As a result of the first cycle of DePaul University's Academic Program Review Process (Cycle I), the participants in the process enter into the following agreements. The participants understand that this document will be available to be made public once the signatures are in place: for the unit, the chair of the unit's review committee and the department chair/program director; for the college/school, the dean; for the Academic Program Review Committee, the unit subcommittee members; for the university, the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Acknowledgements

The APRC members wish to thank the SNL review committee for participating in the university's academic program review process and commended them for the initiative they demonstrated throughout the self-study process and in subsequent discussions with the APRC subcommittee members and the dean. SNL convened a representative review committee to lead the self-study process, the members of which have been thoughtful, thorough, collegial, and have taken the self-study process seriously. Their excellent work has set a high standard for review and has helped the APRC think about its own process. Working with the APRC subcommittee members, the SNL committee integrated the university's self-study process into the program's ongoing conversations about its program's organization and curricular goals. The committee identified major issues and brought in external reviewers to expand the discussions. The two external reviewers were astutely chosen. Most important, their observations and recommendations were keen, highlighting achievements in the program's design as well as challenges inherent within such a design as it interfaces with students' expectations and needs. This use of external reviewers was also cost efficient. The SNL committee's hard work is noted and is to be lauded.

On May 18, all participants in the SNL review process met to come to some shared understandings about what had been accomplished with respect to the major issues outlined by the SNL review committee, future directions for the program, and ideas for next steps. There were no major disagreements on the major issues going into this conversation; many issues had been agreed upon already in discussions with the APRC subcommittee, the review team, and with the dean. Consequently, much of the MOA meeting on May 18 focused on the potential for new ground ahead for the Program, the School and the University. A summary of issues presented and/or discussed is provided below.

Common Issues and University-level Commitments

During Cycle I, the unit program review self-studies raised several issues in common that have important university-wide implications. In subsequent conversations about these major issues, the units, the deans, the Academic Program Review Committee members, and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs all have recognized the need for university-level coordination to support units in the following areas: a) advising activities; b) recruitment and marketing efforts; c) structures that facilitate cross-departmental and cross-college collaboration; d) improvement of the university-level data collection and reporting efforts on academic programs; e) assessment efforts and research on students; and f) efforts to maintain connections with alumni. To follow up on these common issues and determine the appropriate courses of action needed to address them at the university and unit level, the Academic Program Review Committee and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agree to do the following:
1. The Academic Program Review Committee agrees to prepare a summary report on Cycle I to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs which discusses these and other issues that have important connections to other university-wide initiatives, especially to the Strategic Plan. That report will be made public, along with the Memoranda of Agreement.

2. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agrees to direct the appropriate university-level offices to work with the units and their deans on how to effectively address these issues.

3. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will require a progress report in June of 2000 from the appropriate offices that will be shared with the Academic Program Review Committee.

4. The Academic Program Review Committee will invite representatives from the appropriate offices to an Academic Program Review Committee meeting in the fall quarter of the 1999-2000 academic year to follow-up on these issues and discuss possible courses of action.

In addition to these university-level commitments, the following are issues and actions agreed upon at the unit level.

Issues and actions agreed upon

The SNL MA Program regularly develops strategies to implement four major, ongoing goals: (1) to improve enrollment; (2) to improve program design; (3) to improve support systems; and, (4) to consider expanding graduate education. Specific issues and actions identified through the program review process and supported by the recommendations of the external reviewers are captured below in accordance with each appropriate goal.

1. Improve Enrollment (Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity).

   • The Program will clarify the characteristics of students who seem to succeed in the curriculum and will provide this information to Enrollment Management as well as appropriate SNL administrators. Fortunately, the MA Program has a strong diversity record upon which to build.

   • The Program will consider revising its admissions process to better screen for students who are able to succeed in the curriculum, will solicit ideas from successful students and pass these on to new/current students, will institute a certificate to mark/celebrate completion of the Liberal Learning Seminar portion of the program and, as appropriate, will simplify needless curricular complexities. (See #2 below.)

