

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations of the Steering Committee on the Accountability of Service-and-Support Units

MISSION/PURPOSE

In order to continue to excel in an increasingly competitive environment, the University is committed to ensuring that its service-and-support units meet the needs of the University community and effectively support the University's teaching, research, and outreach missions.

OBJECTIVES

Quality assurance, continuous improvement, accountability and integrity, pride in making significant contributions, opportunity for recognition, open communication between service units and their customers, and dialogue between consultant groups and executive officers on the quality of service units.

PRINCIPLES

- Aligns with existing culture, policy, values and practices of the University of Minnesota
- Improves service to the University and external community
- Useful to the assessed unit, the responsible administrator and those served
- Unbiased, balanced, fair, thorough and forward looking
- Highlights best practices
- Sensitive to a realistic timeline to conduct such reviews
- Assesses efficiency and effectiveness in terms of financial planning and resource allocation
- Links to existing University assessment, planning, and reporting structures

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopt administrative policy to ensure internal, comprehensive reviews on a 5-year, rotating basis of each service-and-support unit reporting directly to the office of a vice president.
2. Adopt administrative procedures to provide guidance and recommendations for units to consider as they form and implement their own unique standards for high quality service.
3. Establish a model for implementing the policy that places oversight and responsibility of comprehensive reviews with the president, accountability with the vice presidents to whom the units report, and opportunity for units and senate committee members to provide input on review committee membership and the final review committee report.
4. Strengthen performance measurement by moving from input based measures to output based measures, and by upgrading the University's metrics capacity and training in the developmental measures of quality assurance processes through ongoing annual and comprehensive strategic review and planning processes.
5. Establish a central access point for accepting and responding to complaints/commendations.

EVALUATION

~~Following implementation of the reviews this first year, the Steering Committee on~~
Accountability of Service-and-Support Units will reconvene to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy and procedures as implemented to the president and Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC). Based on their evaluation, the committee will recommend revisions to the policy and/or procedures to the president and FCC as necessary.

Report on the Comprehensive Review of Service-and-Support Units

Introduction

Academic program reviews often involve the collection of data on key indicators of success and rely on the collective wisdom of external peers, students, specialists in the field, and others. Assessing the effectiveness of service-and-support units, however, has been less formal and systematic at most universities, including the University of Minnesota, and protocols are less well established. But the efficiency and impact of service-and-support units becomes increasingly critical as functions grow, resources are produced and consumed, and units assume more and more tasks to support the academic mission of the University. At a time when declining state funding and rising tuition rates lead to an increasingly competitive environment, efficient and effective service is more critical than ever. Accordingly, as part of the *President's Enhancing Service and Productivity Initiative*, the Steering Committee on the Accountability of Service-and-Support Units was charged to ensure that service-and-support units meet the changing needs of their customers.

Composition of the Steering Committee

Kathleen O'Brien, Vice President for University Services (*Co-Chair*)
Tom Clayton, Regents' Professor of English Language and Literature (*Co-Chair*)
Joan Bailey, Senior Administrative Director, Department of Neuroscience (*Emerging Leader*)
Jean Bauer, Professor, Department of Family Social Science
Judy Berning, Chair, Student Senate Consultative Committee
Carol Carrier, Vice President for Human Resources
Gary Jahn, Professor, Institute of Linguistics, English as a Second Language, and Slavic Languages and Literature
Robert Jones, VP and Executive Vice Provost, Faculty/Academic Programs
Jeff Klausner, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine
Reid LeBeau, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
Marvin Marshak, Professor, Department of Physics & Astronomy
Toni Pangborn, Classroom Support Manager, Classroom Management (*Emerging Leader*)
Bill Roberts, Director, Fleet Services
Lorelee Wederstrom, Director, AHC Office of Facilities
Kate Stuckert, Assistant to the Vice President and Chief of Staff, Office of the President (*Staff*)

Charge

When the Service and Productivity Initiative was launched in fall 2002, President Robert H. Bruininks and the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) jointly charged the committee to: "1) examine means whereby the university can provide for regular monitoring of the effectiveness of key service/support units; 2) benchmark the relationship between the level of administrative resources allotted to our service-and-support units and the quality of their service; and 3) more consistently and effectively measure service outcomes of service-and-support units."

Committee Process

The committee met frequently throughout the 2002-03 academic year. First, it determined the scope of the review process by defining service-and-support units as being non-academic, non-teaching, non-research center, and reporting directly to a vice president (a fuller definition is given in Attachment D) or member of the Executive Committee.

