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Academic Vital Signs

The Right (and Wrong) Ways to Measure the Health
of Academic Departments

1

*Introduction***The 'Strategy Gap' Stymying Institutional Aspirations**

2

How does unit activity impact institutional priorities?

Translating Institutional Goals into Departmental Key Performance Indicators

3

How can we ensure progress on unit goals?

Sustaining Momentum through Ongoing Evaluation

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

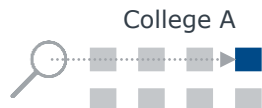
"We can't change our location or culture"



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

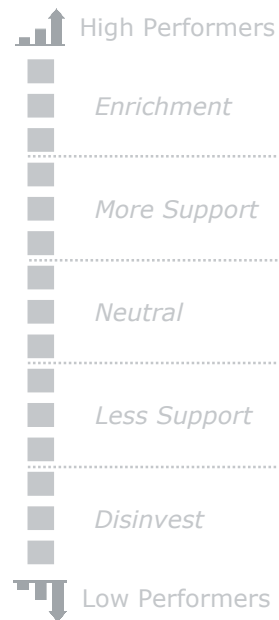
Assessment

- Informal
 - Self- and external evaluations subjective

Results

- Typically superficial
 - Incentive to request additional support

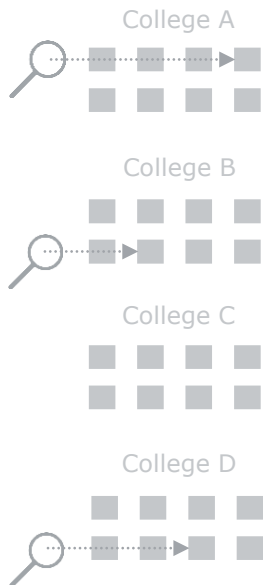
Formal Program Prioritization



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

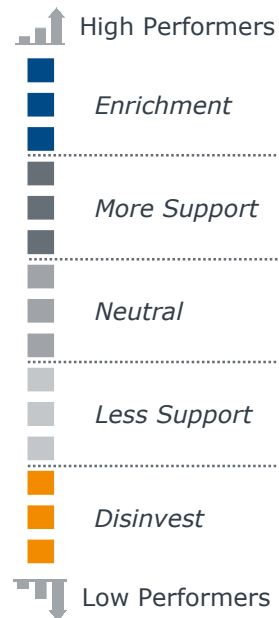
Assessment

- 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

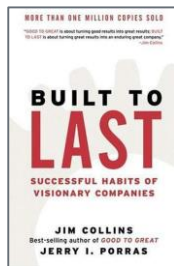
Average tenure of college and university **deans**, in years

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*

1

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Cascading Cost Efficiency



The Five Metrics Most Institutions Track

Student-Faculty Ratio

Instructional Cost per Credit Hour

Standard Faculty Workload

Average Class Size

Operating Expenditures



Challenges in Translating to Units

Gameable

Departments cap enrollment to maintain ratio

Not simplified

Largest cost driver (salary and benefits) difficult to inflect

Unspecific

Significant variation both within and among departments

Misaligned

Unmet course demand ignored to maintain cap

Unrealistic

Across-the-board cuts ignore unit differences



What Departments Should Focus On

1

Instructional Capacity Gap

2

SCH per FTE

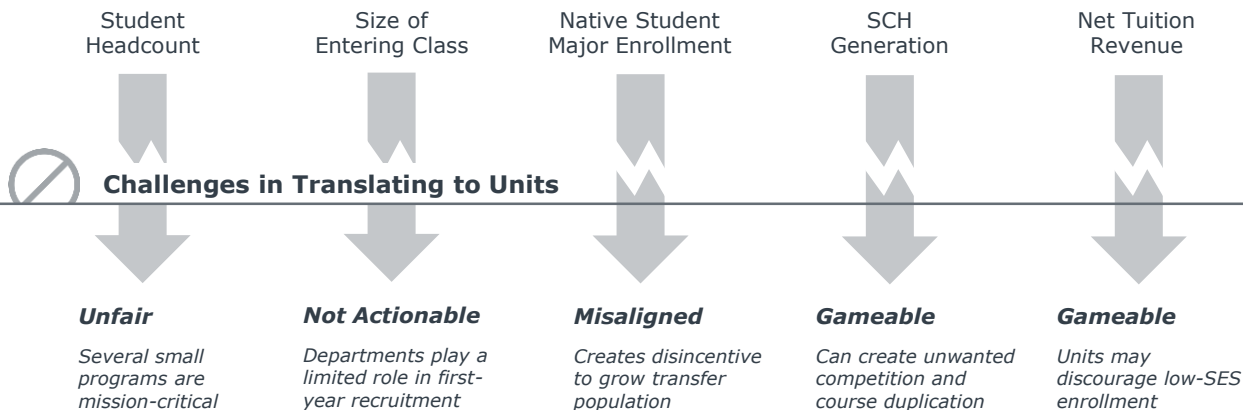
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Unfunded Course Releases

