

APRCA Committee Report to Faculty Senate – June 2022

Committee Charge

Faculty Senate created the Ad-hoc Committee on Academic Program Reduction and Curricular Adjustments in October 2020 with the following charge:

- Focus holistically on PSU's collective future
- Ensure faculty participation in meaningful, inclusive, and formative discussions of curricular adjustments related to budget reduction
- Recommend [principles and priorities](#) based on PSU's values and mission, with an emphasis on applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens, and share these with OAA to guide decision-making
- Plan and implement transparent communications, including but not limited to periodic town hall forums on budget information, regular campus-wide emails, and a website or Google Drive for material, including data on which decisions about reorganizing or eliminating programs are based
- Solicit input and feedback from faculty, including but not limited to implementing surveys and arranging other forums for gathering input and suggestions. Ensure input and involvement from Deans and Chairs/department heads. Facilitate communication with and incorporate input from students, staff, and other stakeholders
- Plan and implement meetings and interactions (preferably with professional mediation), including but not limited to meetings of Colleges/Schools
- Assist, if requested by OAA or AAUP, in contractually mandated retrenchment hearings arising from elimination of positions as per [Article 22](#) of the [PSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

In April 2021, Faculty Senate extended the charge of the committee to June 2022. In May 2022, Faculty Senate further extended the charge of the committee to June 2023.

Committee Membership

In 2021-2022, the committee had designees representing five key Constitutional committees, including Michele Gamburd (Steering), Mitch Cruzan (Budget), Peter Chaille (Undergraduate Curriculum Committee), Yangdong Pan (Graduate Council), and Joan Petit (Educational Policy Committee). The committee also included five members appointed by the Committee on Committees: Rachel Cunliffe, Jones Estes, Candyce Reynolds, Kellie Gallagher, and Michelle Swinehart (diversity advocate). In addition, four consultants were appointed by OAA: Sy Adler, Laura Hickman, Vanelda Hopes, and Amy Mulkerin. Michele Gamburd and Rachel Cunliffe co-facilitated the committee.

Committee report

The APRCA committee has submitted monthly reports throughout 2021-22. This document summarizes the committee's activities for the year, provides a report for the month of May 2022, and suggests priorities for 2022-23.

Yearly report

Accomplishments of the past year include communicating with OAA about the Program Review/ Reduction Process (PRRP), liaising with the Faculty Senate Budget Committee about fiscal issues, and reporting to Senate.

May report

In late April, the 18 units identified in Phase 2 of the PRRP process received letters from the Provost and the Deans of their colleges in reply to the careful and detailed narratives that were sent to OAA. Each letter contained a page of boilerplate text followed by several bullet points tailored to the unit. 2 units received additional funding, 11 received no additional funding, and 5 received instructions to craft a viable strategic plan by November 1, 2022, or else the university will “move forward with steps toward program reduction.” The five units that received instructions to craft Phase 3 plans are Applied Linguistics (CLAS), Conflict Resolution (CLAS), International and Global Studies (CUPA), Theater (COTA), and the Leadership in Sustainability Education track in Educational Policy and Leadership (COE).

Faculty Senate 5/2/2022

At the Faculty Senate on 5/2/2022, Provost Jeffords received a question regarding Phase 3 of the PRRP process regarding how having only five units develop strategic plans is a strategic way to address the larger goals of the university. The Provost replied,

I know that the question around the strategic decisions of the University has been something that was brought forward by the APRCA committee from the beginning of this process. How do we know that any of these conversations are contributing to an overall strategic vision of the university? And I totally understand the value of having that conversation. What I will say is that was not the framing within which we began this discussion. We started this discussion as part of an overall effort to get to a place where our [extended pause] where the institution could be in a healthier budget situation and we would not have to constantly be having conversations about cutting budgets, which was a message that I heard loud and clear since the time I got here. And so I would say, and I know this doesn't feel like a very good response to those who raise this point, that we entered into this conversation in an effort to focus on overall sustainable financial conversations. We did not have a context or a framing in which, as a broad university, we were able to discuss what are the most strategic components of the university and how do we want to emphasize those. That's a conversation I think lots of folks would welcome. I just don't think that this was the framing within which that conversation took place, but I do acknowledge that this is a question that has come up from the APRCA committee since the beginning of this process. [Video recording time stamp: 1:32:49 – 1:34:58. Link: https://media.pdx.edu/media/t/1_tr4a7nmy]

