

*THE PLAN FOR  
ACADEMIC  
REORGANIZATION:*

Vision 2020

The University of Southern Mississippi  
Division of Academic Affairs

**The Plan for Academic Reorganization: Vision 2020**

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The University of Southern Mississippi  
Division of Academic Affairs  
**The Plan for Academic Reorganization: Vision 2020**

The Plan for Academic Reorganization arises from the commitment of academic affairs at The University of Southern Mississippi to enhance the distinctiveness of academic programs and to create a sustainable model for academic programming. The academic leadership at all levels and faculty advisory bodies have played a critical role in shaping the reorganization initiative and the concomitant success of academic programs. The participation of faculty in this process has been critical – faculty were encouraged to think boldly, talk to colleagues across campus, and propose transformative ideas.

The fall 2016 request for proposals resulted in 44 submissions that included more than 100 faculty participants. These proposals were submitted to the Provost for consideration and subsequently reviewed and discussed by Deans and by leadership of the faculty governance bodies, the Academic Leadership Council (ALC). These bodies assessed and discussed the proposals and provided insightful, cogent summaries to the Office of the Provost. Following the initial presentation of the *Comprehensive Plan for Academic Reorganization*, two comment periods ensued with the final comment period ending on May 12, 2017. Throughout this intensive endeavor, the process has been structured as exceptionally inclusive and deliberative, designed to address major issues and guide a powerful, creative, appropriate restructuring that will enable us to respond effectively to the challenges we face.

### **The Context**

Like other institutions of higher learning today, USM operates in a national climate of shifting expectations. Major factors include:

- Powerful external forces—political, economic, and technological—as well as the explosion of knowledge production itself which has reshaped expectations around all dimensions of higher education;
- A steady decline in state support, with indications that funding will continue to decrease<sup>1</sup>; and
- Trends in scholarship that demonstrate a fundamental shift toward collaborative work, which is made more difficult by traditional academic structures.

Certainly changes in funding, student demographics, and public perceptions create opportunities as well as challenges. New discoveries about how our students learn, advances in disciplinary knowledge, and innovations in collaborative work support audacious new directions for the academy. We are poised to respond to such challenges and opportunities so that instructional and research productivity will increase and resources will be maximized to support the academic mission. As one Dean put it in fall 2016, the “new reality of higher education calls for a new approach, a new vision, a new USM.”

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<sup>1</sup> “25 Years of Declining State Support for Public Colleges,” Chronicle of Higher Education, [www.chronicle.com](http://www.chronicle.com), March 3, 2014.

The key question we began with is what remains at hand today: **What can we do within our existing resource realities to highlight our strengths, cultivate creativity, and distinguish ourselves as an institution?** To address this question, our process and ensuing discussions have been guided by the core concept we articulated at the outset: *Administrative units will be larger in size and scope, with emphasis on programs rather than departments, to promote collaboration and interdisciplinary teaching and research, to realize economies of scale, to facilitate fluid reallocation of resources, and to reduce duplication in programming and administration.*

## The Vision

Herein lies our challenge: We must change, but we must do so without sacrificing our institutional mission, values, and identity. We know that the notion of knowledge as a “public good” is an increasingly vulnerable value in a world in which market and political forces are driving our fiscal viability. Nonetheless, we must hold to our philosophical footings and the core of our institutional vision, which underscore our commitment to promote the greater good and the advancement of society.

Our vision is guided by these fundamental principles:

- Advancing USM as a university renowned for academic rigor, innovation, and the achievements of its community of scholars;
- Strengthening our commitment to excellence in research, scholarship, and service;
- Distinguishing USM as a community of engaged citizens, operating as a public, student-centered, doctoral-granting research university; and
- Utilizing administrative resources and a strong infrastructure to provide an educationally rich environment.

We propose to change the way we think about educational processes, outcomes, and structure. We believe that we can and should:

- Design an organizational structure that allows for greater flexibility and innovation as we recognize and expand upon the strengths in our community;
- Leverage our institutional strengths for greater capacity building in both instruction and research;
- Adopt a proactive strategy to meet financial challenges;
- Increase our ability to respond to changes in the external environment, particularly appropriation rescissions and/or reductions;
- Deploy resources strategically and intentionally; and
- Attain administrative coherence, consistency in practice across disciplines, and opportunities for collaboration from arts to sciences and in professional programming.