Cascading Enrollment Growth



The Five Metrics Most Institutions Track



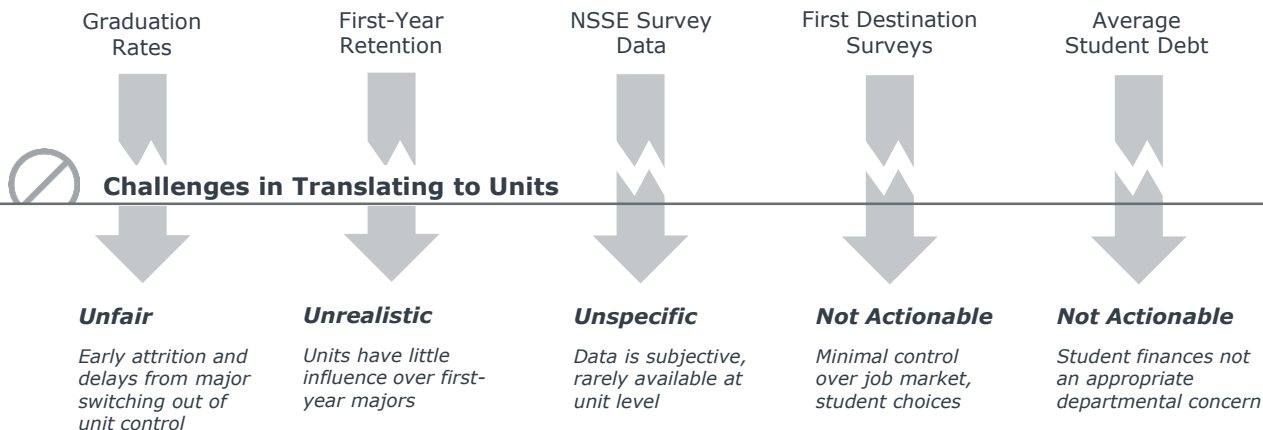
What Departments Should Focus On

- 1 Major Migration
- 2 Off-Peak Enrollment
- 3 External Demand

Cascading Student Outcomes



The Five Metrics Most Institutions Track



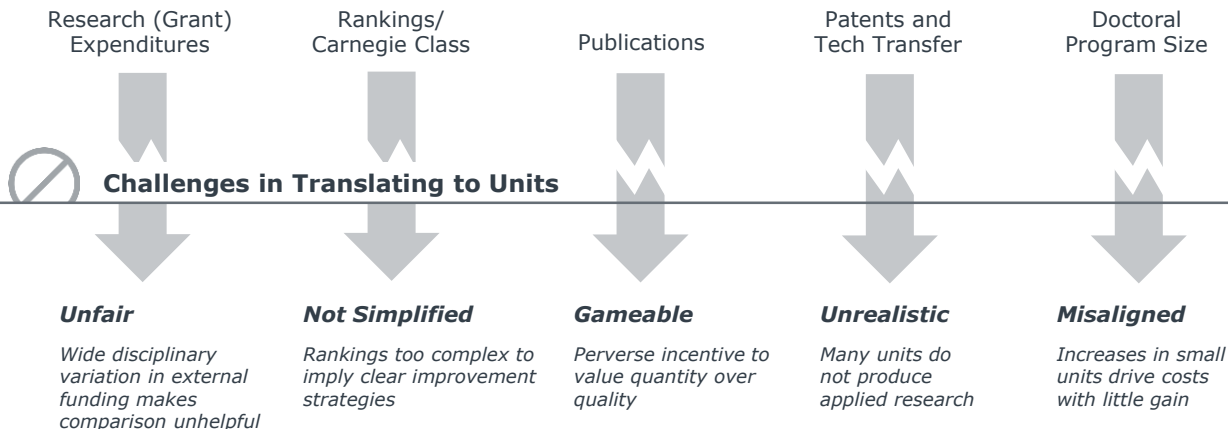
What Departments Should Focus On

- 1 DFW Rates
- 2 Junior Graduation Rate
- 3 Experiential Learning

Cascading Scholarship



The Five Metrics Most Institutions Track



What Departments Should Focus On

- 1 Holistic Outputs
- 2 Effort Metrics
- 3 Post-Tenure Promotion

Cascading Faculty Diversity and Inclusion



The *One Metric* Most Institutions Track



Challenges in Translating to Units

Underrepresented