In conversations with the APRCA committee and Budget Committee meetings, the administration has clarified that reductions through PRRP is one of several strategies to close the \$7 million gap between expenditures and revenue that OAA needs to bridge in the next two years. Other strategies include faculty uptake on the retirement transition option, meeting enrollment targets, and potential efficiencies realized by acting on the findings from the Huron Report on support services.

APRCA committee members would appreciate clear estimates from OAA and FADM regarding how many faculty and staff positions will be lost in order to close the budget gap. We understand the many sources of uncertainty in the budget process. At the same time, over a third of our academic units (18 of 51) have come under Phase 2 scrutiny and nearly a tenth (5 of 51) remain in jeopardy. In the interests of transparency, the faculty request additional budget information on this important topic.

APRCA has urged in the past and will continue to urge that strategic planning and whole-university conversations be part of the program review process. Instead of trimming around the edges and carrying on as usual elsewhere, it would benefit PSU more to engage the entire campus in a conversation about strategies and goals so that we come out of the budget reduction process well situated to meet the challenges of the next five years.

APRCA meeting with the 5 units on 5/5/2022

At its meeting on 5/5/2022, the APRCA committee met with the chairs and interested faculty from the 5 units that have been asked to write Phase 3 Plans for Nov 1st. (This deadline has since been extended into December.) Recognizing that they had not yet had a chance to meet with their Deans, the APRCA committee nevertheless felt it was important to offer support and help plan a way forward.

Several themes emerged from the discussion. The first issue revolves around the lack of clarity about goals and criteria for the PRRP process. The five units do not understand how their Phase 2 narratives were evaluated, and without receiving clearly articulated goals and targets, they are unsure of how to write a viable Phase 3 plan. The chairs articulated their wish for greater transparency around a series of questions: a) What evaluation was applied to the quantitative driver metrics to determine why the 18 units were selected to write Phase 2 narratives? b) What criteria were used to evaluate the qualitative data from the Phase 2 narratives to select units to write Phase 3 plans? c) What are the goals of the Phase 3 plans and by what criteria will they be evaluated? The APRCA committee supports the units in pointing out the lack of clarity around goals and criteria. Specificity around strategies and goals will facilitate the effective writing of “viable” Phase 3 plans.

A second theme that emerged from the conversation involves the mistrust and exhaustion that the 5 units are experiencing. They have expended and will continue to expend a great deal of energy on writing narratives and plans. In the absence of clear criteria for the success or failure of the 18 units’ narratives, the selection of the five units to write Phase 3 plans appears arbitrary or predetermined, and is thus traumatizing and cruel. The current situation suggests that the chairs have failed to save their own jobs and that of their colleagues. This discourse shifts the blame and shame to the units. In the 13 other units targeted to write narratives, faculty do now know what ‘not being on the list of 5’ means and fear that their jobs may still be in jeopardy. The prolonged and unclear process damages hope, drains self-esteem, and diminishes creativity.

A third theme that arose in conversation with the 5 units relates to the need for engaging the entire campus in strategic thinking about the future of the university. At the moment, only members of the 5 units are tasked with creative planning – which should be part of a campus-wide strategic effort. If cross-unit collaboration is a goal, can other programs trust that reaching out to the 5 targeted units will not drag them down? The current process encourages isolation and the siloing of programs. In addition, what scale of savings can result from collaboration? It would be helpful to have the administration articulate how they see the collaboration helping OAA reduce the gap between revenue and expenditures.

