California State University, Stanislaus

Support Unit Review Policy and Procedure

I.   Introduction

CSU Stanislaus is committed to a comprehensive periodic review of all support units that integrates rigorous assessment with ongoing strategic planning.

The primary goal of the review process is to provide a mechanism to ensure the improvement of support units on a continuous basis.

The assumption of the review process is that the responsibility for monitoring the status, effectiveness, and progress of units rests with the unit administrator and the vice president or president responsible for that unit. As a result, important functions of the process are to (1) meet the requirements of administrators for comprehensive information concerning the effectiveness of their units, (2) to determine if resources are being utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible, and (3) to determine if the unit is effectively supporting the mission of the university.

The review process helps to identify the future directions, needs, and priorities of support units. As such, support unit review is inextricably linked to strategic planning, resource allocation, and other decision-making at the unit and university levels. It is also an assumption that the review process is a participatory process that includes input from personnel in the unit as well as from units and individuals the unit is designed to serve.

This document sets forth the process for the review of support units. The vice presidents, or president may designate additional or more detailed procedures for the review of units within their administrative jurisdiction, as long as the common elements described in this document for all unit reviews are met. Because significant resources are invested in this process, it is essential that the review produce results that are useful to the unit and its leadership, to the unit's constituents, and to the university. Thereafter, the university's support unit review process is formally reviewed at least every five years to determine if it is functioning as intended and to incorporate appropriate changes into the process. The review process is initiated by the President's Cabinet or the Academic Senate.

II.   Overview of the Review Process

All university units participate in support unit review, and are reviewed at least once every five years. Each vice president identifies which of his or her units and/or subunits is to conduct the support unit process within the division and ensures that all subunits either conduct the support-unit process or are a subunit of a larger collection of subunits that conduct the support unit process.

A specific list of support units are identified and placed on a five-year review schedule. The provost produces the five-year review schedule in consultation with the other vice presidents.

Each of the academic colleges participates in the support unit review process. Each college completes a single review of its support units, including the departmental administrative structure as part of that single review process. Academic programs are reviewed through the Academic Program Review process, which is described in a separate document.

In addition to the periodic full review in the support unit review process, each unit submits an annual report of the following: (a) the unit's achievements in relation to the unit's and the university's strategic goals and priorities and (b) the unit's contributions in addressing each of the specific WASC concerns that were identified in the most-recent WASC evaluation report. This additional step provides a consistent record of evidence of measurement and progress.

The support unit review process includes input from the broad university community, including faculty, staff, and students. The summary of results and recommendations of the support unit review are given to the broad university community, including the Academic Senate, for information and comments.

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs oversees the support unit review process. Data and survey needs of administrative and academic support units are supported by the Office of Institutional Research.

The procedure for the review consists of three phases: (1) *a self-study phase* in which the unit prepares a report that contains detailed background data, administrative or academic support unit activities, strategic planning documents, future goals, assessment procedures, and other information as needed by the review team; (2) a *review phase* in which a review team examines the unit's self-study and makes recommendations for improvement; and (3) a strategic planning phase resulting in the development of a comprehensive *strategic implementation plan* based on the review results.

Each administrator is encouraged to adapt the review process to be consistent and compatible with existing assessment and evaluation frameworks that exist in the unit, including external accreditation and adherence to professional standards and practices. Throughout the review process, the structure and procedures used in the review process should be established in a manner that is consistent with the size, role, and organizational structure of the unit under review. The unit may also be asked to address relevant and timely issues and challenges facing the unit under review. The emphasis of the review is that each administrator may use this process as a tool that can be modified to meet the planning and management needs of the units within their areas of responsibility.

There are seven key dimensions that should be addressed during the unit review process:

1. Introduction and mission of the unit.
2. Role within the university and relationships to other units.
3. Plans and the planning processes of the unit.
4. Assessment processes and effectiveness of the unit, including measurement of outcomes.
5. Resource allocation and use.
6. Evaluation of the operation of the unit.
7. Special issues to be addressed.

