State University of New York

Memorandum to Presidents

Date: March 23, 1981

From: Office of the Vice Chancellor for
      Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

Subject: Outcome Measures in Program Evaluation

In the 1980 State University Master Plan, Recommendation #5 makes the following commitment: "The University will increasingly rely upon outcome measures of excellence in addition to the traditional measures of input in monitoring the quality of its academic programs." It is therefore necessary for each campus to plan how it will fulfill the obligations of this recommendation, if they are not already being covered.

There are a variety of ways in which outcomes measures for specific academic programs can be conceptualized. Among these applying to students are the following: student personal and intellectual development, including such factors as analytical ability, maturity, moral values, tolerance of ambiguity, social responsibility and specific skills, etc.; progression toward advanced study, such as placement in upper division work or graduate and professional programs after leaving your institution; placement and advancement in employment situations, both immediately after graduation and over a longer period of time.

In addition to their impact upon students (a value added concept), outcomes measures could include evidences of original research and knowledge flowing out of programs and special contributions to the welfare of society in general in the form of public service. Obviously some of these outcomes can be more easily attributed to specific programs than others, and some may be identifiable only as general institutional influences rather than being specific to any program.

In preliminary discussions with University constituents, it is evident that many campuses have already begun and are using outcomes measures of various sorts. In addition, it seems desirable that no uniform standards or measures be imposed on a University-wide basis at this time. Rather, each campus should be left free to develop such measures as it can within its own resources and program configuration.
May I ask that you begin immediately to consider how you expect to respond to the implications of Master Plan Recommendation #5. A report should be sent to me by September 1, 1981 as to what plan you will attempt to follow, the ways in which you will apply outcome measures and the methods you will use to verify or evaluate results.

Should you have any questions on this matter, I will be pleased to discuss them with you, or you may take them up with Ken MacKenzie, (518) 473-1781, of my staff.

I will be looking forward to learning about your plans to fulfill this important University commitment.

James E. Perdue

cc: Chancellor Wharton
Dr. MacKenzie

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

Copies for information to:
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Vice Provost Spencer