APRCA meeting with the Provost on 5/23/2022

On Monday, May 23rd, the APRCA committee hosted the Provost at our last meeting of the academic year. The Provost provided an update on the PRR process. Several key points emerged from the conversation.

Most significantly, the Provost made clear that the goal of the plan that each of the 5 units is asked to write will be to show how the unit can continue to meet their goals and offer their programs viably with their current staffing, resources, and budget. The plan should show how the unit can sustain their programs within the current budget or alter their programs to fit the current budget. The APRCA committee members felt that what we heard from the Provost was significantly less threatening than what we had understood from the letters the units received in response to the Phase 2 narratives.

Recognizing that units have asked for additional clarity, goals, and criteria, the Provost said that she and the Deans will provide additional communication, in the form of a letter, clear instructions for the plan, and greater feedback for the units. (Letters went out on 5/27; see below.)

The Provost said that she will extend the Phase 3 Plan deadline from November 1 to December 1. In addition, in order to keep the workload manageable, she will limit the length to 10 pages. She will provide help with

accessing university data if plan-writers want it, and she will make it simple for people to access funding of \$25,000 per unit to support writing the report, both for the units and for other units that the 5 units might want to be in conversation with over the summer.

The Provost also emphasized that the Phase 3 plan was not, in her words, a "charade" and that no decisions have been made. She envisions a serious dialog about how the units will move forward with 'constrained resources.'

5 units' letter to APRCA on 5/27/2022

On Friday, May 27, the Departments of Applied Linguistics (CLAS), Conflict Resolution (CLAS), International and Global Studies (CUPA), Theater (COTA), and the Leadership in Sustainability Education track in Educational Policy and Leadership (COE) sent a letter to the APRCA committee, with copies to Senate Steering, the Board of Trustees, PSU-AAUP, Provost Jeffords, President Percy, and the chairs of the 5 units.

In the letter, appended in full to this report, the units address "fundamental issues that undermine our confidence in the integrity of [the Program Review and Reduction] process as it has been implemented." They emphasize, "The issues that we find most concerning relate to the lack of transparency, due process, and shared governance in the implementation of the PRRP. Without substantive action by OAA to address these concerns, the process is at odds with the Guiding Principles set forth by APRCA. In light of this, we ask for the Committee's support in stopping the PRRP."

On the topic of transparency, the letter points out the lack of clarity on how the driver and value metrics crafted by the Provost's Program Reduction Working Group in Phase 1 of the process were used to select 18 units to write Phase 2 narratives, as well as lack of guidance and criteria for how the Phase 2 narratives would be evaluated. Similarly, Phase 3 plans need to be 'viable,' but not criteria have been provided for 'viability.'

On the topic of due process, the letter indicates the lack of engagement, dialog, and feedback on the Phase 2 narratives and the mismatch between the detailed documents provided by the units and the form letter response provided by OAA and the Deans. Without clear criteria or explanation of the analysis used, the narratives and plans seem like "glorified busywork." The 5 units question whether OAA is engaging in good faith.

On the topic of shared governance, the letter points out that the lack of transparency and stake-holder consultation undermines the [APRCA Guiding Principles and Priorities](#) and faculty participation in the PRRP, effectively silencing faculty voices. They ask that the PRR process be stopped for these reasons. The letter further calls for greater budget clarity, if budget is indeed the sole driving force behind the Phase 3 process for these five small units.

Provost's letters to the 5 units on 5/27/2022

On Friday, May 27, the Provost and Deans sent letters to the 5 units that mirror what the Provost discussed with APRCA on Monday, May 23.

The letters reiterate PSU's need to reduce budgets across all of its areas of operation, including in OAA. The letters emphasize that no decisions have yet been made about program reduction or elimination. OAA offers \$25,000 per unit of summer money for the unit and/or other adjacent units they want to consult with. In addition, Vice Provost Amy Mulkerin will work with the Colleges' Financial Officers to provide detailed budget material to the units. In a plan (limited to 10 pages plus appendices and due on December 1), each unit is asked to answer one key question: Can the unit fulfill its goals while making do with its current budget? Units are asked to address trends in current and future enrollments, as well as potential reorganization.