Share of Faculty

Gameable

Can achieve institutional targets despite large unit disparities

Unfair

Pipeline diversity remains significant challenge in many disciplines

Unspecific

Doesn't capture time to promotion, retention, and turnover

Not Time-Bound

Departments are limited by allocated lines and change requires long timeframe

Not Actionable

Masks role of equitable processes in recruitment and advancement



What Departments Should Focus On

1

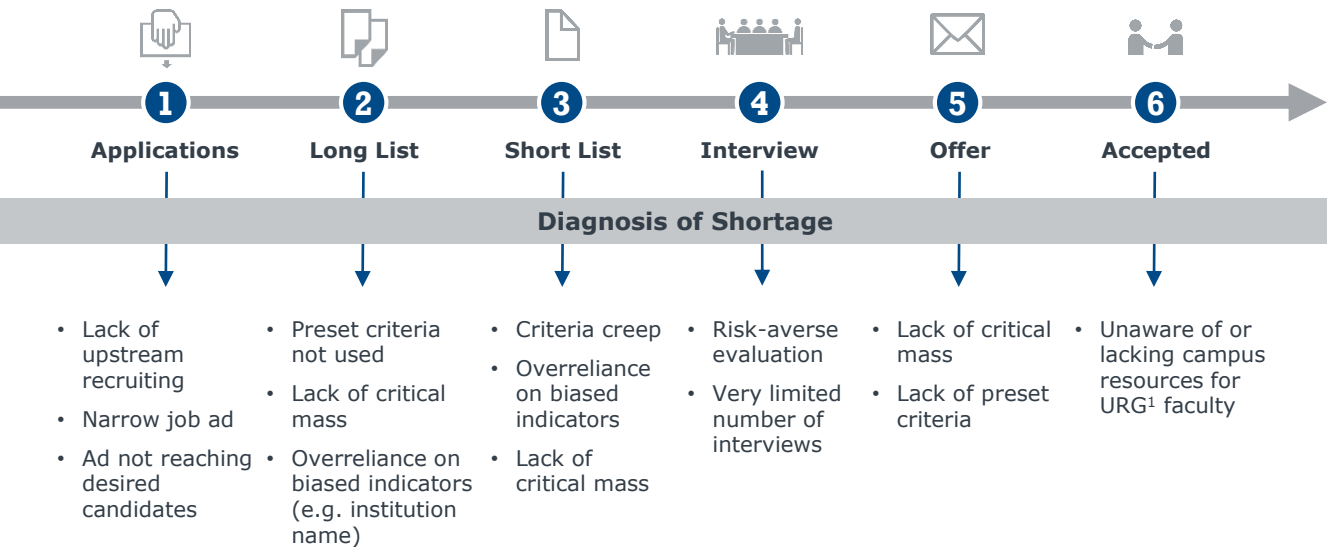
Pipeline Stage
Conversion Rates

2

Retention and
Advancement Disparities

Identify Leaks in the Hiring Pipeline

Tracking Each Stage of the Search to Ensure Equity



What Departments Should Focus On

1) Underrepresented groups.