Second, the committee solicited information about the current status of review processes at Committee for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) institutions in general, and evaluated an extensive process for academic and administrative program review at Northwestern University. The committee noted the lack of uniformity of review processes in the CIC, and determined that the process at Northwestern was simply too cumbersome to be effective at the University of Minnesota. The committee also reviewed the 1989 Report of the Task Force for Review of Twin Cities Campus Support and Service Units, which set forth a number of thoughtful recommendations for all University service units (see Attachment C). Although we found that many of the task force recommendations are observed in some of our service units, it was not clear whether the task force recommendations were ever formally instituted at the University.

Third, the committee developed a list of interview questions and met with service-and-support unit managers across the University to improve its understanding of existing performance measures and review processes. On the basis of collected data and discussion, the committee developed a list of desired characteristics for a review process to guide the final recommendations, discussed later in this report. In brief, the committee found that reviews of service and support units differ widely across the University. Although the committee recognized that the unit managers themselves are reviewed regularly, and that their performance is often related to the performance of their units, it determined that a systematic review process for the units was clearly lacking.

Fourth, the committee established self-study guidelines that formed the basis of a pilot project involving three very different University units: 1) Center for Human Resources Development; 2) Boynton Health Service; and 3) Department of Parking and Transportation. Each of these units conducted a self-study using these guidelines in the spring of 2003, which took approximately 6-8 weeks, and provided qualitative feedback and critique about the utility of the process. With their comments, and those of unit managers from across the University who were invited to offer input on the draft report at a committee meeting on October 14, the self-study guidelines were completed and are described later in this report (see Attachment E).

Fifth, the committee discussed performance criteria for the review of service-and-support units at the University and concluded that units should be evaluated by the same criteria that guide the review of academic units to ensure that each unit, whether business or academic, conducts its activities in full accordance with the University's academic mission and priorities.

Sixth and last, the information on which the report is based comes from the 1989 Report of the Task Force for Review of Twin Cities Campus Support and Service Units, extensive interviews with service-and-support unit managers, examination of existing University and other institutional review processes, and feedback from the pilot project participants and service-and-support unit managers.

Deliverables

The committee was asked to provide the following deliverables, which form the basis of the committee's recommendations:

- Define what is meant by a service or support unit.
- Identify criteria for a comprehensive review process for service-and-support units.
- Assess review processes currently in use to determine whether they achieve the objective and fulfill the criteria proposed by the committee.
- Provide a detailed protocol to follow in producing a comprehensive review-process.
- Propose a schedule for the review of service-and-support units.

1. Define what is meant by a service-or-support unit.

The central functions of the University of Minnesota are instruction and research, which are organized in academic departments, programs and centers, colleges, and schools. Central administration, which is not in itself academic, has the responsibility of enabling and facilitating the University's academic activities, as have the University Libraries as a collective entity that is partly academic.

The mission of giving service and support to the University's academic programs and activities, and to the entire University community, is shared by nearly all University personnel and organizations that are not in themselves academic or administrative; that is, all service-and-support units, and special units including Athletics, the General Counsel's Office, the University Grievance Office, and University Relations. At the college level and below, service and support are provided by personnel employed directly by those units. Above the college level, and campus-wide, are the University's service-and-support units, which are semi-autonomous, have their own directors and heads, and are responsible to the office of a vice president.

2. Identify criteria for the comprehensive review of service-and-support units.

The committee adopted six (6) criteria that are essential for the comprehensive review of service-and-support units, virtually the same criteria that guide the review of academic, financial, and management reviews at both the collegiate and department levels: quality, centrality (the relative importance and magnitude of the unit's contribution to the mission of the University), comparative advantage (the characteristics of the unit in the context of higher education that make it particularly appropriate to this University), need and demand for the unit's services, efficiency and effectiveness, and growth and leveraging of resources.

3. Assess review processes currently in use to determine whether they achieve the objective and fulfill the criteria proposed by the committee.

The committee compiled a list of over 50 service-and-support units (units that report directly to a vice president or member of the Executive Committee), and identified approximately half of them to interview on the basis of committee consensus (see Attachment A). The interview questions were developed to enable the committee to more fully understand the performance measures and review processes currently in place at the University (see Attachment B). The results provided by the unit managers are analyzed and summarized below:

Mission Statement

The majority of units interviewed have a mission statement, understand whom they serve, and regularly complete either a compact or a business plan. The great majority also use consultative groups and benchmarking as part of their evaluating and planning processes. In these aspects of the performance assessment process, periodic assessment appears to occur.

