

***Framework for Institutional Effectiveness at Western Michigan University:
Strategic Planning and Academic Priorities, Academic Program Planning,
Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Resource Alignment***

Strategic academic planning, academic program planning and implementation, institutional and program accreditation, institutional and program assessment, and the effective allocation (or reallocation) of resources are sequentially linked academic management tasks. Each task informs our judgment and decision-making about the next one and, ultimately, institutional effectiveness. An overview of each task, in general relationship to the others, is as follows:

1) Strategic planning and academic priorities: the institutional mission statement, along with historic and continuing mandates, guides strategic planning and the establishment of academic priorities for Western Michigan University. The institution's academic priorities, reflecting student, market, and environmental demand, the intellectual strength of the faculty, external program recognition, and fiscal constraints are guides for enrollment growth, resource priorities, and reallocation judgments. Identification of WMU's academic priorities may result from: (a) enterprising efforts of faculty and departments, (b) academic administrative leadership, (c) campus-wide consensus, (d) formal innovation screening criteria used to benchmark other institutions and partners, or (e) external legislative/political, licensure, and accreditation requirements.

2) Academic program planning and enrollment management: academic program planning involves change and development through forward planning by the academic unit with attention to demand for graduates, application rates and applicant quality, student attrition and completion rates, student learning outcomes, major curricular changes, system-wide course and program offerings, accreditation reviews, and assessment findings. By examining student demand, student quality and learning outcomes, persistence in programs, and external review findings, the academic department charts its future development against recent accomplishments, including the designation of programs targeted for change and improvement. Among the most important outcomes of academic program plans are: (a) student demand, quality, learning and graduation targets, (b) faculty and staff positions required to support targeted student levels, program alterations, and research and creative activities engagement, (c) needed physical space and facilities, (d) instructional and research equipment and technology needs, (e) externally funded sponsored research targets, and (f) program or partnership goals for enhanced program development.

3) Institutional and program accreditations: the external institutional and program accreditation reviews provide cumulative, continuous, and relatively objective overviews of specific programs as well as the entire university. As such, the recommendations of accrediting groups are incorporated into strategic thinking and academic program planning, especially when developing programs of distinction or when correcting apparent deficiencies that lessen program quality for students and other constituent groups.

4) Institutional and program assessments: the externally required program and institutional assessments, often a part of external accreditation reviews, yield important findings that demonstrate the range of academic program quality in terms of student, faculty and other program accomplishments. Moreover, the assessment outcomes for general education and other student learning should inform the more specialized academic programs about student preparedness for specific occupations and their admission into professional and/or graduate programs.

5) Academic resource effectiveness: the first four tasks help academic decision-makers judge how effectively available resources are aligned with stated academic priorities. Where program quality, student outcomes and successes, and reputational measures are demonstrably enhanced with additional resources, then that resource use is clearly effective for Western Michigan University. On the other hand, where institutional priorities and academic program plans require additional resources, subsequently made available without corresponding improvements, then that resource use has been marginal. A re-examination of institutional priorities or program planning is in order if the academic unit continues to lack improvement. The documentation of continuous improvements through institutional and program accreditation reviews and institutional and program assessment activities confirms the effective allocation of resources in terms of both the University's academic priorities and the academic units' program plans.