The need for organizational change is urgent. If we fail to evaluate and update our academic management practices, structure, and culture, institutional decline is likely, and we may well face renewed calls for program elimination. Over the past year, we have heard a call for clarity in processes and roles, for change to the increasingly burdensome role of the Chair/Director, and for commitment to retaining our programs despite the need to reduce our budgets. We take these conversations seriously; the deliberations around the proposals kept these issues in mind. The

plan that has emerged is a combination of many different proposed themes identified through the ALC review process, all while remaining sensitive to the myriad of institutional challenges we face.

Rather than a workforce reduction initiative, the comprehensive plan creates more integrated, collaborative structures for existing positions. The number of colleges is reduced from six to four, which will reduce administrative costs and promote additional efficiencies, and we move from a department-based structure to one rooted in broader schools. Significantly, the role of faculty administrators is changed in this model – the Schools are led by a Director, an administrative lead of departments and programs, which are managed by faculty leadership teams. The heavy administrative burden facing current chairs shifts in this new configuration to the School Director, with academic/curricular oversight moving to the department chairs and program coordinators (see Appendix III).

In this reorganization, the Director of a School will assume a management role while serving as the “first among equals” or lead faculty in that School. This model will also increase the involvement of faculty in the management of curricular and program delivery issues, encouraging cross-disciplinary communication and decision-making.

This reorganization is bold; the times call for nothing less. This plan is built on faculty proposals, driven by national best practices and institutional need and designed to provide leverage for future growth and increased visibility.

## Units and Roles Defined

### I. IHL Coding: Institutional Employees

- Executive, Administrative and Managerial
- Faculty (Instruction/Research/Public Service)
- Other Professionals (Support/Service)
- Technical and Paraprofessionals
- Clerical and Secretarial
- Skilled Crafts
- Service/Maintenance
- Student Instruction/Research Assistants (Graduate Assistants)

### II. IHL Definitions and The University of Southern Mississippi Unit Organization

#### A. Colleges, Schools, Departments, and Programs

Colleges are the “macro” organizational entities for collections of academic units. Their budgets are generally large, and the academic head of a college is generally a dean. Colleges house Schools, Departments, and Programs as well as, potentially, Centers and Institutes, all designed towards a common academic mission within a defined scope of discipline and area foci.

Schools are not defined by IHL. For The University of Southern Mississippi, Schools are the overarching units of academic program organization within Colleges. Each School is comprised of multiple departments and/or related programs that work together for the delivery of curriculum, promotion of student retention, and support of faculty research, teaching, and service. Schools are led by faculty members in the administrative role of Directors who report to the Dean and are responsible for the academic, operational, and budgetary work of the School.

Departments are disciplinary units *within* Schools and often contain multiple degree programs. Departments are led by non-administrative faculty members who serve as chairs, working with program coordinators to manage curricular matters and advise the Director of the School as a team. Non-administrative faculty leaders (chairs and program directors) are elected by their peers or appointed by the director and serve a three-year term of service.

#### B. Centers and Institutes

IHL does not distinguish between Centers and Institutes. Center and Institutes with Extensive Scope and Outreach (ESO) are broadly focused administrative entities having larger numbers of associated faculty and staff. The budgets for ESO centers or Institutes are generally large and the activities of these administrative units are often *multi-institutional*, serve larger geographical regions across the state and beyond, and involve more colleagues, often from several distinct academic and professional fields. Each ESO organizational entity has at least a statewide mission, and they often connect to several Mississippi institutions as well as agencies outside of Mississippi.\*

Centers and Institutes with Limited Scope and Outreach (LSO) are narrowly focused administrative entities having few faculty and staff associated with them. The budgets for LSO Centers or Institutes are generally small and the activities of these administrative units are often primarily within a single university. The outreach of this type of Center or Institute usually involves only the single university where the unit is housed, appropriate professional organizations, and local communities. \*

For The University of Southern Mississippi, an Institute is an administrative structure having a broad objective or common theme, especially a scientific, educational, or social one. A Center will be narrower in scope centering on a single objective. For example, the Arts Institute is an aggregate of all arts initiatives. In contrast, the Center for Math and Science Education is singularly focused on science education. Institutes and Centers may reside within or outside the college structure. In the case of the later, Centers or Institutes will report to the Provost or to the Vice President for Research.