Avenues to pursue next year

Moving forward in the upcoming academic year, APRCA envisions two avenues to pursue. One is to push for greater, campus-wide participation in a faculty-led conversation about curriculum rather than solely participating in an administrative-led conversation about budget. A second avenue involves pushing for greater financial transparency, more consultation with stakeholders, and clearer communication.

From: The Departments of Applied Linguistics (CLAS), Conflict Resolution (CLAS), International and Global Studies (CUPA), Theater (COTA), and the Leadership in Sustainability Education track in Educational Policy and Leadership (COE)

To: The Academic Program Reduction and Curricular Adjustments (APRCA) Committee
CC: The Faculty Senate Steering Committee, Board of Trustees, AAUP, Provost Jeffords, and President Percy, Chairs of 5 departments targeted for Phase III

To the APRCA Committee:

We write to you today as members of the five departments that have been asked to engage in Phase III of the Program Review and Reduction Process (PRRP). We are writing to draw your attention to fundamental issues that undermine our confidence in the integrity of this process as it has been implemented. The issues that we find most concerning relate to the lack of transparency, due process, and shared governance in the implementation of the PRRP. As it stands, the process is at odds with the Guiding Principles set forth by APRCA, and we ask for the Committee's support in stopping the PRRP.

Background: The APRCA Committee and Shared Governance in the PRRP

In communications from OAA, the Provost has foregrounded the APRCA Committee's role in the PRRP. This emphasis suggests an acknowledgement of the PRRP as a fundamentally curricular process, and thus subject to review by the Faculty. APRCA's members include representatives from five main Faculty Senate committees: the Steering Committee, the Budget Committee, the Education Policy Committee, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Council. The APRCA Committee thus plays an important role in the exercise of the powers held by the Faculty Senate under its Constitution, specifically the Faculty's "power to act upon matters of educational policy, to enact such rules and regulations as it may deem desirable to promote or enforce such policies, and to decide upon curricula and new courses of study. *This power shall include, but not be confined to, action upon the establishment, abolition, or major alteration of the structure or educational function of departments or of programs which include more than one department or instructional unit of the University*" ([Constitution of the Portland State University Faculty](#), Article III, Section 1. Faculty Powers, emphasis added). The part of the Committee's specific charge that is most relevant to the issues addressed in this letter is their role in "ensur[ing] faculty participation in meaningful, inclusive, and formative discussions of curricular adjustments related to budget reduction" ([APRCA Committee Charge](#)).

We have based the discussion that follows on [the Guiding Principles](#) set forth by the Committee in order to fulfill this charge. We will be grounding our discussion of transparency in the seventh guiding principle and our discussion of due process in the first and fifth guiding principles. Other principles are referred to below as relevant to the discussion.

Transparency

Our first concern is transparency. Transparency, as we understand it¹, refers to the responsibility on the part of those who are entrusted with making decisions that shape the future of the university to make the goals and criteria for those decisions clear and available to the community. At the beginning of Phase I of the PRRP, the initial [Driver and Value metrics](#) developed by the Program Reduction Working Group (PRWG) were made available to the community, thereby fulfilling the requirement of transparency at this stage of the process.

This level of transparency was not maintained in the application of these metrics to departments during the transition into the Phase II narratives. When 18 departments across campus were asked to provide Phase II narratives, only the quantitative Driver metrics, which relate primarily to the size of the program and the number of majors², were provided as justification. The departments received [a template](#) that indicated that the narratives would allow us to provide context for the Driver metrics in addition to a chance to incorporate the kinds of qualitative data required by APRCA's fourth guiding principle and to address topics relevant to the Value metrics. Beyond the template and a cover letter indicating which Driver metrics were areas of concern for the department, there were no verbal or published guidelines given for how the Phase II narratives would be evaluated, despite repeated requests from the departments for such guidance. Given that the Phase II narratives were the aspect of the PRRP that departments ostensibly had the most control over, the lack of guidance on how we would be evaluated left us to guess what aspects of our programs to emphasize and what kinds of strategic plans to suggest. This situation has become even more serious with the Phase III narratives, in which we are asked to demonstrate that we have a "viable" department or we may be subject to elimination, but there are no criteria for what constitutes viability.

