

# Academic Program Review

## Information Sessions

October 28, 2019

October 29, 2019

November 1, 2019



# VCU





# Overview

I. Preface

{History}

II. Where have we been?

III. What is academic program review?

{Foundations}

IV. Why do we engage in it?

V. Where do we go from here?

{Strategy}

VI. How do we get there?


VII. Specifics

# “Why academic program review?” Think 3,2,1...

## 3 questions

 Where are we now?

 Where do we want to go?

 How will we get there?

## 2 actions

 Reflection

 Planning

## 1 outcome

 Program Excellence

*Using data to drive inquiry, analysis and direction forward.*

***Ask yourself:  
What does program excellence  
mean for my program(s)?***





# Preface: Program review is one of VCU's tools

- “As colleges and universities move into the next decade, we see the program review becoming far more **institutionalized** than at present. The program review, along with assessment and accreditation, will become part of the **routine** institutional processes resulting in **improved programs** and greater **effectiveness**” (Barak & Breier, 1990, p. 126).
- “The program review, when done successfully, can lead to **improved efficiency** and **effectiveness** of higher education. Coupled with an active strategic planning process, institutions can **map** their **futures** in ways that will ensure their continued **growth** and **development**. The challenge for higher education in the twenty-first century is to **respond** to its environment. The program review is **one of the tools** faculty and administrators can utilize in guaranteeing a **successful** response” (Barak & Breier, 1990, p. 127).

***Where have we been?***



# A brief look back

## Launch: 2012-2014\*

6-year review cycle

2 cycles, 56 programs (50 completed)

Post-APR debriefings with interim provost did not occur (personnel change)

Interim provost and deans formally paused APR

APR committee formed

## Lessons: 2015-2018\*

8-year review cycle

Self-study template

Integrated assessment quality review

Standardized data sheets plus training workshops

Modifications for accredited programs

## Reset: 2019

Office of the Provost fully engaged

Work of APR committee concluded

Key lessons from APR committee incorporated into reset plan

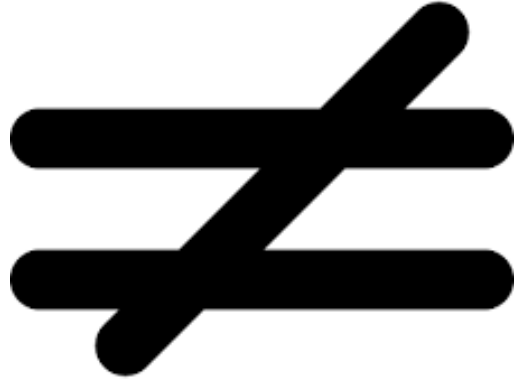
Relaunch set for Spring 2020

# ***What is academic program review?***





# Academic program review at VCU...



- program viability, audit or prioritization.
- degree program accreditation.
- annual learning outcomes assessment.

Note: Academic program review does *support* these critical functions.

# Academic program review at VCU...

- is **faculty-driven**, administration supported.
- is **action research**.
- is an opportunity for **rigorous, data-informed conversations**.
- is visionary and **transformative**.

***Why do we engage in  
academic program review?***




# Reminder: Think 3,2,1...

## 3 questions

 Where are we now?

 Where do we want to go?

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 Reflection

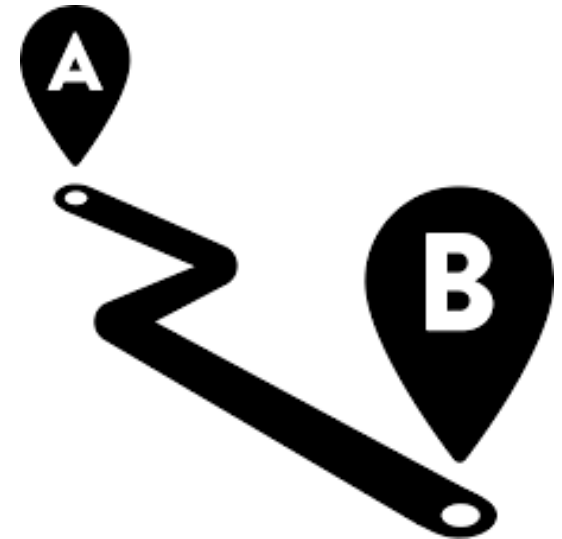
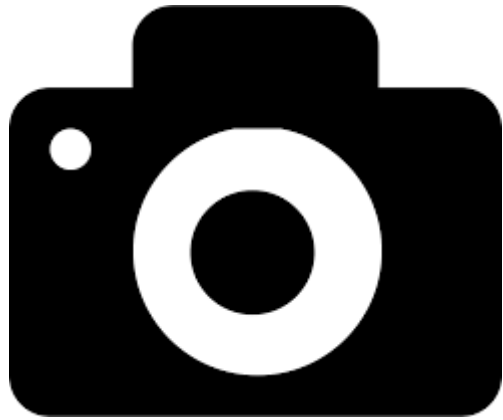
 Planning

## 1 outcome

 Program Excellence

*Using data to drive inquiry, analysis and direction forward.*

Academic program review allows us to see clearly where we are, envision the future and create a roadmap to where we want to be.



