May 6, 2015

Dear Unit Leads:

Now that you have had a chance to read both the feedback for your individual unit’s USAP report and the USAP “Report & Recommendations” document, we want to say more about the differing purposes for each of those documents. When the USAP team built this process, we conceptualized two distinct processes: the unit reporting process and the university-wide analysis. These two processes worked toward distinct goals and resulted in two different types of document.

1. The unit reporting process: From the “Report & Recommendations” document: “The overarching goal that informed the creation of the unit report template was the need to bring strategic planning to the unit level in order to achieve the specific metrics of success tied to Plan 2020. Individual units had, of course, engaged in their own work of strategic planning, but they were not asked to consider or create connections between their own plans and college-level and university-level planning. The Task Force developed the unit report form with the aim of initiating progress toward two goals: First, the ideal of connecting planning initiatives horizontally across units and vertically within larger units of the university is the long-term goal. Second, the shorter-term goal that must be achieved in conjunction with this is to develop the habit of setting clear and measurable goals as part of the planning process within all units. The benefits to IPFW of more careful and collaborative strategic planning at the unit level are clear. The benefits to individual units derive from the creation of a ‘bottom-up’ approach to improvement, through plans being developed, implemented, and assessed for progress by the units themselves.” Thus, the most important work of the unit reporting process is the work done by units themselves. USAP analysis teams, who acknowledge that they do not know as much about any unit as the unit’s own members, provided feedback on reports that was aimed at pushing units to strengthen, for example, the specificity or measurability of the stated goals. The unit reporting process is an ongoing project to create new habits of unit-level strategic planning, and thus the process itself is of greater importance than the feedback forms produced by the analysis teams.

2. The university-wide analysis: Our expectation in planning this work was that the process of reading and analyzing the information in the individual USAP unit reports would position the team well to undertake a comprehensive analysis of operational weaknesses that affect the university as a whole. We detail the results of this university-wide analysis in the “Report & Recommendations” document. Whereas the goal of the unit reporting process is to encourage individual units to implement new ways of thinking about unit-level strategic planning, the goal of the university-wide analysis is to offer our own suggestions for higher-level initiatives that will have more comprehensive effects on the functioning of the university as a whole. Divided into seven themes, our recommendations address the following:

   1. Academic Identity, Priorities, and Direction
2. Alignment with Regional Needs  
3. Communication and Marketing  
4. Leadership Development  
5. Leveraging Technological Capacity  
6. Planning, Assessment, and Continuous Improvement  
7. Strategic Enrollment Management

We hope to focus the discussion at the town hall meeting this Friday (12 pm, LA 35A) on the university-wide “Report & Recommendations,” because that document will have a larger impact on the university as a whole. If you have specific questions about your individual unit’s feedback, please contact Jennifer Oxtoby, who will direct your questions to the appropriate analysis team members.

Thank you!

Rachel Hile and Mandi Witkovsky, USAP Task Force Co-Chairs