### **III. Definitions and Positions at The University of Southern Mississippi**

- A. Colleges** – Macro-organizational entity for collections of academic Schools, Departments, and programs. Their budgets are generally large, and the academic head of a college is generally a “Dean” (*see IHL definitions*).
- B. Schools** – Administrative units comprised of like departments and/or programs that serve operational and organizational functions. They generally command notable budgets. The administrative and academic head of a school is a Director. The responsibilities of this administrative position include oversight of departments, management of assessment, evaluation of faculty, representation of the school at the Dean’s level, and similar. School leadership should facilitate collaboration and interdisciplinary research and teaching, seek to realize economies of scale, facilitate fluid reallocation of resources, and reduce duplication in programming and administration.
- C. Departments** – Academic units organized around common or similar academic areas. Departments are led by chairs who work with the program coordinators to manage assessment and curricular matters. Departments have no salary budgets and generally have no operating budgets, but advise the school Director on the allocation of faculty support dollars that reside within the school budget. Local budgets may exist in response to accreditation requirements or in the operation of outreach services (clinical services, grant funded programs, etc.) or other exceptional activities.
- D. Programs** – Academic areas that result in the delivery of curriculum and/or a specific degree. Program coordinators assist unit coordinators with course sequencing, student mentoring, and assessment.

### **IV. Leadership in Academic Affairs**

- A. Executive, Administrative, and Managerial (IHL)**
  - a. President – Institutional Executive Officer (IEO)

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\* IHL Academic Policies

*Requiring Academic Standing:*

- b. Provost – Chief Academic Officer and Administrative Head of Academic Affairs
- c. Vice President for Research – Administrative Head of research initiatives
- d. Vice Provost – a deputy Provost, usually assigned management responsibilities over a broad area reporting to the Provost
- e. Dean – Academic and administrative head of a college
  - *Associate Dean – Administrative head of a division or area of focus reporting to the Dean*
- f. School Director – Academic and administrative head of a School
  - *Associate Director– a deputy director, usually assigned management responsibilities over an area of focus or grouping of departments or programs*

**B. Faculty (Instruction/Research/Public Service) (IHL)**

(See Corps of Instruction, *Faculty Handbook*)

- a. Department chair – Faculty member who leads the faculty and program coordinators team
- b. Program coordinator – Faculty member who fulfills academic degree program duties

**C. Other Professionals (Support/Service) (IHL)**

- a. Vice President for Student Affairs – Administrative head of Student Affairs areas and reports to the Provost. The Vice President for Student Affairs is an executive appointment with membership on the executive cabinet.
- b. Associate Provost – Manages a specific area of focus, reporting to the Provost, and usually with academic rank.

**D. Technical and Paraprofessionals (IHL)**

- a. Assistant Provost – Delegated a particular aspect of a professional task, but does not hold academic standing. Reports to the Provost.
- b. Assistant Dean – Delegated a particular aspect of a professional task, but does not hold academic standing. Reports to a Dean.
- c. Assistant Director – Delegated a particular aspect of a professional task, but does not hold academic standing. Reports to Director.



## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure that follows is the result of discussions with the Academic Leadership Council, Deans, and leadership within academic affairs following the submission of proposals from the campus faculty. The process of developing a structure began with review and discussion of these 44 proposals, which were all reviewed by individual members of the ALC and discussed in two subcommittees (one for Level 1 proposals and one for Level 2A proposals). The subcommittees then produced reports to the Office of the Provost regarding themes and issues that arose in the reviews. At the same time, Deans reviewed the 44 proposals and provided their own statements regarding the potential impact of the proposed plans to the programs in the colleges. Keeping in mind the larger context of the changing climate of higher education, the reviews and reports from the ALC, the Deans' statements, and the original proposals, the leadership in academic affairs developed this Comprehensive Plan for Academic Reorganization, with input from the Vice President for Research and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The structure below thus reflects our multi-stage process of consideration and contains elements from most of the Level 1 and Level 2A proposals submitted. Level 2B proposals will be incorporated once the comprehensive plan has been adopted. No one proposal was accepted in full, and strong elements from one proposal were often combined with parts of others to create the structure that we believe to be best for this institution. Significant modifications resulted from input from the two comments periods ending May 12, 2017.

