

## STANDARD TWO: PLANNING AND EVALUATION

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively.

### DESCRIPTION

#### THE EVOLUTION OF PLANNING SERVICES AT URI

Since the last full accreditation self-study, the University has twice reassessed its governance and strategic planning infrastructures, and the tools and methodologies by which academic programs and departments are evaluated. These assessments provided the impetus for reorganizing the governance and strategic planning structures. In 2003, the University created both the Office of Planning Services and the Joint Strategic Planning Committee to provide more effective shared governance, institutional strategic planning, and evaluation. Further, the President reorganized Strategic Planning and Institutional Research (SPIR) and first reassigned Institutional Research to the Office of the Vice Provost for Information and Technology Services and more recently to Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. These changes will provide better support for collecting, analyzing, and reporting URI's institutional data and better integration with assessment activities, also under the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

The mission of the Office of Planning Services is to provide "consultation and support to achieve the integration of University-wide planning with regard to fiscal, facility, academic, and fund raising. The Office provides assistance to the Vice Presidents of the four divisions within the University, as well as departments and key planning committees of the University."

A Faculty Senate bill creating the Joint Strategic Planning Committee (JSPC) was passed and approved by the President in 2003 (<http://www.uri.edu/facsen/B%2302-03--23.html>). The mission of the JSPC is to advise the President and the Faculty Senate about broad policies affecting the general direction of the University. It assists in the creation, implementation, and monitoring of the Strategic Plan. The committee reviews and contributes priority items for the budget, the Capital Planning priorities in conjunction with the long-range campus master plan, the Capital Campaign, and any other issues of a strategic nature. The committee often reviews data, trends, and reports as they relate to higher education and the future of the University.

Included in the membership of JSPC are the President, the Provost and the four other Vice Presidents, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, a representative from the Council of Deans, the presidents of both the Student Senate and the Graduate Student Association, and two appointees from the University staff. (Appendix 2.1 Key Committees) The two directors of Planning Services serve as ex-officio staff support for the committee. The JSPC meets approximately every three weeks, and meeting minutes are posted to the Faculty Senate web site (<http://www.uri.edu/facsen/JSPC.html>). During its first two years, the committee monitored the progress of the University Strategic Plan in *Measuring Progress: 2003–2006* ([http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps\\_pp.php](http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps_pp.php)) and reviewed reports and trends impacting higher education in preparation for the development of the next plan.

In the summer of 2005, the JSPC articulated four strategic initiatives for a new strategic plan: *Steps Toward Transformation 2006–2009*. (Appendix 2.2 Strategic Plan 06–09) These initiatives are aligned with goals articulated by the Board of Governors and with the vision and mission of the University. In addition, they respond to trends impacting the University and higher education. The divisions of the University developed the goals and action steps for accomplishing the strategic priorities articulated by the JSPC. After its review, the JSPC endorsed the plan. The plan was disseminated widely across campus and is made available on the Planning Services web site (<http://www.uri.edu/pspd/>). The divisions have since developed corresponding concrete action plans and metrics for

accomplishing them. The President's annual management letters to the Board document progress on meeting the Plan's objectives as well as other significant University initiatives. (Appendix 2.3 Management Letter)

### THE URI PLANNING PROCESS

One of the goals of the reorganized planning process at URI is to promote more broad-based participation and collaboration among University constituents. Another is to align and integrate division and department goals and strategies with overall University initiatives. Planning Services assists in identifying, developing, and facilitating key committees focusing on defined areas of University planning and articulates the process for communication among them. The newly created and/or redesigned permanent planning committees at the University include the JSPC, the Campus Master Plan Review Team, and the Space Enhancement, Design, and Allocation (SEDA) Committee. Some *ad hoc* planning groups include the Financial Aid Leveraging Committee, the Enrollment Management Committee, and the URI Digital Task Force. Flow charts, committee reports, and other planning materials are available to the campus community through the Planning Services web site and are included in Appendix 2.4 URI Planning Process.

Planning at the University is data-informed. Reports, trend analysis, peer comparison data, and national reports are used with regularity to inform planning. The Office of Planning Services works closely with the Office of Institutional Research (IR), which collects, organizes, analyzes, interprets, reports, and archives data from University and other sources. IR periodically reports to constituencies external to the University such as the Federal Department of Education, Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, National Collegiate Athletic Association, New England Land Grant Universities consortium, New England Board of Higher Education, the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, the Common Data Set Exchange, the American Association of University Professors, the *U.S. News and World Report* survey, and other annual surveys. Internally, these surveys and their underlying data are provided to the JSPC, University administration, and other University constituencies to support decision-making, planning, and evaluation. Nonconfidential information is made available on the IR website for public use ([www.uri.edu/ir](http://www.uri.edu/ir)).

