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ACADEMIC DEAN AND PROVOST INSTRUCTION 5420.29J

From: Academic Dean and Provost

Subj: PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND VISITING COMMITTEES

1. Purpose. The program of periodic review and visiting committees exists to provide academic departments and supporting areas an opportunity to reflect on their processes and offerings and to receive advice from external experts on the department's needs, future direction, and priorities within the Naval Academy's mission and constraints. The program is most useful when the self-study is used to identify a small number of areas where disciplinary experts from outside of the Academy can provide insights and non-binding guidance to improve the quality of academic experiences provided to Midshipmen. Midshipmen academic experiences are a result of instruction within and support provided to majors, minors, core courses, and other educational opportunities. Components of this experience include instruction, curriculum, academic support services, and assessment.

2. Cancellation. ACDEANINST 5420.29I.

3. Background and discussion. A regular program of departmental visiting committees has existed at the Naval Academy since the early 1990s to provide an opportunity for internal evaluation, outside review, and independent, non-binding feedback. A typical visiting committee consists of three individuals chosen from a panel nominated by the department, and approved by the Academic Dean and Provost (AcDean), for their particular expertise and contributions to the area(s) being reviewed. The institutional expectations of each visiting committee member include:

a. Careful independent review of materials (e.g. the self-study) provided before and during the visit.

b. Robust interaction with faculty, staff, midshipmen, and administrators during a two-day visit to the Yard.

c. With visiting committee consensus being neither expected nor sought, a final written report that includes:

1. Suggestions for addressing the focal areas identified by the department.

2. Identification of challenges and opportunities within the programs, in light of best practices known to each expert reviewer and suggestions to advance the department.

4. Action. The following actions and Academic Dean and Provost Notices (ACDEANNOTE 5420.1) containing additional specific guidelines are directed in support of the Program Review/Visiting Committee Program at the Naval Academy:

a. The departments or support areas will identify the principal point of contact for administering all aspects of their respective committee visit.

b. In preparation for the visiting committee the department or support area will prepare a self-study typically between 25 and 35 pages (not including front or back matter) focused on the quality of academic programs organized by items listed below and the guiding ACDEANNOTE 5420.1:

(1) Mission, Goals, and Outcomes

(a) Provide mission Statement, goals, learning outcomes, and other foundational information or program planning documents that guide the department's actions.

(b) A brief description of how this information guides departmental plans and aligns with institutional priorities (e.g., strategic plans, attributes of graduates).

(2) Background and Essential Information

(a) Curriculum and Educational Offerings. Including information about how the course offerings and educational opportunities contribute to the development of midshipmen who take core courses and/or constitute a challenging program for majors.

(b) Teaching and Learning. Provide information about the teaching strategies endorsed by the department, support to student learning, and what the department has learned from the annual assessment of learning outcomes process.

(c) Faculty/Staff Profile and Productivity (including laboratory staff):

1. Table of faculty information by rank and appointment type.
2. Summary of research/scholarship specialties and creative work.
3. Information on recruitment processes, recent hires, retention plans and results.
4. Actions taken or anticipated to increase diversity of the faculty/staff.

(d) Enrollment Information: Recent trends in enrollment and demand for major/minors (as appropriate).

(3) Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges resulting in a small number of focal areas and/or questions regarding future direction and priorities. Of greatest importance are focal areas regarding how best to continue to meet the needs of midshipmen and provide excellent educational offerings. Focal areas should be developed in consultation with the Division Office, the Office of the Academic Dean & Provost, and others as appropriate.

c. Visiting committee members are selected the semester preceding the visit. ACDEANNOTE 5420 provides the schedule for periodic program reviews and visiting committees.

(1) Each area scheduled for a visit will provide the names of no fewer than five nominees, including a brief record of each person's experience relevant to the visit, via the Division Director to the Associate Dean for Planning and Assessment identifying potential members to serve on the Departmental Visiting Committee. Special attention should be paid to avoiding the selection of visitors with whom there may be a real or perceived conflict of interest with the Naval Academy, the program, or any individual faculty members in the program. Possible conflicts of interest should be included with the nominee names and additional information.

(2) Where possible, departments or support areas should suggest visitors of the highest quality who can provide advice with regard to the foci identified by the department, possess expertise and experience common to the department and to the Naval Academy, and whose geographic location is within a reasonable proximity to USNA or requires minimum funds for travel and support.

d. After the completion of the committee visit:

(1) Within four weeks of the visit the committee members will provide a written report to the department or support area, division, and dean providing their independent, external and non-binding perspectives regarding the extent to which the departmental programming supports Midshipman educational development, and that identifies strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities for improvement.

(2) After the report of the visiting committee members' observations is received, the department or support area, division, and deans will determine an appropriate plan of action and milestones based on the self-study document and independent feedback from the visiting committee members culminating in a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Major steps include:

(a) Appropriate members of department or support area, division, and dean's office separately review the visiting committee report (alongside the self-study) and identify potential MOU items.

(b) Division leadership, members of the department, and the deans confer as necessary on possible MOU items, accountable parties, and schedules for completion.

(c) MOU items, accountable parties, and schedule are finalized. MOU is finalized and signed by the Provost, Division Director, and Department Chair or Program Director.

(d) Within one year (earlier if the MOU dictates) the department or support area, division, and Office of the Academic Dean and Provost report on actions identified within the MOU and determine if further actions are necessary.

(e) Point of Contact. The Associate Dean for Planning and Assessment will serve as the overall point of contact for the periodic program reviews and visiting committee instruction.



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