Performance Measurement

There were greater differences in the number and types of performance measurement criteria employed. Units that more closely resemble retail businesses had the most systematic methods of gathering performance information. Units whose work was primarily consultative have more difficulty organizing and interpreting performance information.

The area of concern most often mentioned was the relevance of criteria to quality of service. Most units measure productivity indices that are readily quantifiable (i.e. volume of phone calls, number of items sold), and it is not always clear how to interpret this data. Customer surveys were most often the method used to evaluate the quality of service, but in some cases there is a disparity between the survey results and the perception of quality by the University community. Another frequently mentioned concern about performance measurement was difficulty in obtaining information that would be helpful to improve service. Obstacles include lack of cooperation from other units, or simply the fact that other units do not have the information organized in a way that makes it available to share. Almost all would welcome more sophisticated measures and automated systems. A final concern was that the time spent and the cost of collecting and analyzing performance information exceeded the benefit to be gained. This concern underscores the importance of building upon systems that are currently in place or identifying processes that are part of the current infrastructure to avoid creating inefficiencies with burdensome record-keeping at odds with current practices.

In summary, most units have many activity-based measurements where they are tracking volumes of work performed or products delivered; most also employ quality-based measurement in the form of customer surveys to assess satisfaction. However, performance measurement must be strengthened at the University in the area of performance outcomes and quality assurance processes, and must be incorporated into ongoing annual and comprehensive strategic review and planning processes. More specifically, the University must move from strictly input based measurement to output based measurement. Once a comprehensive review process infrastructure has been established and in place for a few years, and depending on the data obtained, the committee recommends that the University consider investing in the upgrade of its metrics capacity. To do so will allow the University to better benchmark and link the relationship between the level of administrative resources allotted to service-and-support units and the quality of their services.

Review Accuracy and Legitimacy

When a review of any kind is undertaken, whether within the unit or from outside, accuracy of results is critical. Such accuracy can be assured by the comprehensiveness of the review and the care exercised by the reviewers. A unit reviewed should express its agreement that the review is accurate or show how and where it is not. In the case of an intra-unit review, the executive officer should certify its accuracy; if members find it at fault, they should specify to the executive officer how and where it is at fault.

Internal Evaluations

The practice and extent of internal evaluations varied widely among the units, most of which did not have a system comparable to that of a self-study by an academic unit. Internal evaluations included post-event evaluations where staff would analyze the successes and failures evident in a particular project as well as any quantitative information that was gathered. Some units have finances reviewed as part of a predetermined internal budget or audit cycle. Several units have employed outside consultants for specific projects, either to assess weaknesses or to help manage identified problems. The majority of units do not have systematic external evaluations.

Customer Service

Responses to the question about a customer-service department or contact varied.

Approximately half of the units do not have a designated person or phone number for this purpose; complaints or comments enter their process in a variety of ways, and it is left largely up to the customer where to initiate the process. Other units have a well-established process but a poorly identified access point. A few units interviewed have both a highly visible access point, such as 1-Help for OIT, and a systematic process for responding to the complaint.

Especially in light of the charges to identify means of: monitoring the effectiveness of key service-and-support units and more consistently and effectively measure service outcomes, it is important that all service-and-support units have a highly visible access point and a systematic process for receiving and responding to complaints. Furthermore, because the University has none, the committee recommends that the University establish a central access point and process. The access point should be clearly identified in the University directory and regularly publicized in appropriate University publications, with an invitation to members of the University community to communicate their complaints, compliments, and commendations, and suggestions. Although the committee does not suggest a specific model in this report, it recommends that the appropriate executive officers consider such a function.

Recognition Programs

Most units do not have a system of recognition programs specifically linked to performance measurement for quality service, but many units regularly evaluate the performance of employees, many have systematic training and staff development opportunities for employees, and many have staff events where exceptional performance is recognized. A few units use outstanding service awards with financial benefits, but it was noted that there might be other criteria for these besides exceptional service. The staff training and development programs again do not necessarily emphasize exceptional service.

Core Value Statements

Some units seemed to have a stronger commitment than others to giving and documenting service above and beyond a minimum acceptable standard. Core value statements expressed and emphasized these standards, and the managers in each of such units talked at length to the interviewers about the importance of high quality service, about how they expected excellent performance from their staff, and about their staff being well informed about these expectations. While the passion expressed by these managers is inspiring, it is difficult to measure how this actually translates into excellent service. But it stands to reason that the exemplary managers clearly motivate by example.