The integration of budget and planning in the allocation of resources to strategic priorities is a critical component of the planning process. The Budget Office works closely with Planning Services and the JSPC to ensure that strategic priorities are funded. The Director of Budget and Financial Planning regularly reports to and seeks input from the JSPC on budget issues at varying times throughout the year. (Appendix 2.5 Budget Timeline) The Budget Office and Planning Services have developed collaboratively a process for reviewing and funding new strategic initiatives beyond the division's current budget allocation. (Appendix 2.6 Budget Form) This process involves new budget items being brought forward through the Provost and the other Vice Presidents to the President's Team and to the JSPC for recommendation of funding consideration. In its formal yearly budget request to the State of Rhode Island for funding, the President and Budget Office clearly reflect the strategic priorities and the related funding in the budget request submission. See <http://www.uri.edu/pspd/planserv/FY%2008%20Budget%20Request%20locked.pdf> for the most recent request.

Facilities planning is also vital to the process. Ten years ago, the University did not have a consistent policy to guide it in making long-term physical development decisions. URI now has detailed plans for its Kingston and Narragansett Bay Campuses and is finalizing plans for its North District (<http://www.uri.edu/pspd/index.php>). The Campus Master Plan provides benchmarks for objectives governing all major capital decisions related to the physical development of the University. Accomplishments under this Campus Master Plan are more fully discussed in *Standard 8: Physical and Technological Resources*.

Key committees are used both to seek broad input into facilities planning, as well as align physical planning with

overall academic and institutional planning. The Campus Master Plan Review Team meets monthly to oversee the long- and short-term physical development of the campus and its adherence to planning priorities as articulated in the Campus Master Plan. (Appendix 2.1 Key Committees) The Committee is comprised of a faculty representative from the JSPC in addition to several other faculty members, administrators, and student representation. The JSPC receives regular updates from the Campus Master Plan Review Team. Recommendations for funding major capital projects are forwarded to the JSPC for consideration and recommendation to the President.

The Space Enhancement, Design, and Allocation Committee was formed in 2001 to ensure campus-wide representation for space planning, to enhance campus communication, and to determine priorities. Guided by the Campus Master Plan and the University's Strategic Plan, SEDA works to establish and implement the priorities of the University with respect to space. The committee meets monthly to review space requests, to plan and to make recommendations to the Office of Capital Planning and Design ([http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps\\_seda.php](http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps_seda.php)). In its first year, the committee developed a set of space policy guidelines that were later endorsed by the Faculty Senate. Relevant space policies are available at [http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps\\_sp.php](http://www.uri.edu/pspd/ps_sp.php).

### THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS

To ensure that actions are carefully aligned with the University's overall mission and vision for the future, progress is monitored and reported annually through the President's Management Letters. (Appendix 2.3: Management Letter) Measures of success are outlined in the Strategic Plan metrics against which progress is evaluated. Reports are made widely available at <http://www.uri.edu/pspd/>.

Since the last accreditation cycle, academic program evaluation has gone through significant changes. The system for academic program evaluation previously consisted of a quantitative financial analysis called the Program Contribution Analysis (PCA) and a more qualitative process called the Program Quality Review (PQR) in which programs were extensively reviewed on teaching, research, and outreach activities on a seven-year rotational basis. After some review of the effectiveness and utility of these individual instruments, from 2003–2005 these processes were replaced by a single instrument that included both elements of quantitative financial cost-benefit and measures of quality. Known as the Academic Improvement and Investment Model (AIIM) and developed in cooperation with Thomas Murphy and Associates, an extramural management consulting firm ([http://www.uri.edu/facsen/AIIM\\_Home.html](http://www.uri.edu/facsen/AIIM_Home.html)), this instrument was constructed with campus-wide input and review, including a four-department pilot testing. It is comprised of two 35-question surveys. The first survey was designed to measure the value of the departments or programs in relation to the University's mission. The 100 points available in the Value Survey are allocated to five areas:

- Learning Impact
- Scholarship Impact
- Financial Contribution
- University Image, Value, and Growth
- Community Outreach

The second survey was designed to measure the success or likelihood of a department or program to carry out its mission. The 100 points available in the Success Survey are allocated to four metrics:

- Commitment and Capacity
- Consistent Focus, Standards, and Metrics
- Adaptability to Change and Conflict Resolution

- Scope and Complexity of Program

The initial administration of the AIIM survey in all academic departments occurred in November and December of 2005. All faculty members in each department were given the opportunity to complete the survey anonymously. Department chairs and deans were provided access to composite data for their individual colleges along with elaborations of Strengths, Gaps, Opportunities, and Risks (SGOR). Analyses outline areas in which the department or program is doing well and areas that could be improved. Raw data can be obtained from the AIIM surveys in spreadsheet form for analysis of individual questions. Department chairs or deans can use AIIM data to make the case for increased institutional investment to enhance either department or program value in relation to the University mission or to enhance likelihood of the success of programs. In the spring of 2006, the Faculty Senate established a standing committee, the Academic Program Review Committee, to oversee periodic academic program review ([http://www.uri.edu/facsen/FSEC\\_Report\\_5.pdf](http://www.uri.edu/facsen/FSEC_Report_5.pdf)). Student learning is evaluated through the student outcomes assessment area as described in *Standard 4: Academic Programs*.