*Using data to drive inquiry, analysis and direction forward.*



# Reflection and planning\*

- 1) To promote **standards of excellence** in teaching, research/scholarship/creative expression, service and patient care.
- 2) To support **responsible stewardship** of resources within colleges/schools and departments.
- 3) To foster **continuous improvement** of academic programs as a reflection of the university's commitment to quality and effectiveness.



# Excellence is important to many parties!

- Students
- Faculty
- University and academic professionals and staff
- Alumni
- Parents
- Industry/Community Partners/ Employers

***Where do we go from here?***







# Picturing “success” (1 of 2)

GOALS	METRICS*
Make meaningful, strategic improvements (i.e., quality and effectiveness) to VCU’s academic programs.	Extent to which planned strategic improvements to academic programs are achieved by target dates in action plans.
Clearly define and achieve standards of excellence in key areas: teaching, research/scholarship/creative expression, service and patient care.	Extent to which standards of excellence for each area (e.g., teaching, research, service) are achieved by target dates in action plans.
Steward resources responsibly within colleges/schools and departments.	Extent to which goals are achieved within existing resources and/or through new efficiencies.  Extent to which units’ revenue generation plans are met.

\*Evidence for metrics will include quantitative and qualitative data.



# Picturing “success” (2 of 2)

GOALS	METRICS*
Increase measurable contributions by academic departments to VCU strategic plan.	Extent to which planned contributions are achieved by target dates in action plans.
Institutionalize academic program review at VCU.	# of departments that complete academic program review in assigned cohort.  Extent to which academic program review shaped positive, strategic conversations about academic departments and programs.

\*Evidence for metrics will include quantitative and qualitative data.

***How do we get there?***





# How do we get there?

## Get the right people on the bus

- There is a role for everyone in the unit
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - University and academic professionals
  - Students

## Have the right conversations

- Use data to support assertions
- For each category (teaching, research/scholarship/creative expression, service) ask:
  - Where are we now?
  - Where are we trying to go? [goals]
  - How do we get there? [actions/strategies]



# Be unified in approach.

Three-part model:\*

- Goal-based
- Responsive
- Good to great in the social sectors

\*This model informs key considerations for prioritization (quality, productivity, revenue, costs, resource allocation)



# Our approach is goal-based

Goal-based evaluation is “the process of identifying program goals, objectives, and standards of performance, using various tools to measure performance, and comparing the data collected against the identified objectives and standards to determine the degree of congruence or discrepancy” (Gardner, 1977, pp. 577-578).

Model organizer = goals and objectives.

Evaluation questions ask

- 1) To what extent is the program achieving its existing goals and objectives? (Where are we now?)
- 2) What are our new goals and objectives? (Where do we want to be?)



# Our approach is responsive

Our model also incorporates elements from the responsive approach to program review. The responsive approach comes from the qualitative research tradition of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Model organizer = unanticipated questions and concerns from stakeholders.

Evaluation questions ask

- 1) What are the activities and effects of the program?
- 2) What does the program look like from a variety of perspectives?

