The primary purpose of academic program review is to assess both the academic quality and the financial aspects of a program leading to improved program focus and quality. In addition, program review is intended to help the University improve efficiency and effectiveness in the relevance, organization, and delivery of the academic program. The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) is a joint committee of the Faculty Senate and the President charged with coordinating the administration of academic program review, overseeing the collection of data, and compiling and disseminating information resulting from the review. It also is responsible for continuing to modify previous instrument versions or develop new instruments to accommodate the changing needs of the faculty and administration. (Appendix I, University Manual, Section 5.86.10, The Academic Program Review Committee).

Overview of the URI Academic Program Review Plan

The APRC supports program improvement resulting from program-level actions and strategic planning consistent with the Academic Plan. Communication between Deans and faculty within departments regarding program review outcomes play a much needed and essential role in guiding college-level planning and strategic investment decisions so that unique departmental strengths are linked to college- and University-wide goals. The URI Academic Program Review is at the departmental or free-standing academic degree program level and at the college level for those without departments or those with departments having fully integrated academic degrees.

Academic Program Review is at the departmental level and is comprised of three parts. The first two elements consist of an annual Central Data Report produced by Institutional Research and a department-driven data collection, helping departments to track progress against their goals and benchmarks. These data also assist Deans to engage in more effective management, helping departments with internal improvements, allocating college resources, and advocating for resources at higher levels on an ongoing basis. In 2018, with department chair consensus, it was agreed that the APRC-prescribed “Chair Survey” for department-driven data collection would be discontinued and that a guidance document would be created by APRC. This APR guidance document suggests areas of departmental focus as well as examples of documentation resources.

The third and cornerstone activity of program review is the Self-Study that is subject to external review through evaluation by a peer reviewer from the same disciplines at another university and/or benchmarking of data from peer institutions. The Self-Study is conducted every six years and provides a narrative explaining how the program's activities in research, teaching, and public engagement support the Mission and Academic Plan of the University, integrating longitudinal trends from the annual Central Data Reports and department-driven data collection.

The Academic Program Review process has been vetted and approved through the University processes. The following sections describe in detail the plan for each element of the program review process.

Annual Central Data Report
The Annual Central Data Report provides detailed information, including student credit hours, faculty measures, and grant proposal and award activity, collected and maintained by central administration through Institutional Research. The annual reports give departments a dynamic picture of their standing on key metrics for monitoring progress toward strategic goals. An important element being developed for the Annual Central Data Report is program-level external benchmarking of key indicators, available through participation in the Delaware Study https://ire.udel.edu/cost/
Department-Driven Data Collection (Previously Chair Survey)
It is important for departments to collect and analyze information about themselves in an ongoing manner. While the Central Data Report is an excellent source of data known at the University level, departments need to have a process for identifying information that is available only at the program level, thus creating a mechanism for monitoring progress on their own unique metrics. Data elements should speak to productivity and quality of research, scholarship and creative activity; curricular and teaching quality and innovation; the extent and nature of public engagement; and existing data on job/career placement and alumni satisfaction. The guidance document suggests focus in the four areas of teaching programs; research and scholarly works; service and public engagement programs and institutional effectiveness and identifies potential methods of data collection and examples of documentation resources in addition to the Central Data Report.

Departmental data collection should be an ongoing process, to provide units with useful, longitudinal information. The timeframe for data collection, whether annual, biennial or other is at the discretion of the department and the College and should strike a balance between the work required to assemble, document and evaluate the data and the reliability of information and benefits of frequent tracking, including progress on research output and public engagement benchmarks. Deans play a key role in tracking the performance of their departments and using the data for effective management and planning, including prioritizing resource needs and requests at the college level to be incorporated into the Academic Affairs budget process. It is recognized that units with accredited program(s) collect data relevant to those programs. Any data collection for the purposes of the URI Academic Program Review is intended to complement and not duplicate any other efforts.

Six-year Self-Study and External Perspective
While the Annual Central Data Report and the Department-Driven Data Collection are designed to help departments track progress against strategic planning goals and benchmarks on a timely basis, the six-year self-study is more in-depth, and supports strategic plan alignment across levels of the institution. The self-study is therefore both a retrospective and a prospective activity. Retrospectively, it allows departments to examine how their past activities support their strategic plan and the University Mission, and to use the information provided through data collection over the previous six years to document progress on performance goals and benchmarks. Prospectively, it allows departments to articulate response strategies to the opportunities and challenges of their field, and to establish forward-looking goals and benchmarks to be pursued during the next planning cycle. Demonstrating success against past benchmarks is critical for establishing the credibility of programs' prospective goals and making their case for additional resources through the college planning and prioritization process.

The Self-Study process is essential to successful program review because contributions of faculty are complex and vary widely across disciplines. Departments must be able to fully explain how their range of activities contributes to the University Mission and Academic Plan. Additionally, the University's budgeting process places significant burden on the colleges, including the Deans and the faculty, to articulate and defend excellence within the norms of their programs/departments' fields. This is particularly true for colleges with heterogeneous disciplines. The narrative process of the self-study assists in translating the goals and benchmarks for outputs and quality appropriate to each discipline to the broader goals for the college and University.

An external perspective is sought through use of a site visit of a faculty member from a peer institution with similar programs and/or external benchmarking of peer institutions. Departments with accredited programs
obtain external perspective through their predetermined accreditation teams. In addition, the narrative of the URI Self-Study should only encompass elements not covered by the accreditation process.

Once the self-study is produced and following external review, the Department Chair will meet with the Dean to develop a set of response actions and refine benchmarks to accomplish identified goals. Needs of programs will also be discussed. The Dean will prepare a letter to the Department Chair articulating performance goals and areas of strength and improvement for the department. The Dean and the Chair will meet with the Provost to discuss future directions of the program. Resource-related issues that may emerge will be incorporated into college-level planning and prioritization activities involving the Deans, Chairs, and faculty of each College. A final action (strategic) plan is then created to guide the unit for the next 6 years.

All academic departments, freestanding academic programs, and Colleges without departments or those with departments having fully integrated academic degrees undertake the Self-Study in six-year cycles.

2012; revised by APRC 2/20/19 to add clarity and remove language pertaining to the Chair Survey