4. Detail a protocol that should be followed in producing a comprehensive review-process.

First, the committee identified the following list of desired characteristics for a comprehensive review process to guide the development of final recommendations:

- Aligns with existing culture, policy, values and practices of the University of Minnesota
- Improves service to the University and external community
- Useful to the assessed unit, the responsible administrator and those served
- Unbiased, balanced, fair, thorough and forward looking
- Highlights best practices
- Sensitive to a realistic timeline to conduct such reviews
- Assesses efficiency and effectiveness in terms of financial planning and resource allocation
- Links to existing University assessment, planning, and reporting structures

On the basis of these characteristics, the committee recommends that the University institute a regular and uniform internal comprehensive review process for all service-and-support units across the University to ensure that their accountability and commitment to meeting the needs of their constituents is aligned with the University's commitment to enhancing service and productivity. Building upon the recommendations of the 1989 task force, it is essential that the recommendations in this report be enforced by policy to ensure consistency, quality, and timeliness in the review of service-and-support units. Therefore, the committee recommends joint administrative/faculty consideration and approval of the following components for the comprehensive review of service-and-support units at the University:

- Adopt and implement an administrative policy for the internal, comprehensive review of service-and-support units (see proposed policy in Attachment D); and
- Implement procedures for the administrative policy for the review of service-and-support units (see proposed procedures Attachment E).

The *policy* essentially institutionalizes the review of service-and-support units, provides for a set of checks and balances (much as the University does for the review of senior administrative officers), and holds vice presidents accountable for initiating timely reviews and following-up on areas in need of improvement. It also allows for the continuous improvement of all service-and-support units across the University.

The *procedures* provide guidance and recommendations for units to consider as they form and implement their own unique standards for high quality service. The procedures are not intended to overwhelm units with reporting requirements, particularly when most units are facing increasing demands for services with diminished financial and staff resources. Rather, the department's investment of resources (such as time and staffing) in this process should be viewed as an opportunity to better meet the needs of its customers. They include a uniform set of ~~guidelines to allow for comparison within and across units over time to provide a meaningful~~ evaluation that will benefit the service-and-support unit managers and staff, the vice presidents to whom they report, and more importantly, their customers.

Finally, the committee considered three potential models for the oversight and implementation of the review, as described below:

Model #1: An internal review committee would be appointed for a 2-3 year term to conduct all service-and-support unit reviews (with the option of including rotating external members in the appropriate service unit industries to provide benchmarking and a solid knowledge base to the review committee). The benefit of this model is that the committee's experience over time might facilitate reviews of other units in subsequent years. However, the significant amount of time necessary to complete several reviews each year will require resources to buy out the time from the committee members' home units.

Model #2: The president would appoint a committee for each unit review, in consultation with the FCC. Each review committee would submit its report to the vice president responsible for the unit, with a copy to the president and to the FCC. The vice president would meet with the unit manager to discuss the review and develop a follow-up plan of the committee's report, again with a copy to the president. The president would evaluate the quality of implementation of the review committee recommendations at the vice president annual performance reviews. This model holds vice presidents accountable for service-and-support unit performance and success, minimizes the opportunity for vice presidents to deflect negative review committee outcomes, and provides faculty with the opportunity for input on the review committee.

Model #3: The vice presidents would submit a schedule/plan for reviews in their units to the president each year, who would be responsible for publishing an annual list of scheduled reviews and delegating those reviews to the vice presidents. Responsibility for the reviews would reside in the Office of the President, much as it does for the comprehensive reviews of administrative officers. Each vice president would be responsible for charging a representative, internal review committee (with external participation in some cases as necessary) to conduct the evaluation, discussing the committee recommendations with the committee and unit manager, and ensuring the appropriate follow-up to the committee recommendations. Additionally, the unit managers and the relevant University/Faculty Senate committee would also have an opportunity to provide input on the internal review committee membership, view the review committee's report, and submit a written response to be included with the final report submitted to the vice president and president. The vice president would use the review outcome as performance criteria in the unit manager and unit's annual reviews; likewise, the president would use the service-and-support unit reviews as criteria for the vice president's annual performance review. These reviews, particularly the vice president performance reviews, would essentially serve as a vehicle to ensure open and regular communication between the vice president and president, ultimate accountability for the vice president to produce positive service outcomes, and the appropriate follow-through of recommendations for improvement.

After considerable thought and discussion, the committee recommends model #3. Not only does the process align with other institutional processes like the comprehensive review for administrative officers, but it places responsibility and accountability for reviews in the hands of the administrators ultimately responsible for service-and-support-unit performance. An additional benefit is that it allows for archival and trend data to be located and tracked centrally.