The fundamental change in this organizational model is that the school becomes the primary organizing unit within the colleges, rather than the department. Each college is comprised of multiple schools, often large and containing diverse programs and/or departments. As noted above in the definitions of units and roles, Directors will lead these schools, working closely with the faculty chairs in various departments and their program coordinators. Particular programs are not itemized, and non-degree-granting Centers/Institutes are excluded from this plan.

## **I. COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES\***

Center for Science and Math Education  
Department of Aerospace Studies (no majors)  
Department of Military Science (no majors)

School of Communication

- Department of Communication Studies
- Department of Journalism, Public Relations, and Advertising  
(Including programs in Entertainment Industry and Film)

School of Computing Sciences and Computer Engineering

School of Construction and Design

School of Criminal Justice, Forensic Science, and Security

School of Humanities

- Department of English
- Department of History
- Department of Philosophy and Religion

School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Professional Development

- Department of Continuing Education  
(non-degree certificates, Continuing Education Credits [CEUs], and workforce and professional training)
- Department of Human Capital Development
- Department of Interdisciplinary Studies  
(including interdisciplinary minors, University Foundations coursework, and the Exploratory Studies Program)

School of Biological, Environmental, and Earth Sciences

- Department of Ecology and Organismal Biology
- Department of Geography and Geology
- Department of Cell and Molecular Biology
- Department of Medical Laboratory Science

School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

- Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Department of Mathematics
- Department of Physics and Astronomy

School of Music

School of Ocean Science and Engineering

- Department of Marine Science
- Department of Coastal Sciences

School of Performing and Visual Arts

- Department of Art & Design
- Department of Dance
- Department of Theatre

School of Polymer Science and Engineering

School of Social Science and Global Studies

- Department of Anthropology and Sociology
- Department of Economics and International Development
- Department of Political Science and Legal Studies
- Department of World Languages

## **II. COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### School of Accountancy

- Accounting
- MPA

### School of and Finance

- Economic Development  
(Including CLTT)
- Finance  
(Including Real Estate, Statistics, Information Systems, BA courses, Business Law, Ethics)

### School of Management

- General Business
- Management
- Entrepreneurship
- International Business
- MBA

### School of Marketing

- Marketing
- Merchandising
- Health Care Marketing
- Hospitality and Tourism Management
- Sport Management

### **III. COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES\***

School of Education

- Department of Curriculum and Instruction
- Department of Special Education
- Department of Educational Research and Administration

School of Child and Family Sciences

School of Kinesiology and Nutrition

- Department of Kinesiology
- Department of Nutrition and Food Systems

School of Library and Information Science

School of Psychology

School of Social Work

#### **IV. COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS\***

School of Health Professions

- Department of Public Health
- Department of Rehabilitation Sciences

School of Professional Nursing Practice

School of Leadership and Advanced Nursing Practice

School of Speech and Hearing Sciences

**V. GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**VI. HONORS COLLEGE**

**VII. UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**

**VIII. OFFICE OF THE PROVOST**

Advising Center

Center for Faculty Development

\* Once the reorganization plan is approved and implementation begins, continuous improvement measures and productivity assessment will assure responsive and responsible realization of the planned changes. Appropriate goals will be set for programs, departments, and schools, taking into account institutional priorities, peer data averages, research scope, and specific contexts of units (e.g., accreditation stipulations, size and complexity of the unit). Programs exceeding goals during the initial years of the reorganization will receive temporary instructional or other resources as practical to support continued growth over time.

Three years after the implementation begins, longitudinal performance data on programs, departments, and schools will be reviewed to identify alterations that are needed. Programs, departments, and/or schools that exceed their pre-determined productivity goals will qualify for additional faculty lines or other appropriate resources to support that trajectory. Units that do not meet goals will face unit consolidation, and programs that do not meet minimum enrollments and/or graduation rates of the institutional average may result in program elimination.