## APPRAISAL

The goal of the reorganized planning process at URI is to promote more broad-based participation and collaboration among University constituents and to integrate and align University initiatives with division and department goals and strategies. Overall, the University has been successful. The creation of the Office of Planning Services and the JSPC were key events to signal a shift in the University's approach to planning. Similarly, participation of the JSPC and staff of each of the University's divisions in the process of developing the 2006–2009 Strategic Plan reflect broad participation and cooperation aligning University initiatives with division and department goals.

The University has made strides in improving the planning process since the last accreditation report. Specifically, the University has instituted improvements in the decentralization of planning and the development of guidelines, structures, and processes for planning. Structural improvements have been mainly in the form of new key planning committees with clear roles and greater representation from faculty, staff and students. Process improvements have been in the areas of space planning, master planning, and the process by which the University develops, articulates, and reports on its Strategic Plan. Significant steps in shared governance have been realized with the formation of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee and its central role in the planning process. This has fostered a far greater degree of collaboration among administration and faculty at the broadest level. The Office of Planning Services has served as a resource for planning activities—especially and with the greatest impact at the higher levels of the University (with leadership of the administrative divisions, the JSPC, and the President).

To assess progress on the goals of the reorganization, the Self-Study Subcommittee on Planning and Evaluation:

- Designed and conducted a series of focus groups with University staff, faculty, and administrators (Appendix 2.7)
- Distributed an online survey to faculty, staff, and administrators (Appendix 2.8)
- Solicited feedback from University academic departments on AIIM (Appendix 2.9, 2.10)

Despite clear progress, there is uneven adoption of and commitment to the University's Strategic Plan across campus. The surveys and focus groups conducted to evaluate planning indicated that those groups and individuals who have participated in any aspect of planning, either at the departmental or broader level, have more confidence in the planning process, understand the priorities of the University more clearly, and indicate a connection between their area's plans to improve and support the University's priorities for the future. Those individuals who had not been engaged in planning activities during the past few years report less confidence in any discernable impact of planning to promote change and growth, question the investment of time and effort, and are less famil-

iar with and/or committed to future directions articulated in the URI Plan. Although administrative areas (Student Affairs, Advancement, and Administration) have developed strategic plans throughout their departments that align with the University's overall plan, greater staff participation, especially among nonmanagerial staff would improve the planning process.

### **PROJECTION**

In the future, more emphasis will be placed on academic planning at the department and college-wide level specifically involving faculty and department chairs. Hosting a series of "town meetings" across campus during the development stages of future URI Strategic Plans will be one way to achieve broader input. These meetings will bring together faculty and staff across campus to provide insight and feedback during the planning process. Planning Services staff will serve as facilitators. This effort is intended to result in greater understanding of the University's mission, support for the University's strategic plan, broader understanding of the University's future priorities, and a greater degree of connection by all faculty to the University's strategic goals.

Deans will be asked to host regular evaluation sessions with their faculty to assess the impact of their current plans, to articulate how they align with the University's mission and future directions, and to use tools such as the AIIM survey to focus planning and identify areas for improvement. Processes will be implemented towards increasing motivation of faculty and department chairs to engage in planning and demonstrating how planning at every level is valuable to the future viability of the institution.

Efforts to decentralize planning will continue in order to spread ownership and accountability broadly across campus segments. A "train-the-trainer" peer system, planned for the future, will extend planning-related expertise and facilitator/consultant resources to the many departments across campus. This peer training system will promote involvement of staff and faculty in the planning process and will encourage them to develop and share their expertise.

Since the University has developed the AIIM survey as a major tool for academic planning, it is essential that deans and department chairs become more familiar with its potential and that its inadequacies be addressed. The Academic Program Review Committee will play a pivotal role in addressing both of these issues.

### **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

The JSPC will expand its current role to be responsible for the periodic and systematic review of various aspects of institutional effectiveness, including projections cited above for improving planning and evaluation and other standards covered in this Accreditation Report, and shall ensure that the results of these reviews are used for continuing improvement.