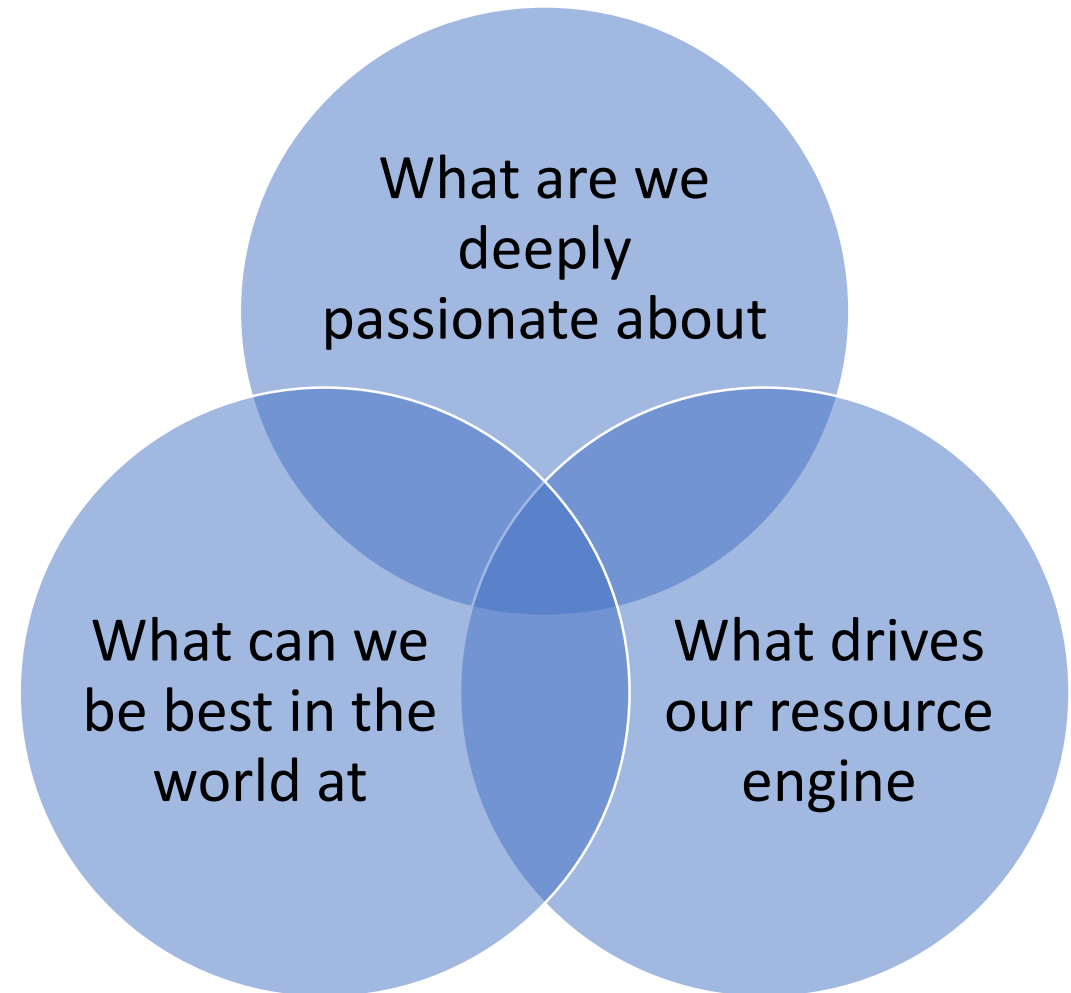
Key stakeholders with voices are faculty, UAP/staff and students.



# Our approach is “good to great” focused

## *Good to great continuum*

**Core question: How can we more effectively deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our resources?**






# Reminder: Think 3,2,1...

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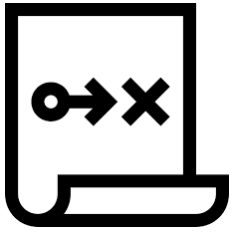
## 1 outcome

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***What are some specifics?***





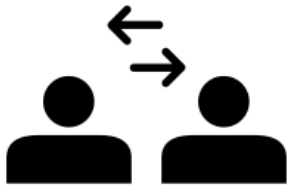
# Academic program review components

- 1. Self-study**
- 2. Peer review**
- 3. Action plan**



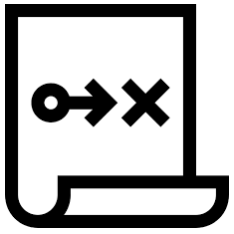
# Self-study specifics: Data sheets

- Self-study guiding questions template
- IRDS to provide standard data sheets, along with definitions and training for users. Data to include:
  - Students
  - Faculty and staff
  - Teaching
  - Budget and finance
  - Actual expenditures
- Caveat: Data are an entry point to a conversation; they are not the entire story. Data require interpretation in context.



