State University of New York

Memorandum to Presidents

Date: April 19, 1978
From: Office of the Provost
Subject: Academic Review and Coordinating Councils of the State University of New York

In the 1976 Master Plan, the Trustees endorsed a series of recommendations re-emphasizing the University's need to review and coordinate academic programs on a planned, periodic basis. To assist in implementing the recommendations, a proposal has been formulated for a series of academic review and coordinating councils. This proposal has been discussed with the Academic Vice Presidents of the State-operated campuses, the Executive Committee of the Academic Vice Presidents, and the Council of Presidents, and was approved by the Council at its April meeting.

The concept of the review and coordinating councils, and their membership, scope and procedures are described below in the document which was presented to the Council.

Assumption #1: The University is obliged to maintain and strengthen the quality of all of its academic programs.

Assumption #2: The University is obliged to explore and test means for the better coordination of its academic programs.

Recommendation: It is proposed to create a series of "Academic Review and Coordinating Councils" to advise the Provost of the University about both quality and coordination.

THE TRUSTEES' POSITION

In the 1976 Master Plan, the University's Board of Trustees called on the entire University to take action in two key academic areas: program quality and program coordination. In fact, these two issues dominated the Board's policy direction for the academic affairs of the entire University.

PROGRAM REVIEW

The Trustees were emphatic about the University's continuing obligation to review the quality of academic programs. The Master Plan contains the following language:
As a matter of high priority, State University will develop guidelines for the further rigorous and periodic review of authorized academic programs, conducted through campus-based procedures.

a) These procedures will take into account the varying levels of instruction as well as evaluation activities already completed or now under way. The evaluation procedures should address the relationship of each program to the campus and University mission, regional needs, and the characteristics of the students served by the program. The strengths and weaknesses of the program and its service components should be analyzed. Unique features of the program should be described. The guidelines for program review should ensure that such reviews include participation by students, faculty, and other constituencies.

b) The reports resulting from this process will be reviewed from a University-wide point of view by the Chancellor. The review will be integrated into the planning and budgeting process following consultation with the campuses.

The first formal step in compliance with this was taken in a Memorandum to Presidents, March 1, 1977, Vol. 77, No. 3, "Request for Procedures for the Review of Undergraduate Academic Programs." A panel* was convened to review campus procedures, and it made an interim report to the Academic Vice Presidents of the State-operated campuses. The panel's final report has not yet been completed.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

In the 1976 Master Plan, the Board of Trustees endorsed a variety of positions designed better to coordinate the University's academic programs:

The campuses, within categories, will identify those programs that could be organized as intercampus degree programs to achieve the highest quality and efficiency.

The campuses, within categories and/or regions, will be asked to review programs for possible consolidation to achieve the highest quality and efficiency.

Renewed emphasis will be given to the importance of strong support and high quality in the doctoral programs. In order to

* The panel members are:
Ronald F. Bunn, Buffalo Center
Whitney T. Corey, Cortland
Frank Wadsworth, Purchase
Richard E. Pentoney, Forestry
Howard Sidney, Cobleskill
Sabra Meservey, Dutchess Community College
Lewis R. Fibel, Sullivan County Community College
Norman Shea, Clinton Community College
enhance access to doctoral resources of the whole University, experimentation will be encouraged in development of University-wide doctoral programs.

The University will develop a University-wide program for Religious Studies to promote a scholarly study of world religions, focusing especially upon the relationships between Eastern and Western religious thought.

The University will continue to develop a network of effective library services including intercampus and automated services to increase the efficiency and access of the libraries.

The University will favorably consider establishing University-wide degree programs in selected fields of study, especially where outstanding faculty in subdisciplines of the field are functioning successfully at dispersed locations.

A step toward better University-wide coordination was taken in the Memorandum to Presidents, November 26, 1976, Vol. 76, No. 27, "Procedures for the Elimination of Academic Programs."

SOME OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN PROGRAM COORDINATION

It is obvious that there is now a very great deal of intercampus coordination throughout the University. There are too many coordinated programs to cite but the following examples will at least illustrate some of the kinds of intercampus arrangements now in effect:

- the clinical campus program of Upstate Medical Center and the Binghamton University Center;

- program articulation between selected community colleges and Environmental Science and Forestry;

- a "one plus one" program in agronomy with the first year at Fulton-Montgomery Community College and the second year at the Agricultural and Technical College at Canton;

- a "three plus two" program leading to a B.S. in Chemistry or Physics from Cortland and a B.S. in Ceramic Engineering from N.Y. State College of Ceramics.

