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**PLANNING, ADMINISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT IN
THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Sub-Committee Members:

**Karol LaCroix
Jim McCarthy
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To assess the way in which the School of Health and Human Services approaches the challenge of planning, administration and assessment, the Sub-Committee first met alone to get the Dean's perspective on these issues, and then met with the School's Executive Committee to ascertain their views. The Executive Committee in HHS is critical to the planning, administration and assessment process since the Executive Committee addresses each of these issues collectively. (This Committee includes the Dean, the Associate Dean, the Director of Finance and Administration, the Chairs of each of the School's eight departments, the Director of the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice, and the Senior Administrator from the Dean's Office. In the past, and we hope in the future, the UNH Foundation Gift Officer assigned to the School also sat on the Executive Committee. That position is currently vacant.)

In this report, we address the three main issues of planning, administration and assessment. In collecting the information summarized below, we followed the set of suggested questions developed by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

Planning: One of the strengths of the School is its extensive and collegial planning process. Last year, with support from the Provost's Strategic Initiative Fund, and with the help of an outside consultant, the School undertook a strategic planning process. A School-wide committee systematically gathered information on the School's effectiveness from students, alumni and key stakeholders. The Committee also consulted with national experts in the area of health and human services as part of its fact-finding work.

In a very short period of time (approximately four months start to finish) the Committee produced a report that proposed a set of "Strategic Directions" that they concluded should guide the School's work in the coming years. The Executive Committee took this report and prepared a companion "Implementation Report" that set out very specific objectives for the current year, objectives that were directly linked to the Strategic Directions proposed by the Committee.

The entire process started with the University's Academic Plan (which was in draft form at that time). Each Department in the School is now using the School's plan as part of its own planning activities.

The process itself produced benefits beyond the plans that resulted. For example, involvement of the School's constituents in the process was seen as beneficial. The main downsides to planning and assessment that emerged from discussions were time constraints and multiple demands for similar information. HHS departments are each subject to periodic review by external accrediting agencies, as well as to periodic reviews of graduate and undergraduate programs by the University. At times, this can result in a request from one group conducting a review for information that is similar – but not identical to information already provided to another group.

Administration: In part because of the size of the School, in part because of current financial challenges, and in part because of a well-established collaborative culture, all major decisions regarding not only planning but also implementation and management at the School are made collectively. The Executive Committee is also the key unit in these processes. All vacancies are discussed in Executive Committee; all new program initiatives are proposed to the Executive Committee; and the entire School's budget is presented repeatedly to the Committee for extensive discussion. This collective approach has served the School well during difficult financial times. Following the approval of each year's budget, the Director of Finance and Administration and the Associate Dean meet quarterly with chairs and institute directors to monitor budgets. Executive Committee members are well informed about financial matters – they understand RCM and use it effectively to plan and manage activities. The BSC in the School has been well accepted. Apart from the seemingly perennial challenge the School faces with making ends meet, the major administrative concern expressed by the Executive Committee was a perceived breakdown in communications with the Office of Sponsored Research. That part of the administrative process is not seen as working.

Assessment: The School feels it does a good job of “closing the loop” by assessing not only each of its separate programs but its collective work as well. Each department is accredited by an external agency, most of which now insist on clear mission statements, goals and objectives, and clear outcome measures, including detailed assessments of student learning. Although dealing with the demands of multiple specialized accrediting agencies can be extremely demanding on faculty time and energy, it has the considerable advantage of insuring that we rigorously assess the impact of our work on a regular basis.

For the School as a whole, the way in which it has presented its Strategic Plan and feeds directly into an overall assessment of the School. The “Implementation Plan” that resulted from the planning process sets out a series of very specific, and easily measurable objectives for the current year. At the end of the year, assessing the School's progress in meeting these objectives will be straightforward.