Appendix IIIa. Self-Study Guidelines for Academic Support Units

The following guidelines are designed to assist academic support units as they conduct the self-study and report on the results. The purpose of developing a set of guidelines is to insure a reasonable level of institutional consistency and yet allow for flexibility in the self-study process. While the self-study is intended to focus on a small number of strategic issues, it also provides an opportunity for the unit to examine its purpose within the context of university priorities, present an analysis of its programs of study, identify changes within its field or discipline and make recommendations for improvement. The format provided in these guidelines can be used for the self-study report or a different format can be used by mutual agreement between the unit head and the Provost. It is anticipated that the self-study report is no more than 25-30 pages excluding the data in the appendixes.

I. Executive Summary

Please include an executive summary that is 3-5 pages in length. Identify the strategic focus of the self-study, key points of the unit's analysis of the strategic issues, and a set of recommendations. Describe the process used, constituencies involved, and proposed action steps for program and process improvement, especially any opportunities for innovation and distinctiveness.

II. Results of Previous Reviews

Please include a brief description of the results of previous reviews (internal or external) and the resolution of any outstanding issues from the reviews. Provide any necessary documentation including the action plan from the previous review, if available.

III. Overview of the Unit and Programs

This section is intended to present information about the unit that will help the reviewers to position the unit within the university and among its peers outside the university. Some of the data is available in the data repository or, if necessary, may be obtained from Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Provost's office or the Office of Finance. The following suggested data items could be included in the self-study based on relevance to the strategic issues and should be included in an appendix.

1. Strategic Priorities, Goals and Activities

Brief description of the strategic priorities of the unit, its purpose, alignment with university mission, distinctions and distinctiveness, anticipated changes

a. Unit mission, purpose, strategic priorities, and goals
b. Support of and alignment with university mission and strategic priorities

c. Primary service or support activity
d. Unit accomplishments and distinctiveness among peers and aspirational institutions, e.g., unit and individual awards and recognition, areas of excellence and distinction, external benchmarks, comparison with comparable units at peer or aspirational universities
e. Current or anticipated external or internal changes that may impact the unit

2.   Service to Constituencies

How well the unit serves its constituencies, meets the needs of the university community, and offers opportunities for development to its employees

a. Major internal and external constituencies of the unit, that is, the groups that it serves
b. Cross-functional relationships, how the unit partners with other units across the university
c. Community engagement, how the unit serves the local, national and global communities
d. Customer service benchmarks and standards for the unit's area or field
e. Benchmark data such as level of staffing and support needed to serve constituencies
f. Surveys and trend data that document constituency satisfaction compared to goals
g. Opportunities for employee development and advancement

3.   Performance and Productivity
Assessment of the unit's effective and efficient use of resources, level of performance over time and in comparison to peers, examples of process improvement. Review of the number and kind of positions it has and any gaps in position categories, that is, areas where it needs distinctive expertise to serve its constituents

a. Organization chart
b. Position review
c. Key performance metrics
d. Examples of process improvements, resource reallocation, and investment in innovation
e. Performance and productivity challenges and opportunities

4.   Infrastructure and Financial Profile
Issues related to the work environment, infrastructure such as technology, space for personnel and equipment and special facilities for services and activities. Financial profile of the unit

a. Unit financial profile (5 years)
b. Financial and infrastructure challenges and opportunities
c. Review of facilities, space, equipment, technology, and learning environment

IV.   Identification and Analysis of Strategic Issues

Please discuss the strategic issues for the unit, providing background information as necessary and referring to data in the previous section as needed. These issues are typically established through an assessment of the unit's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities and an analysis of these should be included in this section. Strategic issues might be motivated by internal or external trends or changes. These might include opportunities to advance university goals or strategic priorities, build an area of excellence or distinction, improve customer metrics, partner with another unit to create efficiencies, invest in technology to improve service or productivity, or respond to a changing workplace environment. Please identify factors that may be causing the unit to face new challenges or opportunities in your discussion.

V.   Recommendations

Please provide specific recommendations and steps that could be taken to address the strategic issues for the unit. Please include scenarios that resolve the issues with and without new resources. In the current environment, innovative and efficient use of existing resources typically provides the most feasible path forward. These recommendations will be shared with the internal and external review teams and will be used to create a proposed set of action steps.