

MINUTES  
Graduate Program Review Team Leaders Meeting  
With Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Delene  
College of Health and Human Services  
November 4, 2005

The meeting, held in CHHS room 1010, began at 1:30 p.m. Dr. Delene thanked people for attending and for their participation in the process. The graduate program review team meetings will be completed by January and February 2006. She said the teams appeared to be a fair subsection of the faculty/disciplines/colleges, and she expressed confidence that the process would move forward in a positive way.

The discussion about the graduate program review began last March and April (2005). The graduate program review should be seen as a task that is routine at many institutions. We have tried before and failed to do this at WMU.

Dr. Delene emphasized that as of November 4 she will not be involved in the review process until she receives the review teams' recommendations. The process itself is open, and information is available campuswide. The charge to the teams appears on the Provost's Web site and has been distributed across campus. Teams will decide which graduate programs should be kept (and possibly enhanced), which should be eliminated, which should be consolidated. Dr. Delene has been asked by many people what number she is really trying to reach. Her answer is and has been that she has no number in mind.

The University's fiscal situation is getting worse. It will experience a \$6-14 million deficit for next year. We must figure out new ways of doing business and ask ourselves what we must do more effectively. This review is not a lack of support for graduate education. As a result of the graduate program review, Dr. Delene would like to preserve and protect the excellent programs we have. For those programs that are average or below average, we must ask ourselves if they should be kept or what it would take to improve them.

Team leaders will make a lot of operational decisions as they go about this task. They are completely empowered to do that. Dr. Delene made a point of saying that "The team leaders are the team leaders." Dr. Joseph Stoltman, faculty member from the Department of Geography, is the coordinator or leader of the team leaders. If individuals think something is arbitrary or capricious, they should talk about it with Dr. Stoltman. We want to build a review program of confidence and trust.

Teams should look at graduate programs and at the specialties within the programs. If you look only at the degree, perfectly good questions are apparent: Are the programs distinct? Are they intellectually separate? Concentrations or specializations must have content-based differences.

The criteria to be used when considering graduate programs are fixed. It is not permissible to change them. Teams should look at external demand; the quality of student and program outcomes; size, scope, and program productivity; impact, justification, and essentiality of the program; opportunity analysis; and one compelling program factor.

Dr. Delene repeated a story she had heard at a recent meeting about people living in a swamp where innuendo, inaccurate comments, exaggeration, etc., were used in the drama of the environment. The work in the swamp was divided into three groups:

1. Recognize that the swamp exists.
2. Talk about critics who are out to make a judgment.
3. Look at where you want to be in the future.

She cautioned the teams not to get mired in the swamp. Try to keep moving. Seek the evidence. Find a collaborator. Look with objectivity, care, and respect. Don't look backwards. This effort is not about fault-finding. We must make better choices about programs and fund them adequately.

The state will not pay to help higher education; we must save higher education.

Materials asking for a new degree program should not be considered unless graduate programs in the department have been reviewed. This is not the role of the team. We are reviewing programs as they now exist.

In May, we should be able to say, "We did the best we could within the limits of our capacity. We did the best we could."

The meeting was then opened for questions.

The first question dealt with making suggestions for consolidation, expansion, etc. Dr. Delene asked that judgments be made with caution, that teams try to get some consistency with their judgments. Michael Scriven interjected that judgments should be made on the basis of what the program is.

Another individual mentioned that many people are on teams that are different from what they are used to. This person was reminded that he would not be making judgments by himself. Instead, decisions will be made by the team. Information will be collected from deans and faculty. Team members are entitled to ask any penetrating questions they want. Departmental conversations will be useful. All these sources of information should give teams the information they need to make judgments.

One individual was unclear how the departmental information will become available. Teams will look at materials provided by the departments. The deans are responsible for seeing that all pertinent information gets to the teams, including those programs that may be interdisciplinary. Team leaders will have to be vigilant in making sure that interdisciplinary programs are evaluated.

Another individual indicated that some departments' reports may have missing information. Dr. Delene responded that we never have perfect information. If something is missing, we hope and expect that the department chair includes a note of explanation (e.g., placement of graduates). There is not always a direct link between the data and the questions being asked.

Dr. Delene said there is nothing better than the team members' own common sense. It is not realistic to compare Western Michigan University with the pacesetters. On the other hand, we do not want to stifle units that are trying to do better. We need to determine the extent to which programs can adapt to change.

When asked what anchors/comparisons will be used on the team report rating sheet, Dr. Delene said she would leave that to Dr. Scriven and the team leaders to decide.

All the reports—deans', chairs', and teams'— will go forward. Do not be concerned about rumors and innuendos. The quality of the reports should be the basis for review.

In response to another question, the provost indicated that there will be things that cannot be quantified. Each team will learn a great deal about others and certain aspects of the University.

The deans and team leaders will submit some kind of summary report.

A lot of good questions had been received about the template. Team members should direct any questions to their team leaders and Dr. Scriven. Fairness, objectivity, and relative consistency or equity among colleges should be the standards used in this process.

Dr. Delene indicated that a meeting would be held in March to diagnose and give feedback about the review process.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Sally A. Veeder