1

Pipeline Stage Conversion Rates

2

Retention and Advancement Disparities

Expanding the Hiring Horizon

Three Ways Units Can Broaden Pools to Diversify Candidates

Broadening the Entry Point



Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity

- Postdoc lines offered to units with future hiring needs, retirements
- Department-led search committees increase investment in hires
- Postdocs are given UNC-specific tenure guidance
- **50%** of program participants have been hired as full-time faculty since 2006

Broadening the Timeline



College of Engineering Three Year Hiring

- Lines are allocated over three year period
- Standing hiring committee can network and recruit year-round
- ✓ Longer window with multiple lines reduces impact of in-group bias
- ✓ Able to hire off-cycle
- ✓ Hiring faculty develop expertise in recruiting

Broadening the Discipline



Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering



Analysis revealed women were less likely to be hired when ads targeted narrow discipline

- Dean designates a few lines as cross-departmental hires
- Cross-departmental search committee identifies and prioritizes interdisciplinary candidates



What Departments Should Focus On

1

Pipeline Stage Conversion Rates

2

Retention and Advancement Disparities

Auditing Promotion Rates

How One University Uncovered a Disparity in Career Advancement

State Flagship University

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ►

PROMOTION DISPARITIES ►

FULL PROFESSOR ►



Provost Initiates Promotion Analysis

- Promotion and tenure rates by race, gender, and ethnicity
- Time-to-promotion by race, gender, and ethnicity



Lack of Concrete Promotion Criteria

'Unwritten rules' common and subject to bias, in-group preference



URG Faculty Not Actively Encouraged to 'Go Up'

Informal mentoring and support focused on majority faculty



Dossier Reviews and Promotion Workshops Implemented

- Chairs and Office of Faculty Advancement spearhead efforts to clarify expectations
- African American full professors more than doubled in 4 years, from 6 to 15



What Departments Should Focus On

1

Pipeline Stage
Conversion Rates

2

Retention and
Advancement Disparities

Multiple Stage Mentorship

Overcoming the Challenges of Traditional One-to-One Faculty Mentoring

Typical Approach

Senior **Internal** Mentor

Provides P&T guidance, but with little formal structure or accountability for follow-through



Differentiated Support Network

Peer Mentor

Helps navigate unwritten cultural rules of the department, mitigating isolation many new URG faculty experience

Senior **External** Mentor

Allows new faculty to ask questions more freely without fear of intra-departmental consequences

Provide Structure in the First Year



Mentoring teams in Engineering and Natural Sciences receive guided agendas for meetings with new faculty members focused on professional and social support

Post-Tenure Portfolio Support



Associate-rank faculty receive small grant and mentor support to create project plan aimed at accelerating promotion pace



What Departments Should Focus On

1

Pipeline Stage Conversion Rates

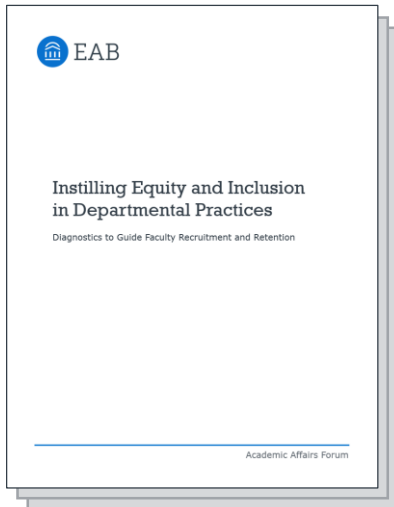
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Retention and Advancement Disparities

New Diagnostic Resource

Instilling Equity and Inclusion in Departmental Practices

Available at Today's Meeting



EAB guidance for departmental leaders on...

- Analyzing Departmental and Unit Trends
- Creating Accountability and Tracking Success
- Upstream Recruitment
- Search Committee Preparation
- Job Ad Composition
- Pre-Tenure Track Appointments
- Applicant Evaluation
- Professional Advancement and Development
- Dean-Level Strategic Hiring Initiatives

An Ounce of Prevention



Pre-empting the Need for Severe, Top-Down Corrective Measures

Routine preventative practices surface and mitigate health risks

- Diet and Nutrition
- Regular Exercise
- Routine Check-ups
- Diagnostic Exams

When untreated, risk factors lead to costly, aggressive intervention

- Invasive Surgery
- High-Cost Medication
- Urgent Care Treatment
- Hospitalization



Health Care



Preventative Care

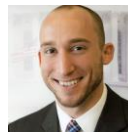
- Enrollment Planning
- Outcomes Assessment
- Annual Unit Reviews
- Improvement Incentives

Reactive Treatment

- Program Prioritization
- Draconian Performance Funding Formulas
- Across-the-Board Cuts
- External Audits



Higher Education



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Questions or Comments?