   • The Program, School and University will make every effort to coordinate databases so that enrollment data is accurate.


   • The Program will consolidate professional competencies (from 16 one-credit to 8 two-credit), will revise the demands of the final project (Master Work), will retitle the final project (Integrating Project), will develop an alternative strategy for students wishing not to pursue a final project per se, will revise the Graduation Review to achieve better program closure for the student as well as additional program evaluation data for the program, and will add "Reflection on Practice" as a new, separate area of competence. (To the credit of the Program, these initiatives were implemented this Spring.)

   • The Program will revise its materials in support of its Liberal Learning Seminar Faculty as well as consider preparing a generic "packet of readings" in support of the program’s initial course.
• The Program will review the role, function and content of the four Assessment Sessions interspersed throughout the program and will update the Assessment criteria and form used for Professional Competence assessment.

• The Program will consider incorporating a systematic "exit interview" as a part of the Graduate Review.


• The School (SNL) will clarify the scope of proactive support for the MA Program and its students as available from various SNL offices. In addition, the Program, School and University will make every effort to coordinate databases to provide accurate and timely data in support of program decision-making.

4. Consider Expanding Graduate Education (as appropriate to its place within the mission, vision, and priorities of SNL).

• The Program will support efforts to adapt/diversify the current model of the program, i.e., as appropriate to the mission, vision, and priorities of SNL and DePaul. At present, a proposal for a joint degree with CTI has been approved for implementation next year.

• The School (SNL) will clarify the nature of, and appropriate priority for, graduate education within SNL, e.g., its fit within the mission, its fit in relation to undergraduate programs, its unique features, its appropriate size, its appropriate use of resources, and its contribution to the margin.

In addition to these four major goals, and in response to the required APRC Program Review Template Question regarding morale, it was agreed that neither the self-study committee nor the dean had sufficient data to determine conclusively the state of morale within the Program/School. Hence, a fifth goal/initiative was agreed upon:

• The School (SNL) will conduct an organizational culture assessment (re: structure, communication, motivation, teamwork/collaboration, goal-setting, control/decision-making, rewards, workload demands, system restraints, capacity analysis, support, etc.) in order to better ascertain the state of morale within the Program/School.

Issues and actions on which there is agreement to do further work and continue conversations

For each of the four major, ongoing goals listed above, the Program Review process yielded additional ideas and actions for consideration. Due primarily to capacity/resource constraints, these are tabled for further consideration until after next year.

1. Improve Enrollment (Recruitment, Retention, and Diversity)

• Additional ideas under consideration in this area include: changing the name of the degree; sponsoring periodic social gatherings of program various constituencies (students, alumni, faculty, etc.); designing and implementing a series of non-credit workshops in support of the individualized portion of the program; revising the applicant advising process to better prepare students for the demands of the program; and, instituting academic performance awards throughout the program and at the point of graduation.

   • Additional ideas under consideration in this area include: developing and implementing additional strategies for orienting and supporting seminar faculty and professional advisors (e.g., breakfast training sessions, website interchange, etc.); developing and implementing periodic focus groups and town meetings among constituents (students, alumni, workplace associates, etc.) for both program evaluation and professional development purposes; assessing effectiveness of pilot efforts designed to improve program recruitment and retention (e.g., submatriculation); and, developing and implementing an intensive version of the MA Program—using periodic weekend retreats rather than weekly sessions.


   • Additional ideas under consideration in this area include: revising all program materials to incorporate appropriate graphics

   • Consider Expanding Graduate Education (as appropriate to its place within the mission, vision and priorities of SNL).

   • Additional ideas under consideration in this area include: developing certificate emphases, specialty tracks, and/or separate degree programs.

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A hard copy of this document was signed by:

Chair of the Unit Review Committee/Program Director: Russ Rogers

APRC Subcommittee members: Alex Papadopoulos and Michael V. Smith

Dean of the College: Susanne Dumbleton

Executive V.P. for Academic Affairs: Richard Meister

*The hard copy with signatures is on file in the Office of the Associate V.P. for Academic Affairs and is available upon request.*