Academic Priorities Work Group (APWG) Report #2
May 2010

Introduction
The Academic Priority Work Group is charged with the task of assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Missouri State’s academic endeavors, identifying strategic choices facing the University and the priorities that should govern decision-making in the future. The parameters for this review and all other work groups should be the following:

* Assume steady or slightly increased enrollment
* Assume at least a 10 percent reduction in state appropriation beginning in Fiscal Year 2012, with possible further reductions
* Assume legislative constraints on tuition will be maintained
* Recommend academic priorities at the curricular and program levels
* Recommend evaluative criteria to be used to assess existing and proposed programs
* Recommend a transparent process for any internal reallocation and reorganization to achieve these priorities
* Present initial report to Steering Committee by September 1, 2010, in a public forum that would permit sustained review, response, and follow up via Town Hall Meetings, email responses, etc.

Activities to Date
The APWG has adopted (and adapted) the outline of tasks identified by Robert C. Dickeson in his book: Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services (John Wiley and Sons, 2010).

I. REAFFIRMING AND REFINING MISSION
The APWG views the Missouri State University Mission as having two major components – (A) that which we share with other contemporary universities, and (B) the public affairs mission, which is uniquely ours.

   A. The Contemporary Mission of Higher Education
   
   Education, Community (Re)vitalization, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation
   
   Commentary: A New Paradigm for Economic Development (Rockefeller Institute, 2010)

   First, institutions and systems are advancing innovation — New technologies, new processes, new products, new Ideas— in their local and regional economies. This focus on innovation sees university faculty and leaders thinking creatively about how to leverage their strengths in knowledge creation to yield tangible economic benefits.

   Second, higher education institutions and systems are pursuing strategies to help employers prosper and grow. They do this by deploying their strengths in knowledge transfer — through worker training, management counseling, help for startups, and other initiatives.

   Third, higher education institutions are playing a more vigorous role in community revitalization. Many are a significant factor in the life of their home communities, and take that responsibility seriously.
Finally, higher education’s most fundamental contribution to economic development lies in its traditional role: creating an educated population. The new economy is making the traditional academic mission ever more important.

B. Reaffirming, Refining and Implementing the Public Affairs Mission
In the earliest years, there was a great reluctance to define public affairs – the feeling was that any description would limit the involvement and engagement of our faculty and students. We have come a long way since 1995, when the mission was first conferred. We are now moving from a concern about the articulation of our public affairs mission, to a focus on how best to implement the public affairs mission through various means, including outcomes based improvements to our curriculum and programs. We have developed initiatives in a variety of international and domestic policy efforts, and identified competencies that our graduates should possess. We now seek to distinguish ourselves from other universities, connect our efforts to national programs and projects in higher education (from AASCU, AACU, etc.) and clarify learning outcomes for our students. We also hope to move toward greater interdisciplinarity, campus wide engagement and collaboration with the community in all our efforts.

The Public Affairs Mission has both 1) knowledge and 2) competency requirements:

1) Public Affairs Content Knowledge reflects Public Policy Issues:
   A) Global Policy Issues (from AASCU’s Seven Revolutions Curricular Development Program of the American Democracy Project):
      1. Population – shifts in the nature of the human family, including overall population level, rate of demographic growth, distribution of growth, age distribution, level of urbanization, and the profound asymmetries implicit in many of these demographic trends;
      2. Strategic resource management – in the face of increasing population pressures and environmental sustainability limits, the challenge of meeting demand in food, water and energy;
      3. Technology innovation and diffusion – exploring which technologies will have the greatest influence on changing our lives, with a view to innovations in computation, robotics, biotech and nanotech, and a focus on convergence points between them;
      4. Information and knowledge creation and dissemination – the remarkable opportunities and challenges associated with the exponential rise in the movement of data, information, and knowledge across the planet;
      5. Economic integration – implications of the continuation of the massive cross-border movements of goods, services, labor, capital, and technology, and the volatility such integration engenders;
      6. Conflict – the tremendous new complexities associated with addressing the erosion of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, traditional nuclear and radiological threats, the onset of new threats involving bioterrorism, the rising specter of cyber-warfare and the challenge of post conflict reconstruction;
7. Governance – in government, the private sector, and civil society, or in the research and education fields, or capacity to organize ourselves to seize opportunities and mitigate risks in the longer run

B). Domestic Policy Issues (not exhaustive)
1. Health Care
2. Education
3. Economic
4. Immigration
5. Terrorism
6. Environmental Stewardship
7. Conflict Resolution

2) Public Affairs Competencies
Missouri State University graduates should be skilled at effective community engagement and ethical leadership, and possess cultural competence.

II. DEFINING WHAT CONSTITUTES A UNIT OF ANALYSIS FOR PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION AND ENUMERATING PROGRAMS: The unit of analysis is “any activity or collection of activities in student or academic affairs that consumes resources.” Every degree program option, certificate, track, etc. needs to be identified and listed, along with all research, education and service initiatives in Academic and Student Affairs.

III. SELECTING FROM POTENTIAL CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZATION
1. History, development and expectations of the program
2. External demand for the program
3. Internal Demand for the program
4. Quality of program inputs and processes
5. Quality of program outcomes
6. Size, scope, and productivity of the program
7. Revenue and other resources generated by the program
8. Costs and other expenses associated with the program
9. Impact, justification, and overall essentiality of the program
10. Opportunity analysis of the program

Desired Outcomes of a Prioritization of Academic Programs
While the APWG has been asked to address program prioritization as a means of reducing costs, the paramount concern among the participants is that we take advantage of this unique opportunity to improve the quality and focus of our efforts – enabling us to identify and invest in programs for the future. A prioritization of academic programs should achieve:
1. Continued excellence of programs
2. Further support of a learning community
3. Identification of funds for excellence and innovation
4. Ability to respond quickly and effectively to the learning needs of the community
5. Understanding of a clear, strategic sense of what we need to be as an institution
6. Development of a strategic balance
7. Reduction of budgetary dependence on year to year enrollment numbers
8. Enhanced sense of university community and the ongoing need for self examination
9. Enhanced community wide confidence that we are doing the right things and doing it well
10. More effective stewardship of the university
11. Enhanced sense of ownership in the institutions future by all campus constituencies.