Due Process

The lack of transparency in the criteria for the evaluation of the Phase II and Phase III narratives appears to stem from more fundamental issues of due process. Due process requires that decision makers consult with and provide meaningful feedback to affected parties and allow them to respond before a final outcome is decided. When the PRRP entered Phase II, the 18 departments were informed that there were three potential outcomes for their Phase II narratives: targeted investments, program redesign, or targeted reductions. We were informed that these outcomes would be based on an evaluation of the evidence that we provided in the Phase II narratives together with the information from the quantitative Driver metrics from the dashboards. We invested significant time and energy into creating narratives that addressed the areas outlined in the OAA template, and we assumed that the process would move forward in good faith.

¹ The update from Provost Jeffords in the [monthly report of the APRCA Committee from the May 2, 2022 Faculty Senate Meeting](#) suggests that the Provost has a different understanding of this term.

² As several of us noted at the time, these Driver metrics put smaller departments at a disadvantage. We also note that the majority of the Driver metrics were based on AY 2019-2020 and AY 2020-2021, the two years most directly impacted by the pandemic.

The Provost's response to these narratives suggested otherwise. Rather than engaging with any of the additional context, qualitative data, or plans that we had provided in response to this request, the Provost sent each department a form letter with a brief set of minimally customized bullet points that suggested, at best, a brief skim of the narratives, and at worst, not having read them at all. The impression that this gave was that the request for the Phase II narratives was intended to provide cover for decisions that had already been made. If this is the case, the Phase II narratives were little more than glorified busywork that wasted time and resources in 18 departments across campus, all while exacerbating existing morale issues. This is a far cry from the meaningful engagement and substantive feedback prior to decision making that are required by the first and fifth APRCA principles, which ensure due process in the PRRP.

Shared Governance

The issues of transparency and due process outlined above all point to a far more significant concern: a lack of shared governance. Shared governance requires that the Faculty have meaningful representation in making decisions that affect the future of the university. The APRCA Committee is the only representative of the Faculty in the PRRP. If the principles that the APRCA Committee has set forth to guide this process are not being meaningfully implemented, their role is symbolic rather than substantive. While OAA continuously describes the APRCA principles as "so important" in their official communications, the failure to follow these principles in practice means that the only faculty voice in this process has effectively been silenced. Moreover, if the Driver metrics developed by the Program Reduction Working Group (PRWG), a committee appointed by the Provost with nine administrators (mostly financial officers) and two program directors, are in fact the only basis for the selection of departments to be reduced or eliminated, as the due process issues outlined above suggest, OAA has effectively created a workaround to avoid having to include teaching and research faculty in the decision making process.

Conclusion: Call to Action

We call on the APRCA Committee to use their authority to stop the PRRP. If the PRRP is indeed a curricular matter, then the APRCA Committee's charge to "ensure faculty participation in meaningful, inclusive, and formative discussions of curricular adjustments related to budget reduction" on behalf of Faculty Senate must be upheld. If the PRRP is instead a budgetary matter, we call for your support in pressing the Provost's office to demonstrate that this is in fact the case by providing clear answers on the budget costs and projected budget savings for both the overall PRRP and the reorganization or elimination of five smaller departments.

Signed:

Applied Linguistics (CLAS)
Conflict Resolution (CLAS)

International and Global Studies (CUPA)

Theater (COTA)

The Leadership in Sustainability Education track in Educational Policy and Leadership (COE)