UW Tacoma Academic Plan 2018-2023
Frequently Asked Questions and Lessons Learned

Why is there a strong focus on engineering, computers and STEM in the academic plan?
Faculty have proposed programs that are responsive to the needs of the community and the interests of students. The largest workforce gaps at the baccalaureate and graduate levels in Washington are in computer science, engineering, education, and the health occupations. UW Tacoma's academic plan is responsive to calls from the state's agency for higher education, the Washington State Achievement Council (WSAC), for more STEM degree offerings. Such programs may benefit from dedicated funding offered by the Washington Legislature for High-Demand Programs.

How were programs that are self-funded evaluated in the academic plan?
All programs are evaluated according to the criteria delineated in the academic planning policy and in relation to their campus level impact. Funding structure does not take precedence over other criteria in the academic planning process. The assessment that occurs during academic planning also considers the portfolio of campus offerings including linkages to other programs, market/community demand, and fit with the strategic plan in addition to resource impact. It is important to note that even if they are revenue neutral, self-funded programs place demands on campus infrastructure and services, and they use up the capacity of the faculty and staff.

What do the rankings of high, medium, and low mean?
These categories convey the relative priority of a program in terms of its immediate prospects for positive impact on students, the campus, and the community and its long-term sustainability. High priority programs are those most urgently needed to fill gaps in degree offerings, advance scholarship and student success, and/or support economic and community development. Medium priority programs offer relatively lower impacts and are relatively more resource intensive to generate the same level of impact. Low priority programs are those with promise but require substantial investments to come to fruition, are similar to existing offerings, or have relatively low demand by students and communities compared to other proposals. When program proposals enter the curriculum approval process, the categorizations provide reviewers information about the program relative to other proposals in the current academic plan. Prior to academic planning, curriculum review occurred without reviewers being aware of other programs in the pipeline, and reviewers were unable to consider how approval of one program would constrain opportunities to launch another program.

Lessons Learned

This is UW Tacoma's first academic plan. It is a living plan that is updated in response to new information and to changes in the environments and communities that influence our campus. The following lessons were learned from the planning process:

- The data gathering was clumsy the first quarter and the data were difficult for faculty to use.
- Program eliminations were not seriously considered by most during the review stage.
- The APCC must shoulder additional work during the process of the academic plan, and their review requires support and coordination across multiple units. In particular, budgets and market demand data were not standardized for the purpose of new program proposal review. As a result, the APCC did not have sufficient information to evaluate resource demands of proposed programs.
- The process was rushed at key points. Due to the constrained time frame, faculty did not have an opportunity to respond to comments from APCC review.
- Faculty that were already in process of developing new programs had to temporarily halt work during academic planning, and subsequently had to repeat steps in the curriculum approval process.
- The climate survey had not yet been conducted at the time of the initiation of this plan. A revision of this academic plan will be needed when results of the climate survey become available in early 2020.