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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
The Ohio State University has been a center for innovation and achievement since its establishment in 1870. On September 17, 1873, classes began with just 24 students attending.

Nearly 150 years later, Ohio State is a renowned public research university and the leading comprehensive teaching and research institution in the state of Ohio. With more than 15 colleges and more than 200 majors, Ohio State offers its 66,000 students a tremendous breadth and depth of opportunity in liberal arts, sciences and professions.

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
The Office of Student Life comprises more than 40 departments, all dedicated to creating the extraordinary student experience for every Ohio State Buckeye. A foundational understanding that every student has a unique background and set of needs informs every program and service offered by Student Life departments.

Creating the Extraordinary Student Experience
The Office of Student Life supports students on their paths to success by helping them live healthy, fulfilling lives throughout their time at Ohio State, in and outside the classroom. Student Life provides many of the programs and services that influence the daily lives of Buckeyes, including dining, housing, health and wellness, diversity and inclusivity, counseling and many more.

Student Life departments and the programs within them foster student learning and development, enhance the educational experience and prepare students for citizenship in a diverse global society.

More about the Office of Student Life and its departments is online at studentlife.osu.edu.

Student Life Functions and Strategic Plan
The Office of Student Life’s core functions are to enhance student success; foster wellness; promote diversity and inclusivity; provide supportive environments; offer opportunities for involvement; and advocate for the Ohio State student in and outside the classroom.

Student Life’s commitment to student success and development at Ohio State is reflected in the office’s strategic initiatives. The Office of Student Life’s most up-to-date Strategic Plan is online at studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/sl-strategic-plan.pdf.
INTRODUCTION TO THE EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

In 2004, The Ohio State University instituted a systematic program review process designed to assess the overall organizational effectiveness of all academic support units in the university. Systematic program reviews are an important source of input regarding the strengths and limitations of units and serve as a constructive base for future improvements. Reviews are also a catalyst for units to seek and implement change. These reviews cumulatively inform university-wide priority setting. They are an essential means of communication – within a department and with the Senior Vice President for Student Life. Finally, program reviews are an important mechanism for accountability within the Office of Student Life.

This guide is supplemental to the information provided in the Student Life Program Review Guidelines Manual and contains information specific to the External Review Panel’s role and responsibilities in the program review process. In addition to these written guidelines, D’Arcy Oaks (Student Life Program Review Administrator) is available to answer any questions about the process by email at oaks.9@osu.edu.

The External Review Panel has access to program review documents through BuckeyeBox, a secure and user-friendly cloud-based service. General information about the Student Life program review process is online at studentlife.osu.edu/programreview.

The review process includes a self-study by the unit being reviewed; a comprehensive review by an internal university committee of Ohio State faculty, staff, students and, where appropriate, community members; and a two or three day site visit by field experts from outside the university. The External Review Panel will write a report, to be incorporated into a larger final report that will be presented to the Senior Vice President and unit leadership for action. The resulting action plan will be forwarded to the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) for comment. The Senior Vice President for Student Life will approve the action plan.

SELECTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

The external reviewers are selected from a list of nominations of subject matter experts from across the country.

ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL

One of the primary strengths of the program review process is the involvement of external reviewers who have a wealth of knowledge about the particular field at issue. The external reviewers evaluate the unit in its national context and provide insight and feedback on issues and trends particular to the unit’s field. In contrast, one of the roles of the Internal Unit Review Panel (members of which cannot be members of the unit under review) is to filter the external reviewers’ expertise through the lens of the peculiarities and uniqueness of the Ohio State environment.
The Internal Unit Review Panel views the external reviewers’ report as one factor in their final report, along with the numerous interviews, the self-study report and other data. The Internal Unit Review Panel is urged to use the external reviewers to answer questions and address issues it is not qualified to answer (e.g., how do unit operations compare to other operations at similar institutions? How are similar institutions providing efficient and effective unit operations?). The Internal Unit Review Panel is strongly encouraged to discuss these questions and issues with the external reviewers during their campus visit.

Because of their expertise in the specific field, members of the unit under study may view the external reviewers with more credibility than the Internal Unit Review Panel and may raise different issues with the external reviewers than with the Internal Unit Review Panel.

Thus, the external reviewers should view the list of issues and questions provided by the Internal Unit Review Panel as a guide – members of the unit may raise different, and equally or more important, issues during their meetings.

THE EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS
The Internal Unit Review Panel and Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) are available to consult with external reviewers on any issue that might arise during the course of the review and to provide assistance or additional information whenever needed.

Background Materials
In preparation for the campus visit, the external reviewers are provided with:

- campus information
- the unit’s self-study report
- materials outlining the internal review panel’s preliminary findings
- if applicable, an Issues Statement outlining the key issues identified through the unit self-study and internal review process that will serve to guide their site visit activities

The director of the unit under review will have access to the external reviewers’ contact information in advance of their visit and may provide additional information or comments directly. In addition, the members of the internal review panel are advised of the opportunity to contact the external reviewers in advance of the campus visit to highlight key issues and questions.

Travel Arrangements
The Office of Student Life will make hotel reservations and will work with reviewers on flight or ground transportation arrangements.
Approximately one month prior to the campus visit, the Office of Student Life will provide the reviewers with a draft itinerary for the visit, which will include hotel and ground transportation reservation numbers and other pertinent information.

The Campus Visit
The external reviewers’ visit is usually two to three days in length, but can be extended for particular needs. The external reviewers meet with members of the unit’s professional staff, members of the Internal Review Panel, line administration involved (unit manager and appropriate assistant/associate vice president) and others appropriate to the review.

