

Contact: Rachel Boon

REPORT ON ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Action Requested: Receive the report on Academic Program Review.

Background

Board Policy 3.6 requires review of all academic programs on a seven-year cycle. The Office of the Provost at each institution leads this process and annually reports enrollment, completions, placement and planned program changes to the Board office for each reviewed program. Based upon these reviews and any other information available, the Board office can periodically select programs for on-site audits to assess the need for future Board reviews or actions.

Program Review Process

At the University of Iowa, the University of Northern Iowa, and Iowa State University, departmental or program reviews occur at a minimum of every seven years. Departmental or program reviews consist of a self-study and an external review. The external review committee of faculty from peer or aspirational institutions will meet with faculty, staff, students and administrators that can provide additional context for the team. The external team provides a report of observations and recommendations for program improvement. At UNI, departments prepare an action plan in response to the self-study and external report. For all Regent Universities, after consultation with Provost, the dean prepares a final letter summarizing findings of the review and setting out recommendations and required actions for the department. The chair, faculty in the department/program, and the Provost receive the final letter. In the spirit of continuous improvement, ISU also requires programs to submit a brief status report to the Office of the Provost at the mid-point of the seven-year review cycle. Programs accredited by external bodies can request that the accreditation reviews serve the role of the program review process. In those cases, the accrediting agency conducts the external review.

2019-20 Program Reviews

Delays in some program reviews occurred during spring 2020 due to the closing of in-person activities at all three universities. This included both programs that had to postpone external site visits and programs that had their self-study process interrupted as faculty shifted their focus to developing emergency online instruction. Recognizing those challenges, the Board granted campuses discretion to defer evaluations for a year to complete reviews and develop new procedures necessary during COVID-19 conditions.

University of Northern Iowa resumed program reviews that had completed the self-study phase by developing processes for virtual site visits. This was necessary both for general safety, and to accommodate external reviewers who are uncomfortable with face-to-face visits. Programs that had not finished their self-study by March of 2020 were deferred one year to give time for faculty to resume their work. To prevent overwhelming the process, UNI shifted all future program reviews by one year to maintain the relative sequence of program reviews across campus.

Iowa State University completed a number of program reviews. However, a small number of program reviews were rescheduled due to COVID as follows: Horticulture (Spring 2021), Agriculture education and studies (Spring 2021), Veterinary Pathology (Spring 2021), and Veterinary microbiology and Preventive medicine (Fall 2021).

At the University of Iowa, some program reviews at various stages of the academic program review process were delayed, starting in the spring 2020 semester, due to the closing of in-person activities. Site visits were delayed and faculty shifted their focus on developing immediate online instruction. The University of Iowa resumed some academic program reviews that had completed the self-study phase by developing processes for virtual site visits, both for general safety, and to accommodate external reviewers who are uncomfortable with face-to-face visits. Programs that had not finished their self-study by March of 2020 were allowed to defer one year to give time for faculty to resume their work. We also provided one-year deferrals to several additional programs which were unable to complete reviews this year due to ongoing challenges with the pandemic.

The table below lists program reviews conducted at each Regent university in academic year 2019-20. Except where noted, reviews included all undergraduate and graduate degrees in the program.

Iowa State University	University of Iowa	University of Northern Iowa
Chemical and Biological Engineering Chemistry Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering Computer Science Geological and Atmospheric Sciences Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication Philosophy and Religious Studies Psychology Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal Medicine	Applied Mathematical and Computational Sciences American Sign Language Anthropology Cinematic Arts Earth and Environmental Sciences English as a Second Language Sociology and Criminology Master's in Medical Education	Biology Earth Science Environmental Science Leisure, Youth and Human Services (MA) Physics

Key Findings and Improvements at Iowa State University

- Since its last review, the Chemical and Biological Engineering doctoral programs successfully increased enrollment by 30%. The hope is to continue this growth over the next several years.
- Geological and Atmospheric Sciences decreased since the last review, but have now stabilized. This aligns with other programs nationally and with the job market in the mining and oil industries.
- All Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication bachelor's level programs have a required internship. Feedback and assessment data from students and employers has led to some curriculum additions of specific digital skills and one-credit short courses in podcasting, virtual reality and influence marketing.
- Undergraduate enrollment in Computer Science has increased by 50% in the past five years. The department is now focusing on retention and diversity efforts through smaller class sizes and modernizing curriculum.
- The Veterinary programs is exploring new funding streams for clinical, faculty, research and programmatic needs.

Key Findings and Improvements at the University of Iowa

- Student feedback is leading to program changes in Applied Math and Computational Sciences to ensure more applied coursework in the first year.
- Enrollment in the American Sign Language minor has doubled since the last review. The program hopes to add faculty and create a sign language interpreter program and a major in Deaf Studies.
- Sociology and Criminology undergraduate enrollment has doubled since adding a major in criminology. Placement rates for the department are consistently 95% or higher.
- The English as a Second Language program is making structural changes to staff and faculty roles to create a new course and potentially develop a bridge program to assist new students in matriculating.

Key Findings and Improvements at the University of Northern Iowa

- The undergraduate Biology program is highly successful at placing students in graduate programs (50% of all graduates enroll within 6 months), particularly in healthcare fields. The department is contemplating ways to better emphasize and build on this success. Both the undergraduate and graduate programs would like to expand their capacity with high-powered computing necessary for genetics research and teaching needs.
- Review of the Master of Arts in Leisure, Youth and Human Services revealed that loss of graduate assistant funding was negatively impacting enrollment. As a result, they closed the program and merged it with the Master of Arts in Health Education to form the new Master of Arts in Community Health and Recreation.
- Environmental Science was reviewed for the first time since the Board approved it. It has met all goals set when proposed and has strong enrollment and 100% placement of the first three cohorts of completers.