

How Departments Make or Break Institutional Strategy

Academic Vital Signs, Part I

A Clear Mandate from the Membership

Focus on Data-Informed Change Management Driving Provost's Agenda

90%+ Of provosts called these topics an “urgent or ongoing area of concern”¹



2016 AAF Topic Poll

Academic Vital Signs – The Five Key Metrics Every Dean Should Be Watching

Provost as Change Agent – Lessons and Strategies from Provosts Successfully Leading Major Change Initiatives on Campus

Getting Beyond “Business as Usual” in Academic Resource Allocation – Helping Chairs Understand the Urgency for Change and Equipping Them to Assign Courses and Allocate Resources According to Institutional Needs and Priorities



2017 AAF Topic Poll

Academic Vital Signs – The Five Key Metrics Every Dean Should Be Watching to *Monitor and Improve Program Health*

Developing Academic Leaders – Scalable Approaches to Improving Management and Leadership Skills among Faculty Leaders, Department Chairs, and Associate Deans

Engaging Deans and Chairs in Entrepreneurial Program Planning – Best Practices and Training Modules for Encouraging Unit-Level Innovation and Growth

1) Topics received an “A” or “B” grade in AAF member topic poll

Five Common Imperatives Driving Strategy

Core Financial and Mission-Oriented Priorities Should Inform Assessment



Most strategic plans emphasize same goals



Few establish measurable objectives for academic units



Cost Efficiency

"Athletics, amenities, and administration first"



Enrollment Growth

"We're at the mercy of admissions"



Student Outcomes

"Students control their grades and career choices"



Scholarship

"The value of my work can't be quantified"



Faculty Diversity & Inclusion

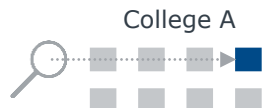
"We can't change our location or culture"



Program Reviews Too Narrow in Scope

Discipline-Driven Process Doesn't Align Unit and Institutional Goals

Traditional Academic Program Review



Periodicity

- Too Infrequent
 - Typically on a 5-10 year cycle

Focus

- Disciplinary
 - Emphasizes unit-driven goals

Scope

- One program at a time
 - Prevents comparison or portfolio analysis

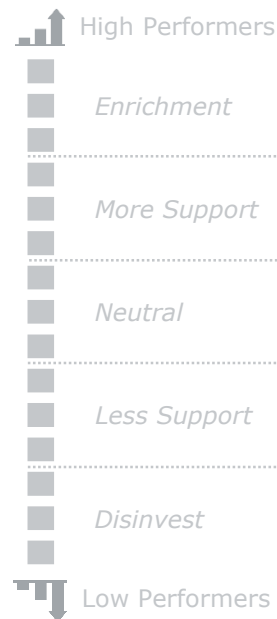
Assessment

- Informal
 - Self- and external evaluations subjective

Results

- Typically superficial
 - Incentive to request additional support

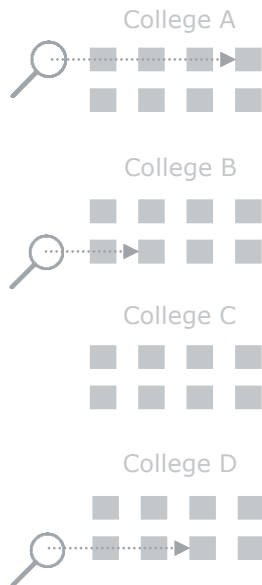
Formal Program Prioritization



Prioritization – More Harm than Good?