Meeting with the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s)
The Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) will help the external reviewers prepare for their time on campus at a brief orientation session.

Meetings with the Internal Unit Review Panel
The external reviewers typically have an opportunity to meet with members of the Internal Unit Review Panel.

At a wrap-up session on the last day of the external reviewers’ visit, the external reviewers will debrief the Internal Review Panel, share initial observations and recommendations and address follow-up questions to the external reviewers.

Meetings with the Unit Professional Staff
Ideally, professional staff will meet individually or in functional groups with the external reviewers. These meetings will allow the external reviewers to explore the critical issues or questions identified by the internal review panel. In the case of a scheduling conflict with a unit head or other key individual, the external reviewers may be asked to participate in a conference call.

Meeting with the Line Associate/Assistant Vice President
The external reviewers will also meet with the appropriate associate/assistant vice president to become familiar with the broader administrative and functional context of the unit.

Meetings with other Campus and Community Stakeholders
As time permits and the unit structure and size allows, the external reviewers may also meet with individuals who can provide additional information about the unit.

Private Review Panel Meeting(s)
Generally, the schedule allows for private meeting time for the reviewers toward the end of the visit to prepare for their debriefing sessions with unit staff and the Internal Unit Review Panel and to coordinate their thoughts, discuss the division of labor in drafting a joint report or begin preparing their report.
External Program Review Report
The external reviewers will provide a joint written report that assesses the strengths, weaknesses, personnel, overall organizational performance, unit leadership, governance and improvement opportunities for the unit. The report will also assess the reviewers’ perspectives on the issues outlined in the unit self-study and those highlighted in the Internal Unit Review Panel Preliminary Report. Panel members may wish to attach individual reviewer comments, not to be included as part of the panel’s official report. A draft electronic copy of the panel’s report will be sent to the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) within two weeks of the campus visit and will be reviewed for any factual errors and/or necessary content clarification. The external reviewers’ final report is due to the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s), via email, within four weeks of their campus visit.

The Internal Unit Review Panel prepares the Support Unit Program Review Final Report using information from the unit self-study, the Internal Unit Review Panel’s own findings and the External Review Panel findings. The Final Report provides an assessment of the unit under review and recommendations regarding future improvements.

AFTER THE CAMPUS SITE VISIT
Follow-up with the External Review Panel
Honorarium and Reimbursement
Each External Review Panel member will receive a $2,000 honorarium upon completion of the report. All travel, lodging, meals and other expenses associated with the review will be reimbursed upon submission of an expense account and receipts.

Well in advance of the campus visit, reviewers will supply their contact information and other relevant information in order to process the payments. The Office of Student Life will supply further information and forms. The Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) will address any questions regarding payment.

Preparing the Final Unit Program Review Report
The review process is not complete when the external reviewers have submitted their report. The Internal Unit Review Panel prepares the final Unit Program Review Report using information from the unit’s self-study, the Internal Unit Review Panel’s own findings and the External Unit Review Panel findings. The report provides a concise assessment of the unit under review and recommendations regarding future improvements.

The final Unit Program Review Report should include the following elements:

- Evaluation of Mission and Key Goals: Briefly assess the degree to which the unit’s mission statement and key goals support the university’s academic plan
and Student Life goals and strategic initiatives; evaluate the unit’s success in achieving its mission and key goals

- Customer and/or Stakeholder Perception of Unit: Summarize customer and/or stakeholder feedback regarding services provided and the quality of these services as obtained through customer surveys, interviews and/or focus groups; discuss additional services customers would like to receive from this unit, as well as any services that customers and/or stakeholders believe can be discontinued; provide the unit’s perspective on their customers’ and/or stakeholders perceptions

- Use of Successful Organizational Practices: Assess the effectiveness of the unit’s processes and capacity for building and sustaining performance excellence

- Evaluation of Resource Usage: Provide commentary on the appropriateness of resource allocations and use given the unit’s mission and role in fulfilling the university’s academic plan and Student Life goals and strategic initiatives; consider financial, human, space, equipment and technology support

- Measuring of Performance Results: Address how successful the unit is in determining intended student learning and development outcomes and/or specific business and service outcomes, user satisfaction, financial performance and other noteworthy performance results related to organizational effectiveness; discuss the relevance of key performance measures the unit uses to track results

- Recommendations: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the unit; discuss the key program/service, operational, resource and campus/community environment challenges the unit faces; provide concrete suggestions for improvement, including ways to build upon current strengths, overcome weaknesses and increase effectiveness and efficiency; offer specific strategies for addressing the key challenges affecting the unit; recommend budget adjustments, providing the appropriate rationale

Implementing and Tracking Review Findings and Recommendations

The final Unit Program Review Report, with the External Review Report attached as an addendum, is presented to the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) for preliminary read. The report is then presented to the Senior Vice President for Student Life and unit staff to verify, discuss and clarify issues raised in the Support Unit Program Review Report.

The recommendations contained in this report form the basis of a unit action plan that speaks to the findings and recommendations presented in the final unit report. This plan serves as the basis for an implementation agreement that is developed through meetings with the relevant Assistant/Associate Vice-President or CFO, the Senior Vice-President, and other relevant members of the Executive Team. These meetings also offer an opportunity to respond to any matters raised in the external or internal reports.
Beginning one year after finalization of the implementation agreement, the Office of Student Life will provide the Executive Vice President and Provost with annual updates on the progress of the unit action plan.