5. Propose a schedule for the review of service-and-support units.

Each service-and-support unit should be reviewed every five (5) years, or more frequently as requested by the president or vice president, to provide for a more comprehensive and peer evaluation of the unit to complement the annual reviews. Ideally, the review process should generally be completed within 90 days of initiating the review. The committee recognizes that the review schedules vary from unit to unit. Reviews should occur on a staggered, rotating basis, and vice presidents are encouraged to be mindful about the timing of other accreditation or audits being conducted. The vice president should maintain a schedule for service-and-support unit reviews, provide a list of units to be reviewed each year to the president, and supply information about the reviews initiated, results of the reviews, and implementation of the review committee recommendations each year to the president at the annual performance review. The review schedule, once set, should also be provided to the Faculty Consultative Committee for information each year and published annually by the president.

Communications Plan

If approved, the committee proposes that the president communicate to all vice presidents and service-and-support unit managers about the new review process, and communicate broadly to the University community throughout the 2003-04 academic year. In any communications, it is important that the objectives of this process are clearly defined in a way that aligns the process with overall University priorities, that the diverse constituencies that designed the process are identified, and that the benefits to the unit managers, vice presidents, and customers are clearly defined. Essentially, this process is not intended to be a single tool for holding the units and their managers accountable for performance, and it is not meant to add to the already full workloads of the unit managers and their staff. Rather, it is meant to complement other, existing models and processes that are conducted for other reasons (i.e., audits or accreditation), and to serve as a development tool, a learning process, a chance for the units to promote their own success stories, and an opportunity for the president to broadly promote the accountability of the University service-and-support units to the University community and to the state of Minnesota. In addition, as reviews occur, it will be critical to communicate about the efficacy of the process, not just for a particular unit, but for the university system as a whole. To do so would begin to narrow the gap between the University's actual performance and the internal and external community's *perception* of our performance.

ATTACHMENT A

List of Service-and-Support Units

Office of the President

Office of the General Counsel
Grievance Office
Senate Office
Department of Intercollegiate Athletics
Office of Licenses & Athletic Properties
Department of Audits (dual reporting relationship with the BOR)

Executive Vice President and Provost

Office of Admissions
Office of Budget & Finance
Earle Brown Center (CEE)
Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action
Office of Information Technology
Office of Institutional Research and Reporting
University Libraries
Registrar's Office
Office of Student Finance
Office of Enrolled Student Services

Vice President and Executive Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Programs

Office of Student Affairs
Office for Multicultural & Academic Affairs
Office of International Programs
Children, Youth & Family Consortium
Weisman Art Museum
Business & Community Economic Development

Vice President for Human Resources

Employee Benefits
Center for Human Resource Development
Center for Teaching & Learning Services
Human Resource Information (PeopleSoft) & Payroll
Graduate Assistant Employment Services
Job Center
Labor Relations & Staff Compensation
Employee Assistance Programs
HR Policy Development & Consulting

Vice President for University Relations

Information Services (telephone operators)
Alumni Association
University Foundation
Retirees Volunteer Center

Vice President for Research

Patent & Technology Marketing
Sponsored Projects Administration
Office of Oversight, Analysis & Reporting
Office of Regulatory Affairs
Office of Responsible Conduct of Research and Ethics
Electronic Research Administration

Vice President for University Services

Auxiliary Services

- Addressing & Mailing
- Bindery
- Bookstores
- Campus Mail
- Fleet Services
- Housing & Residential life
- Office Equipment Services
- Parking & Transportation
- Printing Services
- U Card Office
- U Dining Services
- University Stores

Facilities Management

- U Architect
- Design and Construction Services
- Energy Management
- Facilities Zone Services

Northrop Auditorium

Public Safety

- Emergency Management
- University Police Department
- Central Security

Campus Health and Safety

- Environmental Health and Safety
- Building Code and Inspections

University Services Human Resources

University Services Communications

ATTACHMENT B

Interview Questions for Optimizing the Performance of Service-and-Support Units

1. What business are you in; whom do you serve; who are your customers?
 2. How do your services/strategic priorities contribute to or support the academic programs of the University?
 3. Ideally, what kind of performance information or data do you need to do your job? What would you like to know that you don't now? What prevents you from collecting this information? How would you use the information to manage?
 4. How do you assess your performance; what are your measures of success?
 5. What are your concerns about performance measurement?
 6. What do you think the benefits of a comprehensive performance measurement would be?
 7. How adequate are the resources of your unit? Given the current level of resources, how effective a job can be expected of your unit?
 8. Is your unit internally evaluated (self-initiated) or externally reviewed, or both?
 9. Do you conduct client/user satisfaction evaluations/surveys?
 10. Do you have a customer-service department or contact?
 11. Do you use consultative groups to help formulate general policies and/or identify problems?
 12. What is the frequency of financial audits?
 13. Do your organizational procedures and/or systems provide an infrastructure to measure service quality and/or improvement?
 14. Do you conduct employee-satisfaction surveys?
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ATTACHMENT C

