positive and negative findings. The committee reviewed all of these findings to identify trends among all the program reviews. Below we list General Findings – trends across multiple units and reports, as well as Specific Findings – high profile program specific issues that have likely been noted but we wish to emphasize at a Faculty Executive Board level as well.

General Findings

- **Missing responses.** The InfoSec MS program and School of HTS did not provide responses to the 2012-13 program review. Without a unit response, it is difficult to ascertain the unit reaction or responsiveness to the observations of the external review committee.
- **Strategic plans** are often needed. Several units were asked to create one, and to create one with effective and actionable items.
- **Silos** within and between academic units, at the levels of students and faculty, hurt both the academic as well as research mission of several units.
- **Barriers to registering for courses in other units**, and hesitancy by units to cross-register courses, impede graduate and undergraduate education alike. The lowering of such barriers may be mutually beneficial. For example, the reports of the Schools of Chemistry and Materials Science and Engineering both expressed a desire by students to cross-register in courses in the other school, which are currently hampered by major restrictions.
- **Untapped opportunities exist for professional MS programs.** Units appear hesitant to either create new programs or grow existing programs due to the lack of a clear benefit to the unit (financial or resources) that would result from such increased enrollment.

- **Difficulty in recruiting and funding PhD students** in programs that do not have the sponsored research levels of many other schools in science, computing, or engineering.
- **Appropriate means to provide for Teaching Assistantships and how TAs should be funded** (mentorship, PhD program requirement, pay) was a recurring issue in all units, although the details varied significantly.
- **Some academic units have a hostile climate among the faculty**, in some cases for a long time. This was noted by the external evaluators and is a difficult problem to fix.
- **The demands to choose an undergraduate major early at Georgia Tech** were noted by more than one external review committee. They felt this constrained students' options at an unnecessarily early stage in their career, which could lead to an unproductive major change later.
- **The lack of ability to control undergraduate enrollment** was cited by several reviews as a major impediment in handling student-faculty ratios and providing a quality educational experience.

Specific Findings

- The **DM Smith** building desperately needs to be renovated.
- CHEM students want to take MSE courses, MSE students want to take CHEM courses. It is possible that identifying and lowering such barriers may not lead to the feared increase in enrollment that the schools fear, to the extent that the demand is reciprocal.

Summary. We felt this process worked very well, and we especially thank Donna Llewellyn for providing all necessary information needed for this to occur. We recommend that an identical process occur next year, following up with existing programs and studying the reviews for the coming year.

On behalf of the Ad-Hoc APR Committee,



Robert Butera, Chair

Members: Tucker Balch (IC), Ron Bohlander (GTRI), Robert Butera (ECE, BME), Martha Grover (ChBE), Robert Kirkman (SPP), Eric Schumacher (PSYC), Debbie Turner (Scheller)