One-Time Reallocation Efforts Require Huge Effort, But Result in Few Savings

Traditional Academic Program Review



Periodicity

- Once (If Ever)
- Most vow never to repeat

Focus

- Holistic
- Often hundreds of metrics included

Scope

- Every academic program (and more)
- Designed to roughly rank and categorize

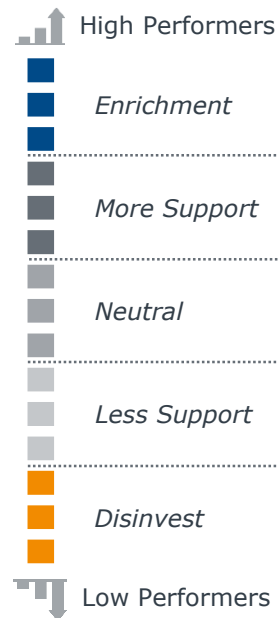
Assessment

- Reductive
- Apples-to-oranges comparison required

Results

- Limited program consolidations
- Cultural costs can outweigh cost savings

Formal Program Prioritization



More Harm than Good?



“There is no way to rank, in an uncontroversial and unproblematic way, the myriad activities and programs contained within a university. In the case of academic programs, professors in each and every department are more than capable when asked to justify what they do.

In the worst cases, this is the reason why PPP tends to produce bitter suspicion, anger, and frustration rather than consensus. Rather than solve the thorny problems that it is supposed to address, all of the ambiguities and complications, and the insecurity and fear generated by PPP can inspire widespread opposition to change, making crucial, unavoidable decisions more, rather than less, difficult to make. One does not make change easier by whipping a university into the kind of uproar that can break out as different programs fight with one another over their places in a PPP ranking.”

Groarke and Hamilton, 2014

Central Admin - Tip of the Institutional Iceberg

Department Chairs Best-Positioned, but Least Prepared to Lead Change



Budget Model



Rarely transparent or animating for faculty leaders

**Central
Administration**



Strategic Plan



Rarely translated into unit-level expectations

Chairs receive little training or data on performance...

...but influence innumerable departmental decisions

67% Receive no formal training

40% Of existing trainings last < 5 hours

66% Say training didn't prepare them for the job

**Departmental
Leaders**



- Faculty recruitment
- Promotion and tenure
- Workload and releases
- Course scheduling
- Student advising
- Program design
- Faculty evaluation
- Pedagogical support

The Cost of the 'Musical Chair' Model

“Inevitably, after a year or two, [chairs] finally learn enough about budgeting, resource management and development, personnel development, and curriculum and course scheduling to do their jobs effectively—but then it was time to give up the job to someone else... who also felt unknowledgeable and uncomfortable, unprepared to actively lead their units.”

Chu and Veregge, 2002

Elevating the Department Chair Role

Structural Changes Can Encourage Chairs to Deepen Leadership Skills



Term Length

Chairs typically serve **three-year terms**, with an option for reelection



Four-year terms give chairs enough time to build and use leadership skills



Contract Length

Most chairs have **nine-month contracts** and receive overload pay for summer work



Twelve-month contracts allow for planning during the summer term



Selection Process

Rotating or elected chair model selected based on department preference



Competitive application process ensures candidates are engaged in the role

Typical Practice

Progressive Practice

Clock Builders vs. Time Tellers

Lasting Results Require Great Systems, Not Just Great Leaders

7

Average tenure of college and university **presidents**, in years

4

Average tenure of college and university **provosts**, in years

6

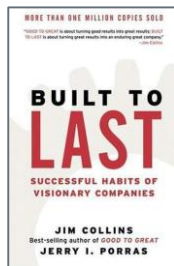
Average tenure of college and university **deans**, in years

4

Average tenure of department **chairs**, in years

7%

Likelihood that all four individuals will overlap in service for 4 years



A Lesson from High-Performing Organizations

“Having a great idea or being a charismatic visionary leader is ‘time telling;’ building a company that can prosper far beyond the tenure of any single leader and through multiple product life cycles is ‘clock building.’ Those who build visionary companies tend to be clock builders.”

*Jim Collins
Built to Last: Successful Habits
of Visionary Companies*

A Two-Part Effort

From One-Time Initiatives to Continuous Improvement

1 Translate Institutional Goals into Departmental Performance Indicators



- Accurately measure departmental performance
- Motivate and direct departmental action
- Identify opportunities for improvement

2 Sustain Momentum Through Ongoing Evaluation



- Ensure ongoing improvement
- Inform short- and long-term resource decisions
- Create continuity through leadership transition