1989 Task Force for Review of Twin Cities Campus Support and Service Units

The 1989 Task Force for Review of Twin Cities Campus Support and Service Units developed seven recommendations that should apply to all University service units. Many units were already doing some or all of these:

1. Develop mission statements and objectives that reflect the unit's commitment to supporting the academic mission.
 2. Conduct periodic financial audits.
 3. Conduct in-depth reviews, using internal and external reviewers, on a five-year cycle.
 4. Form faculty/user consultative committees to help develop general policies and identify fundamental problems.
 5. Conduct regular surveys to assess user satisfaction.
 6. Provide clear information about services to potential users.
 7. Establish systems of rewards and training to encourage employees to provide the best possible service.
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Administrative Policy for the Comprehensive Review of Service-and-Support Units

Policy Statement

The University of Minnesota has committed itself to the continuous assessment and improvement of the quality and effectiveness of services that are vital to supporting the teaching, research, and service missions of the University. To ensure a high level of quality in the delivery and content of service, each service-and-support unit that reports directly to a vice president shall undergo a regular review and evaluation of its performance. Each vice president ("responsible administrator") shall be responsible for initiating a review of the service-and-support units that report to him/her on a staggered, rotating basis every 5 years, with exceptions being made for extenuating circumstances, such as a significant move or project. It is assumed that each service unit is already reviewed on an annual basis; the review called for in this policy is meant to be a more in-depth, comprehensive review that will complement the annual reviews and accelerate progress toward long-term institutional goals.

Reason for Policy

Academic program reviews often involve the collection of data on key indicators of success and rely on the collective wisdom of external peers, students, specialists in the field, and others. However, assessing the effectiveness of service-and-support units has been a more ad hoc process at most universities, including the University of Minnesota, and protocols are less well established. The efficiency and impact of service-and-support units becomes increasingly critical as functions grow, resources are consumed and produced, and units assume a broadened set of tasks to support the academic mission of the University. At a time when declining state funding and rising tuition rates lead to an increasingly competitive environment, efficient and effective service is more critical than ever.

Objectives of Policy

- Quality assurance
- Continuous improvement
- Accountability and integrity
- Pride in making significant contributions
- Opportunity for recognition
- Open communication between service units and their customers
- Dialogue between consultant groups and executive officers on quality of service units

Definitions

Responsible Administrator

A vice president, or the individual who is responsible for initiating the review, delivering the final review assessment to the unit manager, and using the review along with several other factors to evaluate the unit's performance.

Service-and-Support Unit

The central functions of the University of Minnesota are instruction and research, which are organized in academic departments, programs and centers, colleges, and schools. Central administration, which is not in itself academic, has the responsibility of enabling and facilitating the University's academic activities, as have the University Libraries as a collective entity that is partly academic.

The mission of giving service and support to the University's academic programs and activities, and to the entire University community, is shared by nearly all University personnel and organizations that are not in themselves academic or administrative; that is, all service-and-support units, and also special units including Athletics, the Office of the General Counsel, the University Grievance Office, and University Relations. At the college level and below, the mission is performed by personnel employed directly by those units. Above the college level, and campus-wide, are the University's service-and-support units, which are semi-autonomous, have their own directors and heads, and are responsible to the office of a vice president.

Schedule and Timeline for Reviews

Each service-and-support unit should be reviewed every five (5) years, or more frequently as requested by the president or vice president, to provide for a more comprehensive and peer evaluation of the unit to complement the annual reviews. Ideally, the review process should generally be completed within 90 days of initiating the review. Review schedules should vary from unit to unit to allow reviews to occur on a staggered, rotating basis, and vice presidents should be mindful about the timing of other accreditation or audits being conducted. The vice presidents should maintain a schedule for service-and-support unit reviews, provide a list of units to be reviewed each year to the president, and supply information about the reviews initiated, results of the reviews, and implementation of the internal review committee recommendations each year to the president at the annual performance review. The review schedule, once set, should also be provided to the Faculty Consultative Committee for information each year and published annually by the president.

