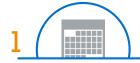# Six Principles for Annual Reviews

When was the last time departmental health was reviewed at your institution? Typical departmental review occurs every five to eight years, which leaves departmental mission and progress unchecked for an extended period of time. To ensure departments are on track to continue progress and threats to institutional success are mitigated, institutions should conduct reviews annually.

The most effective and impactful annual reviews are those that are informed by data. Provosts and teams review data, set goals, and diagnose departmental challenges – ultimately outlining specific actions departments should take and why. This process encompasses a variety of criteria, so leveraging an agreed-upon data source is essential. Use the six principles below to effectively transform your institution's review process.

1   Find the Right Frequency

Hold a formal evaluation conversation, at least annually

- An annual review is a data-informed discussion with key decision-makers based on a common data set to ensure accuracy and efficiency
- Academic stakeholders review data, interpret departmental performance relative to goals, and determine next steps

2   Make It Easy

Minimize self-reporting burden on department chairs

- Academic stakeholders must agree on a single source of data that is globally accessible
- Single data source alleviates burden on department chairs, who are not trained to analyze data, and makes comparing results across departments feasible and productive

3   Know Where You Stand

Share data on internal and external benchmarks openly

- If distinctions in mission and goals are clear, transparency in performance data creates trust and cooperation
- Without creating a competitive atmosphere, departments can benchmark their performance against other departments and focus on areas for improvement

4   Make It Matter

Reward improvement with recognition and resources

- Institutions should measure departmental progress against past performance based on a set of strategic metrics, such as final grade reports
- Rewards should be discretionary, such as funding that can be used for one-time expenses to benefit the program

5   Open the Black Box

Connect performance and data to major resource decisions

- Department leaders often feel that major resource decisions, such as faculty lines and program launches, are made in a "black box"
- Provosts and deans should use the data to inform resource decisions and make their reasoning transparent

6   Keep It Focused

Prioritize a small number of goals to focus on each year

- Annual reviews should guide departments to focus on only two to four goals throughout the year
- An overload of goals is often too broad and undirected, hindering departmental inspiration and progress