The outcome of unit review should be a well-designed and agreed-upon strategic implementation plan for enhancement of the administrative or academic support unit. Plans should be explicit, realistic, viable, and should reflect the aspirations of each unit. The unit review process should focus on improvements that can be made using resources that currently are available to the unit.

III. The Self-Study Report – Phase 1

The unit is responsible for preparing the self-study report in a format and timeline as outlined by the vice president or president. The following guidelines are recommended areas that should be addressed in the self-study report. The vice president or president is responsible for identifying a specific focus of the self-study report where desirable and appropriate.

The Office of Institutional Research provides the unit with relevant data or other available information and assistance in presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. This office should be used to ensure comparable definitions and interpretation where appropriate. The Office of Institutional Research serves as a resource in the development, administration, and analysis of questionnaires, surveys, or interviews used in self-study reports, in accordance with university policy for human subjects research.

Self-Study Report Format Guidelines

1. Introduction and mission of the unit: Describe the roles and functions of this unit and the impact of this unit upon the institution by addressing the following elements:

      a. Mission and organization of the unit and sub-units.
      b. Brief description of the self-study process and participants.
      c. Services or functions provided:
- Describe the work performed by the unit. Provide data that describes the amount of work or transactions handled by the unit.
- Document recent trends and changes.

2. Role within the university and relationship to other units: Describe how this unit relates to other units on campus and how the current unit administrative structure serves the campus needs by addressing the following elements:

      a. Describe interrelationships of the unit with other units at the university, where applicable.
      b. Identify areas of possible function overlap or service duplication with other units offered at the university.

3. Plans and the planning processes of the unit: Describe the goals, strategic plan, and planning processes of the unit and how they contribute to the university's mission and strategic plan. Describe the consultative process used to establish these goals and explain how they are consistent with, and supportive of, the university's goals and plans, by addressing the following elements:

      a. List the unit goals and the strategies to achieve these goals:
- Describe the planning process within the unit.
- Provide implementation plans and timetables.
- Include other materials used in the unit's planning process, if applicable.

      b. Discuss the centrality to the university mission:
- Identify the relationship of the unit to the university's mission and strategic plan.
- Describe its role and function support the university.

4. Assessment processes and effectiveness of the unit including measurement of outcomes: Describe how the unit is achieving goals set by the unit and its vice president or the university president and the effectiveness of service to its designated constituency, by addressing the following elements:

      a. Assessment of unit's quality:
- Describe the assessment and evaluation processes of the unit and its functions (not the personnel employed in the unit).
- Present evidence that this unit is achieving its goals.
- Identify the kinds of data regularly collected to provide feedback to the unit on its achievement of objectives and the perceptions and attitudes of the users of the unit's services.
- Identify specific outcome measures
- Summarize the results or attach copies of summary reports to the review if constituent interviews or surveys have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of this unit in meeting needs.
- Describe the methods and results of input sought from the broad university community.

      b. Implementation of assessment:
- Describe how data are used to improve the unit and its services. Give specific examples to support the conclusion.

5. Resource allocation and use: Describe how the unit maximizes its effectiveness in terms of available resources and how priorities for allocation of resources are determined in the unit, by addressing the following elements:

a. Resource allocation: Provide data that describe the resources allocated to the unit over the last five years:
- Staffing figures by headcount, FTE, category of position, funding source, gender, and ethnicity for the last five years.
- Budget by funding source; expenditures by expenditure classification and funding source; external funding and income received for the last five years.
- Current physical space available to the unit and its function.

b. Adequacy of resources: How adequate are the resources allocated to the unit to perform its mandated functions in each of the areas listed below? If any resource is judged inadequate, what solution does the unit recommend?
- Administrative and support staff.
- Facilities.
- Equipment/instrumentation/laboratories.
- Supplies and services.
- Information resources and services (library, computing).