Related Information

Procedures for the Administrative Policy for the Comprehensive Review of Service-and-Support Units

History

Effective 2004-05 academic year

Administrative Procedures for the Comprehensive Review of Service-and-Support Units

There are three (3) components to the comprehensive review of service-and-support units:

- Self-Study Report
- Evaluation by Review Committee
- Administrative Response

I. SELF-STUDY REPORT

The unit shall prepare a self-study report that provides the internal review committee with information that will help it fully understand the purpose, function, organization, and processes of the unit. The report shall contain or discuss each of the following components: 1) strategic/business plan or compact, 2) customer surveys, 3) self-assessment, 4) recognition programs, 5) effect of financial reality on service level expectations, and 6) policy and process implications. It shall be submitted to the review committee within 30 days after it is requested from the committee. A discussion of each component is described below.

1. Strategic/Business Plan or Compact. If the unit already has a strategic/business plan or compact (or the unit's portion of the compact), it should provide a copy to the internal review committee and use it as a foundation for the self-assessment. If the unit does not have a strategic/business plan or compact, it should prepare such a document using the following components as a guide:

- mission statement, to include identification of those served
- external and internal analysis
- strengths and challenges
- opportunities and threats
- efficiency and effectiveness
- long-term strategic plan
- workplan for the upcoming year
- outsourcing discussion
- performance measures/benchmarks
- use of technology
- commitment to diversity
- goals/objectives

2. Customer Surveys. If the unit uses customer surveys, it should provide a copy of the last year's survey and responses to the internal review committee. If the unit does not use customer surveys, the unit should explain why not, how the unit obtains customer feedback, and the results. Ideally, customer surveys should meet each of the following criteria:

- measure performance standards suitable for the department
- be structured to allow survey results to be easily summarized
- be conducted on a routine basis, either annually or biannually
- be sent to customers and potential customers
- be concise, allowing the customer to complete the survey in 10 minutes or less
- remain somewhat constant to allow results to be compared on a year-to-year basis
- measure the quality and effectiveness of the service
- measure the unit's ability to meet the customer needs, not just performance standards set by the department

If it hasn't already done so, each unit should implement and communicate a system for handling *complaints and/or commendations*, including the identification and clear communication of the name of the contact person in the unit designated to accept complaints and/or commendations, and the process for resolution or follow-through.

3. Self-Assessment. The strategic/business plan or compact shall be used as a foundation for the self-assessment. Self-assessment ensures that each unit systematically takes time to step back from everyday challenges to evaluate its strengths, weaknesses, and progress. This process lays the foundation for the further development of a strategic/business plan or compact and the alignment of the unit's priorities with that of the greater University. Using the unit's strategic/business plan or compact as a foundation, units shall evaluate the unit's service philosophy using the following model as a guide:

Financial Perspective

- Are we using our financial resources in a responsible way?
- Goal: Address fiscal responsibility and cost effectiveness in operations.

Internal Business Perspective

- How efficient are our key business processes?
- Goal: Address the need for quality, operational efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Innovation and Learning Perspective

- Do we foster integrity, teamwork, pride and trust?
- Goal: Address support for training, innovation, partnering, and problem solving.

Customer Perspective

- How do our customers see us?
- Goal: Address performance from the perspective of the requirements and expectations of our customers and stakeholders.

Outcome Perspective

- How does the unit measure quality, service, and cost effectiveness of its operations and management? Does it produce the intended outcomes?
- Goal: Address performance from perspective of the delivered results and product.

4. Recognition Programs. Units should have recognition programs for individuals and groups who exemplify outstanding or excellent service and the unit employees should have input on incentives that motivate them. Actual reward or incentive should be commensurate with the scope of the service program and should be an organic outcome of the service program. Recognition programs should clearly articulate the definition of outstanding service as well as:

- how to create and maintain an improved service culture
- what customers want and how to give it to them
- why employees are so important to service delivery
- when service makes a real difference
- where the strategic advantage pays off

5. Effect of Financial Reality on Service Level Expectations. An important part of the review of any unit's performance is the ability to evaluate the relationship between the level of resources available to the unit and the level of expectations for the performance of the unit. It would be helpful to know not only how the unit evaluates its own performance, but also where that level of performance falls on a scale from "entirely satisfactory" to "unacceptable."

If standard benchmarks are available for such evaluation they must be used. This will, however, provide only an absolute measure of the unit's performance, and such a measure by itself may well verge on irrelevance, especially in times of financial constraint. Therefore, units should provide an evaluation of the level of performance that could reasonably be expected given the resources available to the unit during the review period. The use of standard benchmarks, if available, is strongly encouraged, tempered by any explanation of particular local circumstances, if these are relevant to the fair application of such benchmarks. Finally, the review should indicate what additional resources would be required to move the unit upward along the scale of performance, as well as the downward consequences of reductions in the level of support.