Despite the effectiveness and range of current coordinated programs, the great majority are bilateral arrangements. There is presently no University-wide procedure for extending programmatic coordination beyond a regional review of proposals to introduce programs.

Among the issues that at present cannot be adequately addressed are the following:

- inter-regional program coordination;
- undesirable program duplication;
- off-campus instruction;
- sharing equipment;
- facilitating the movement of students for brief periods to enrich the student's academic program with the appropriate resources of the entire University (e.g., Memorandum to Presidents, May 2, 1977, Vol. 77, No. 8, "SUNY Intercampus Doctoral Fellowships and Grants-in-Aid"); and
- research coordination.

To address these and related issues in a way that ensures the participation of campus academic officers, the following Academic Review and Coordinating Councils should be established to advise the Provost of the University about program quality and program coordination.

It is not intended that these Councils supplant any of the current campus or University-wide governance or consultative arrangements, specifically the regional organizations of Presidents. Routine matters will be brought to the Councils only for information. No deliberative Council session will be convened unless there is a substantial issue on which advice would be desirable.

THE SCOPE AND PROCEDURES OF THE COUNCILS

It is essential that the following points be explicit and understood as applicable to all of the Councils:

General

1. The Councils are composed of appointed academic administrative officers from a variety of University campuses, and their recommendations are advisory to the Provost.

2. Each Council should decide whether to invite an observer from the other councils.

Program Coordination

3. The charge to the Councils includes recommending new campus programs when an unmet need in the University is disclosed. It will be a major responsibility of each Council regularly to provide advice on future academic directions for the University and on new instructional methods to be tested.

4. Intercampus cooperation should be stressed, including recommendations for initiating new intercampus academic and research programs, as well as emphasizing program complementarity where appropriate.
5. All Councils should be informed of all relevant new program intentions and all relevant program deactivations.

6. When requested by the Provost or by one or more Presidents the Councils should consider intercampus conflict over the intention to create new programs.
   A. All campus program intentions should be brought before the appropriate council.
   B. When the Provost or Presidents request a recommendation relating to an intercampus controversy, all relevant documentation will be submitted to the appropriate Council.
   C. In making a recommendation about an intercampus conflict, each Council will refer to the differing missions of the campuses involved.
   D. The Provost will report the Council's recommendations, along with his own, to all involved Presidents.

7. The charge to the Councils includes the review of undesirable program duplication. Duplication is undesirable when there is inadequate demand to offer services at reasonable cost; this criterion will also include consideration of access, program quality, and the interrelationship of campus programs, including public service.

Program Reviews

8. The primary responsibility for the quality of programs is and should be carried by each campus.

9. All campus program reviews will be forwarded to the Office of the Provost.

10. The Councils may be convened by the Provost following review of internal or external program evaluations. A council will be convened when in the judgment of the Provost there is a substantial problem for which he requires consultation, when one or more Presidents request a Council's recommendation, or when the majority of Council members request a meeting.

11. Whenever feasible, all reviews should be coordinated with external evaluations, i.e., Middle States, professional associations, SED. Self-studies should always be concluded well in advance of formal evaluations so that problems disclosed by the campus may be addressed in a timely manner.

I. The Doctoral Review and Coordinating Council

This body is currently functioning extremely well, and should be used as an indication of how the other Councils could be organized and function. Some of the details of doctoral review, however, may not be applicable to other instructional
levels. This Council is presently composed of the Academic Vice President and senior officer responsible for graduate studies and research of the four University Centers as well as the Academic Vice President of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Membership should be extended to other institutions that are authorized to award the Ph.D. A separate Council may be required for professional doctorates.

The SUNY Doctoral Council provides an important mechanism for the coordination of programs with the objective of enhancing both quality and breadth. Through the principle of complementarity, human and physical resources can be coordinated to strengthen and develop programs on a University-wide basis with minimal replication of resources.

The procedures adopted by the Doctoral Council follow:

"The SUNY Doctoral Council consists of the Academic Vice Presidents and Graduate Deans of the four State University Centers and the Academic Vice President of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The Council meets periodically to advise the Provost of the University on issues relating to doctoral education in SUNY.

"The SUNY Council has concluded that one of its special responsibilities should be to advise the Provost of the University in internal evaluations of doctoral programs in SUNY. The conditions under which the Council will exercise this responsibility and the procedures it will use are outlined below. In assuming this responsibility the Council is mindful of the primary obligation which each campus has, and should continue to have, of maintaining the quality and integrity of its academic programs. The Council's purpose is emphatically not to diminish this obligation of each campus; its purpose instead is to share in the broader obligation which all of SUNY has of ensuring that only quality doctoral programs are offered throughout the system.