# Peer review specifics

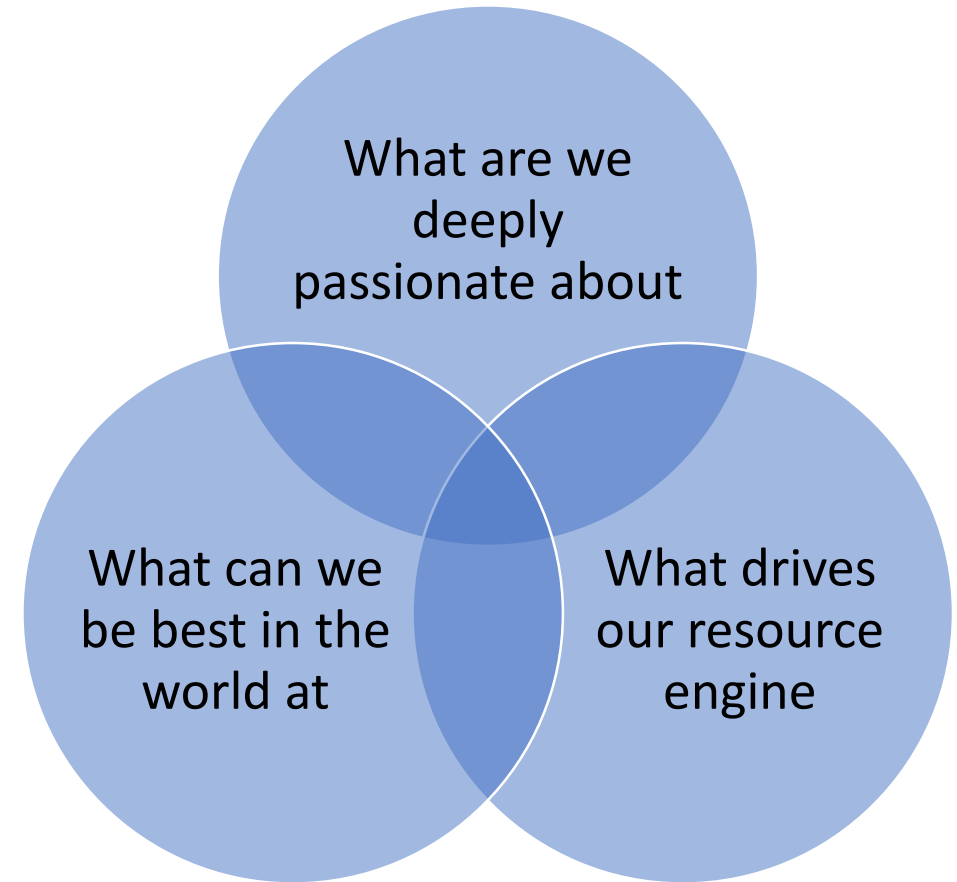
Internal peer review	External peer review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People are more likely to embrace what they help to create</li><li>• Engages VCU faculty beyond the assigned departments in each cohort</li><li>• Internal faculty are in a better position to evaluate and offer constructive feedback from a university perspective than external</li><li>• Internal is something different than the accredited programs go through, so will prevent redundancy</li><li>• Increased efficiency (reviewers are on-site; less time spent on logistics; greater flexibility)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good for VCU programs that do not have separate program accreditations so they have the benefit and experience of focused external input</li><li>• Potentially redundant for accredited programs</li><li>• Greater cost and lower efficiency</li></ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hybrid Solution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 2 internal peer reviewers for all departments</li><li>✓ Non-accredited programs include 1 external reviewer (for a total of three reviewers) to provide an outside perspective</li><li>✓ An external reviewer is not required for accredited programs, if separately required for program accreditation</li></ul>



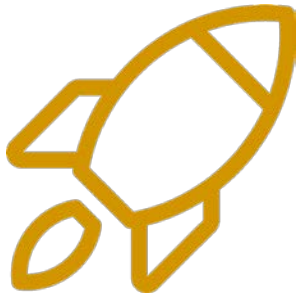
# Action plan specifics

## Contains:

- Narrative
- Goals
- Key tasks
- Metrics
- Resources
- Target dates
- Responsible faculty/staff by task



**Key reflection for action: How can we more effectively deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact, relative to our resources?**



# Timeline: Phase one

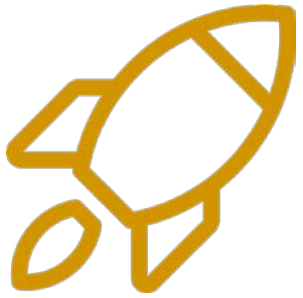
Re-launch &  
information  
sessions  
Oct/Nov. 2019

Cohort 1  
identified  
Spring 2020

Data sheets  
generated /  
training  
sessions occur  
Spring 2020

Cohort 1  
self-studies  
Fall 2020

Peer reviews &  
action plans  
Spring 2021



# Timeline: Phase two

Cohorts 2-8  
identified  
Spring 2020

Cohort 2  
training  
sessions  
Spring 2021

Cohort 2  
self-studies  
Fall 2021

Cohort 2  
peer reviews &  
action plans  
Spring 2022

Ongoing  
academic  
program review  
with remaining  
cohorts

Refine process



**VCU**




# Again: Think 3,2,1...

## 3 questions

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# Thank you!



**VCU**

# References

- Barak, R.J., & Breir, B.E. (1990). *Successful program review*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- Gardner, D.E. (1977). Five evaluation frameworks: Implications for decision making in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 8, 571-593.
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