

University of Rhode Island

A Resource Guide for Effective Planning within University Academic Departments

DEPARTMENTAL PLANNING

The University Academic Plan is a guide for the institution as a whole. Different areas within the institution, such as academic departments, student services, and administrative offices, will have their own strategic plans, missions, and goals. **Critical to carrying out the University's core Academic Plan, however, is that the missions, goals, and programs of all departments and offices be linked to those of the institution.**

Hold departmental meeting approximately every 5 years to re-evaluate curriculum.

Colleges might schedule this cyclically between departments within one college.

Ask, what should we be doing? How well are we doing it? What can be done more effectively to meet current and future student learning needs in fields relative to our department's focus or prospective focus and the external environment (workforce trends, graduate school requirements, etc)?

For assistance, contact a planning facilitator/process consultant from Academic Planning (morrissey@uri.edu) to assist in this process of review and planning at the department level.

- Summarize related assessment data (student learning outcomes, IDEA data, program accreditation, APRC program review data) and examine strengths and weaknesses of programs
- Discuss and or summarize trends in related majors, including new potential majors, economic trends in job related prospects, graduate school needs related to the majors and undergraduate preparation
- Consider alignment to the Academic Plan strategic goals
- Analyze course and majors enrollment data to understand demand, trends, and effectiveness in resource allocation and demand
- Consider cross college, cross-departmental prospects for integrating and/or developing new majors (see related URI guidelines for interdisciplinary work and joint appointments).

USING LABOR MARKET DATA TO INFORM PLANNING AND BUDGETING

In evaluating the external environment as part of the strategic planning cycle, most colleges will want to consider the labor market, which has significant implications both for students and for the types of programming colleges may want to offer. This has become even truer in recent years, as a challenging economy and job market cause students increasingly to choose programs based on the expected return on their investments of time and money.

To assess program offerings: Labor market data tells colleges what jobs and industries are in demand. Colleges should take this information into account when deciding which new programs to offer, which programs to close, and how many students programs should have.

To assess program quality and effectiveness: Colleges can use labor market data to see if students are adequately prepared to succeed in their field upon graduation. If students are not gaining employment as expected based on available jobs, it prompts colleges to find out why.

To support student decision-making: Colleges can share labor market data with students to help them make an informed choice about selecting a major.

Colleges and departments should **cultivate relationships with employers to learn about specific skills they seek in employees and to understand the trends of the market.** Advisory Councils of industry, community, and organizational representatives could be formed and utilized by colleges to assist in this purpose.

Resources in labor market trends and careers:

<http://cew.georgetown.edu/>

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/herman/reports/futurework/execsum.htm>

<http://www.bls.gov/emp/>

Colleges might use a departmental curriculum planning form/guide that includes:

The department's cyclical review process for improvement in programs/majors should incorporate **how the (revised) programs relate to current and emerging trends in the field and will advance:**

- Specific goals of the Academic Plan and the College's strategic priorities (College Plan)
- The University's mission
- Desired student learning outcomes
- Effective delivery of the curriculum

Budgetary Considerations

- Summarize the plan for utilizing resources effectively (faculty and operational) to advance and promote the programs (Reference data or target goals such as credit hours per faculty, current enrollments by major, projected student enrollments, credit to degree, etc. should be utilized to determine resources)