1. The SUNY Doctoral Council will commence a selective internal review of doctoral programs for the purpose of advising the Provost of the University. The SUNY Doctoral Council review will occur concurrently with the schedule of review adopted by the State Education Department Doctoral Project. The SUNY Doctoral Council review will be consistent with the maintenance and enhancement of campus responsibility for academic programs and with Memorandum to Presidents, Vol. 76, No. 27, dated November 26, 1976 on the elimination of academic programs.

2. The SUNY Doctoral Council will meet upon the call of the Provost to review a doctoral program before a SED evaluation, after the SED site visit, or after the SED rating committee report is available. The SUNY Doctoral Council will be asked to make recommendations on a particular doctoral program only if, in the Provost's judgment, a serious question has been raised about the quality of viability of a program.

3. After review of the program in question, the SUNY Doctoral Council will advise the Provost of a recommended campus action. The Provost will forward the Council's recommendation, along with his own recommendation to the President of the campus. The President will be asked to consider the Provost's recommendation and submit campus reactions to the Provost by a fixed date.
4. Campuses with programs which have been scheduled for a three-or four-year review by the State Education Department should submit annual reports on the progress of those programs to the Provost of the University. The SUNY Doctoral Council will also make interim recommendations to the Provost on the progress being made on each program which is subject to a three- or four-year review.

5. Any new doctoral program proposed will be brought to the attention of the Council after a Letter of Intent is received in the Office of the Provost. In a case where there arises controversy about such a proposal, the Council may appropriately express an opinion.

6. The Council will be notified as existing programs are deactivated or discontinued. The Council may express an opinion, particularly where such action involves a program that appears to be unique within the University.

7. In case deactivation of a program has occurred and a campus wishes to reactivate a program, the recommendation to reactivate will be submitted via the Provost to the SUNY Doctoral Council which, in turn, will inform the Provost of its recommendation. After review of the case, the Provost will take appropriate action.

II. The Masters-Level Review and Coordinating Council

The Masters-level Council should be kept informed of all new Masters-level program proposals and all programs to be closed. It should concern itself with a coordinated University-wide Masters-level academic program.

Among the issues to be addressed should be the enrollment decline in Masters programs in teacher education.

This Council should be kept informed of problems associated with program quality. This Council should consider whether some of the review procedures adopted by the Doctoral Review and Coordinating Council are appropriate to Masters-level programs.

III. The Undergraduate Review and Coordinating Council

After consultation with campus Presidents, the Provost will appoint the members of this Council to represent institutions within each campus type. This Council will be composed as follows: one community college and one College of Arts and Science from each coordinating area; one statutory and one specialized institution, 3 Ag. Techs., and 2 Centers. This results in a total of 15 institutions, 7 of which are 2-year institutions. Unlike the preceding Councils, the Undergraduate Council will be a new body.
In the Council's review of program quality, special attention should be paid to the relation of the program to the whole undergraduate experience, i.e., to minimum credits for graduation, the number and relevance of liberal arts courses in the total curriculum, number of credits in a single discipline, the number of credits earned in introductory courses, distribution requirements, or general education programs elected.

Additionally, this Council should stress the comparability, but not uniformity, of review procedures. To the extent feasible, evaluative criteria should be common. A draft report of the panel that reviewed the campus review procedures identified the following questions as appropriate for every program:

1. In what way does the program being reviewed fit with the overall mission of the campus?

2. Are resources adequate to make the program effective? If they are inadequate, what additional resources are necessary?

3. How effective is the program? Specifically, what are its demonstrated results for students? Is its curriculum adequately conceived and modified when necessary? Does it possess organizational characteristics which allow it to accomplish its purposes and does it possess an ongoing internal means for self-evaluation?

4. What are the future directions for the program and are they consistent with mission, resources and critique of current effectiveness?

This Council should pay particular attention to the articulation of programs from the lower to the upper division.

IV. Specialized Review and Coordinating Councils

As circumstances dictate, specialized Councils may be established in particular curricular areas, e.g., health sciences or teacher education.

I look forward to working with you in developing the councils into useful groups.

Loren Baritz

This Memorandum addressed to:
Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Presidents, Community Colleges
Deans, Statutory Colleges

Copies for information only sent to:
President Rose
Vice President Cook