6. Policy and Process Implications. Units should identify and evaluate any internal and external factors that support the unit's ability to be efficient and effective, and the benefits to the institution. Likewise, they should identify any internal and external factors that impede the unit's ability to be efficient and effective, and the costs to the institution. Units should also identify the incentives/disincentives to working collaboratively and cooperatively with other partnering service-and-support units, including the costs/benefits to the institution. The results of each evaluation should also be discussed with the administrator or vice president responsible for the unit as well as the leadership of the relevant service-and-support units annually in order to inspire meaningful change.

II. EVALUATION BY INTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

A representative review committee of 3-5 members internal to the University (and perhaps external, if necessary) shall be appointed to conduct the review. In those service units whose customers are primarily students, it is recommended that at least one of the members of the committee is a student. Once charged, the review committee shall meet with the unit manager and with the responsible administrator to discuss factors that might be important to consider or that may be viewed as problematic in the review and to gain insight into the context of such situations. The review committee shall use the self-study report as the principal reference document in its overall evaluation of the unit.

The final report of the review committee need not be extensive, but should contain four primary components:

- a discussion and an evaluation of each of the performance criteria
- the committee's conclusions about the overall quality of the unit
- areas of best practices and extraordinary service and support
- recommendations concerning areas of improvement, if necessary

Most importantly, the review committee should consider and report on the following question:

Is the unit realizing its mission, goals, and objectives in the most cost-effective, sustainable, and high quality manner?

An assessment of the performance criteria — quality, centrality, comparative advantage, need and demand, efficiency and effectiveness, and growth and leveraging of resources — will be equally important in the review committee evaluation. For example, it may be helpful for the review committee to also consider the following questions as it evaluates each criteria:

- *Quality* — In what ways does the unit's development ensure that its services will be of high quality? What steps are being taken to ensure unit quality?
- *Centrality* — In what ways is the unit consistent with the University's mission? How does the unit contribute to the University's priorities? How will faculty, staff, and students benefit from the program?
- *Comparative Advantage* — What are the characteristics that make the unit unique to the University of Minnesota?
- *Need and Demand* — How does the unit handle its ability to offer goods and services that meet the needs and expectations of the customers in the short- and long-term?
- *Efficiency and Effectiveness* — Is the unit functioning within the unit's capability of its resources? How is the unit planned to operate economically and effectively? Is the unit making a continuous effort to identify and implement more economical and efficient ways to operate the business of the unit?

- *Growth and Leveraging of Resources* — To what degree is the unit able to leverage existing resources and expand new resources?

A significant weakness in any of these criterion might be cause to initiate an external review of a unit. Conditions that would prompt such a unit review might include budget overruns, service complaints, audit findings, policy violations, and violations of the law. In order to ensure consistency in assessing the performance of these units, it is recommended that assessment information focus on these six core performance criteria, with significant weight given to each, in addition to the self-study report and other criteria as defined by the responsible administrator and internal review committee. Such criteria might also include trend data and financial data for accountability reporting purposes.

Optional External Peer Review

An optional, separate external review process might be initiated by the unit manager or responsible administrator and conducted as an independent review by peers identified through professional organizations and peer institutions. Two to three people qualified by education and experience in the unit function shall be selected to conduct the review. An external review shall include a study of unit information, an on-site review, a report of findings, and recommendations. The external review team shall receive the self-study report prior to a site visit, including interviews with the unit's administrative authority, administrators, and staff, and those served by the unit (students, faculty, staff) and appropriate University administrators. At the conclusion of the site visit, the reviewers shall give an initial report to the unit manager, responsible administrator, and president within thirty days of the site visit. The responsible administrator shall present a summary of the external review to those who participated in the review process and to the president. The responsible administrator shall provide staff support to the external review team, and the unit under review shall fund the external review.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE

Once the review is completed, the responsible administrator shall meet with the internal review committee and the unit manager to discuss the final committee report. The responsible administrator shall report the results of the review and the follow-up plan to the president in his/her annual performance review. The unit shall take timely and appropriate action to implement recommendations for improvement identified in the committee report, and shall report back to the responsible administrator, who shall report back to the president, on those particular areas within one year of the review. Furthermore, the unit manager and responsible administrator shall incorporate and track the review committee recommendations in the strategic/business plan or compact of the unit to ensure continuous quality improvement, including an identification of those components that contribute to such success and the feasibility of the widespread application of those components to other areas in the organization.

* Refer to Administrative Policy for the Comprehensive Review of Service-and-Support Units.