Quick Facts: Academic Program Review (APR)

What is APR?
APR is a continuous improvement process designed to enhance the quality of academic programs and align those programs with the overall mission and vision of the University. It engages faculty in an ongoing process of program evaluation to make certain that program offerings are relevant and prepare students for academic and career success.

Why is APR necessary?
APR is expected as part of the regional and national accreditation process. It is typical for universities to review academic programs every five to seven years as part of a quality enhancement process.

What is expected from APR?
It is expected that some academic programs will be enhanced, perhaps with increased investment in faculty. Other academic programs will be suspended--no new students will be admitted and those students already in the programs will be provided opportunities for successful completion of their program degree. Most academic programs will be maintained, ensuring the availability of faculty and support for program delivery.

Who had a voice in these decisions?
The process of APR invited and included broad involvement across campus—from faculty to chairs, directors and deans, to the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, to the Office of Academic Affairs, the Provost and the President. There was a special APR Committee appointed to focus on the process, and all documents with data-informed recommendations were readily available on a password protected website.

What criteria were used to formulate recommendations for academic programs?
Criteria included student demand for programs, completion rates, post-graduate job or career placement rates, level of research and scholarship, established partnerships and collaborations, centrality to mission of the university, alignment with organizational goals and objectives, and long-term sustainability of the program.

What has already happened?
Over time, many programs have already started actions or have taken actions to make academic program adjustments including suspending admissions. These adjustments are steps naturally taken by faculty in the course of their work. In fact, since 2005, about 90 academic degrees/specializations/tracks have been inactivated through a process of continuous quality improvement, along with academic program review. During that same period, about 105 programs or program tracks have been added.

What happens next?
The President submits to the Faculty Senate a list of current programs and program tracks proposed for suspension, representing about 10% of the total programmatic offerings. The Faculty Senate will be asked to provide a response to that proposal. Thereafter, the President will make recommendations to the Board regarding program suspensions and the Board will take the action it deems appropriate. Board action is expected at its April 23, 2014 meeting.
What are we telling students who are in the programs under consideration for suspension?
Currently active students in those programs can be assured they will be given the opportunity to complete their degrees. Courses in their program of study will continue to be available, and faculty and advisors will work with them to make sure their academic requirements are being met.

How many students are currently in the programs under consideration for suspension?
Approximately 600 students may be impacted, as they pursue an associate, bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree. That number represents about 2% of our total student population.

What are we telling potential students who have applied for programs under consideration for suspension?
We are notifying students who have applied for or been admitted to these programs that they are currently under review and being considered for suspension. We are also providing an advisor for these students to determine whether they can achieve their academic goals through a similar course of study in another program or college.

How many students have applied for admission into the programs under consideration for suspension?
About 115 students have applied for admission to the programs in question, less than 1% of our total applicant pool. About 30 students have been admitted to these programs, again less than 1% of our admitted students.

If a decision is made to suspend a program, what happens next?
Right now, programs or program tracks are under consideration for suspension. If the decision is made to suspend a program, the responsible dean will develop an action plan and tactical timeline to ensure that students currently in the program are provided every opportunity to complete their degrees. No new students will be admitted to the program. The plan will also address faculty roles going forward and strategic reallocation of resources.

What are some of the benefits of these proposals?
This process leading to the latest proposals and the ultimate outcome will help the University focus its resources more strategically and serve the needs of students and the region in more relevant ways.