TO: Provost David Perrin
FROM: APR Data Review Committee
Sarah Carrigan, Institutional Research
Kelly Burke, Music
Deborah Kipp, Nutrition
Jeff Patton, Geography
Daniel Perlman, Human Development and Family Studies
Gary Rosenkrantz, Philosophy
Sevil Sonmez, Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management

DATE: June 27, 2011
RE: Academic Program Review

At your request, the Data Review Committee named above has reviewed the data definitions document developed earlier this spring for the academic program review. In this memo we will summarize our activities and highlight concerns we have regarding several of the data elements, as well as larger issues for the Academic Program Review.

The committee met in early June to begin reviewing the definitions document, and continued the discussion electronically through the rest of the month. At the initial meeting we identified several areas for language improvement, along with concerns about the usefulness and validity of several of the data elements. A few days following the meeting, we received data recommendations from Scott Jenkins. Sarah provided a merged document to show Scott’s changes and the committee’s work together. As of June 27th, we have presented a final version containing expanded data definitions for Associate Provost Adams to post to the Academic Program Review website, pending your approval of our completed task.

Throughout the committee discussions regarding these data elements, we members of the faculty expressed strong concerns about the meaning and interpretation of this data for the program review. While a collection of data has been presented to campus, we are concerned that expanding the definitions is not sufficient. We are concerned that the pressure to move quickly will result in developing one or several mathematical formulas, using the data values, which will only appear to provide objective evidence of program strength and quality. We urge the unit review committees to engage in deep discussions on how to interpret the data, what meaning each item brings, and what the context is for determining strong or weak programs, and avoid reducing programs to numeric values.

With regard to the definitions document itself, we find a number of the data to be of questionable value to the APR. We recommend the following data points either be considered only for those programs for which faculty agree the data are accurate and meaningful to understanding the programs’ value and impact, or eliminated from the APR.

1. One-year retention rate
2. Four-year graduation rate (new freshmen)
3. Six-year graduation rate (new freshmen)

Many academic programs at UNCG are discovery majors – students do not enter their program as first time freshmen, but select their majors in the sophomore or junior years. Other programs may have large freshman cohorts, but lose those students to other programs as students explore their academic options. Given the instability of choice of
major in the first semester of the freshman year, and the many programs which do not attract majors until the sophomore or junior year, the data elements above, while useful as generic institutional measures, are not directly relevant to program quality and do not contribute significant information to the academic program review.

4. **Four-year graduation rate (new transfer):** Without understanding the distribution of native UNCG students and transfers who comprise the enrollment of a given program, this data element is not directly relevant and does not contribute significant information to this academic program review.

5. **Graduate admissions:** Given the possibility of missing data due to changing vendors during the period included in the APR, as well as inconsistent internal processing issues, this data element is unreliable, not directly relevant, and does not contribute significant information to this academic program review.

6. **Graduate program graduation rates:** Scott Jenkins indicated in his report that this data element is not a national standard for reporting graduate program completion, and recommended that it be eliminated from the APR. This committee recognizes that graduate completion rates can have utility as measures, but these vary considerably by discipline. A key question is how various departments are doing compared to other programs in their own discipline at peer universities.

7. **Inclusiveness:** The faculty data review committee has determined that these data elements, while interesting as generic institutional measures, are not directly relevant and do not contribute significant information to this academic program review.

8. **Market share:** This criterion is considered quite problematic as it involves CIP codes assigned to programs, which need to be verified for correctness or currency. While having a larger market share is clearly considered an advantage, in cases where incorrect or out-of-date CIP codes are being used, the validity of market share comes into serious question.

9. **Department Efficiency data:** The faculty data review committee has determined that none of the departmental aggregate data can be shown to have direct relationship to academic program quality or demand, therefore are not directly relevant and do not contribute significant information to this academic program review. These measures may be shown to have meaning for department management efficiency, but that is not the purpose of the APR. In addition, the items *Proportion of SCH taught by faculty, Scholarly Activity/Professional Service Activities per Faculty FTE, and External Funding (Sponsored research awards)* might be better understood as department quality measures, rather than efficiency measures.
   a. **Proportion of SCH taught by faculty category:** the departmental Delaware comparisons have no value for programs. Department data being provided for individual programs is believed to be problematic.
   b. **External funding (sponsored research awards):** needs to be revised to clearly convey it is a measure of extramurally funded research (awards)
   c. **Instructional cost per student FTE:** this criterion is also considered very problematic especially for those programs that are not accurately represented in the Delaware Study, therefore, to use this criterion across programs (regardless of balanced representation) brings into question its validity as a measure.
   d. **Research and Service Costs per Faculty FTE:** The faculty data review committee has determined that this departmental measure is confusing and counter-intuitive. It is not an efficiency measure, but is relevant to growth of grant funding and research efforts in the department.