6. Evaluation of the operations of the unit: Describe how the operating procedures of the unit are compatible with the policies and regulations of the university, and where appropriate, with administrative regulations and faculty governance structures, by addressing the following elements:

a. Evaluation of the management of the unit:
- How is appropriate staff involved in the decision-making process of the unit?
- What mechanisms exist for staff to provide feedback to the unit?
- What mechanisms exist for other units on campus to provide feedback to the unit?
- How are data used to determine future goals and evaluate current performance?

b. Assessment of climate and management:
- Are personnel within the unit familiar with unit objectives and the importance of their work in achieving unit and campus objectives?
- Is there effective communication among staff?

c. Efficiency analysis: What recommendations does the unit suggest to...
- Improve decision-making?
- Eliminate duplication or non-essential work?
- Simplify reporting relationships and communications?
- Use resources available to it effectively?
- Reduce or contain costs?

7. Special issues to be addressed: Each vice president or the president, where applicable, is encouraged to develop a set of questions that is timely and unique for issues facing the unit under review. Units may discuss the status of support units relative to similar programs at appropriate peer universities or departments. Data that compares the structure, activities, procedures, and practices of the unit against standards of professional associations may be included where appropriate.

8. Appendices: Attach to the unit's self-study report, where applicable.

a. Tables, charts, and graphs that are referred to in the body of the self-study report.
b. Organizational chart.
c. Flow chart of major operations or systems.
d. Workload data, measurements, and performance indicators used for major activities.
e. Roster of current staff.
f. Copies of significant policies.
g. Reports and other supporting documents.

IV.   The Review – Phase 2

The review team provides a mechanism for the administrative or academic support unit to benefit from perceptions and assessment of faculty, staff, and students from outside the unit, and, where appropriate, from outside the university. The review team should be representative of those that the unit serves. The review team provides an evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the unit and make recommendations for improvement.

1. Selection of review team and schedule for the review: The review team is comprised of people mainly from outside the unit being reviewed as well as those involved in preparation of the self-study report to ensure continuity and appropriate interpretation of the data. When the unit has university-wide responsibility, all sectors are represented on the review team. The vice president's or president's responsibility includes soliciting nominations for team members from the faculty through Committee on Committees and selecting the members and chair of the review team.

When a review of a support unit contained within a specific college is planned, the dean's responsibility includes soliciting nominations for review team members from the college faculty via college governance structures established to make faculty committee appointments.

2. Materials, information, and questions provided to the review team: Upon appointment of the review team, the vice president or president provides, through the unit administrator, the following to each member of the review team.

  a. A copy of the university's support unit review process document.
  b. The unit's self-study report and all supporting documentation and attachments with the understanding that the review team may request additional information and interviews.
  c. An outline of specific questions the review team is asked to address. These questions are developed by the vice president, in consultation with the president, and after receiving suggestions from the unit administrator undergoing review, faculty governance, and others as deemed appropriate.
  d. A timetable for submission of the review team's preliminary and final reports.

3. The review team's reports: The review team presents its major findings and recommendations to the vice president or president, who, in turn, distributes the preliminary draft to the unit, so that the unit may correct any factual errors before the report is finalized. A final report is provided to the vice president or president by the review team within six weeks of the return to the review team of the preliminary draft. The vice president or president distributes copies of the final report to the unit administrator. The unit administrator distributes the final report to all members of the unit being reviewed. The executive summary, minus any references to individuals, is an open document and distributed to the campus community through the university web page and the Academic Senate.

4. Unit response to the review team's report: Following receipt of the final report of the review team, the unit being reviewed may provide the vice president or president with a written response to the review team's report findings and recommendations. The vice president or president distributes a copy of the unit's response to the review team, and president. In addition, the report and follow up documents will be distributed to the university community via the web.

V.   Strategic Implementation Plan and Follow Up – Phase 3

As a result of this process, the vice president or president and the unit administrator jointly approves a strategic implementation plan for agreed-upon actions. This strategic implementation plan (1) identifies and prioritizes the goals of the unit over the next five years; (2) identifies the strategies which will be used to accomplish those goals, e.g., state what actions are to be taken by whom and include deadlines; and (3) identifies the expected outcome or results of the strategic implementation plan.

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