The implementation of this reorganization plan will be a dynamic process, guidance by ongoing appraisal and appropriate alteration over time.

## **Appendix I. Guidelines for Reorganization**

In considering programs, units, and/or college-level reorganizations, key stipulations guided the process:

1. Academic units with fewer than 10 FTE faculty may be considered for consolidation with larger, discipline-appropriate units;
2. With consideration of accreditation standards and other relevant elements, academic units with greater than 17 students for each FTE faculty in the major/program may continue to hold departmental status. Other units will be considered for consolidation with larger, discipline-appropriate units to create synergy and efficiency;
3. Distinct funding support for programs with specialized/professional accreditation will be provided as appropriate for the standards of the specific accrediting body;
4. Unit naming conventions will be visited and may be modified;
5. All units, regardless of disciplinary associations or student classification, will qualify for incentive and reallocation funding as prioritized by the Academic Master Plan under these circumstances:
  - Have a faculty-to-student ratio of one faculty for every twenty or more student majors, or units that adhere to accreditation standard enrollment caps for majors; or
  - Be research intensive and hold a faculty-to-student ratio of one faculty for every ten or more student majors; and
  - Also, demonstrate evidence of sustained success in external funding for scientific inquiry, nationally/internationally adjudicated creative expression, and/or significant annual contributions to publications that bring national/international recognition to the institution.
6. Organizational units will identify disciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty groupings, including across college divisions and other traditional boundaries. Joint faculty appointments across multiple faculties will be developed where appropriate;
7. Collaborative and innovative disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary groupings that hold the greatest potential to increase student enrollments, expand research funding, and otherwise improve institutional profile will be incentivized;
8. Faculty will be encouraged to work together to build on institutional strengths and to pursue opportunities for expansion;
9. Increased F&As and salary buyout funding may flow directly to interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary (perhaps themed) research areas;



10. Advising practices will be reviewed and efforts made to collaborate across unit and office lines to support student movement to an appropriate major and timely degree completion;
11. Student outreach and retention practices will be coordinated with the Office of the Provost to ensure that communication efficiencies are realized across key areas (e.g., Financial Aid, New Student and Retention Programs, Residence Life, Registrar);
12. Open faculty lines will revert to the Office of the Provost, where reallocation will incentivize academic consolidation to effect improvement in key performance metrics;
13. Student credit hour production will follow faculty in all aspects of unit performance metrics;
14. Dollars from resulting tuition revenue growth will flow to productive academic units at a yet to be determined percentage of tuition per SCH. In the first and second years of growth, dollars may be used to fund travel or temporary lines for instruction or research. In the third year of sustained growth, dollars may be used to adjust faculty salaries, fund research and travel, or add new tenure stream or non-tenured full time teaching, research, or clinical faculty.

Upon completion and implementation of reorganization, a period of assessment and analysis will follow to determine whether a second phase of adjustment or further reorganization is necessary or advisable.

## **Appendix II.**

### **Request for Proposals (RFP) Timeline**

#### **Process**

December 2016 – Academic Reorganization Plan was distributed broadly across academic affairs, initially through a meeting between the Provost and the faculty governance bodies.

- Provost and Academic Leadership Council (ALC) representatives discussed the plan and the RFP with their governance bodies to create mechanisms for deliberation and feedback.
- Chairs and directors shared the planning document with faculty, seeking input and possible proposals for consideration.
- Impact analysis: Ideas for reorganization were asked to consider where individual faculty members in affected units would fit in the new structure.
  - a. Proposals should have provided detail on any realignment of units, in whole or in part;
  - b. Proposals suggesting mergers should have provided detail on the leadership of those units;
  - c. Proposals should have included provisions to protect current promotion and tenure/continuing status criteria and processes in the new environment.
- At the end of this period, each member of the ALC reviewed all submitted proposals individually. Two committees of ALC members then met to discuss Level 1 and Level 2A proposals, then provided executive summaries of emergent themes in the individual ALC reviews. This work was done independent of the Deans. Simultaneously, the Deans reviewed all 44 proposals and provided summaries to the Office of the Provost regarding potential positive or negative impact to the programs within their current jurisdiction.
- The feedback documents received from Deans and from the faculty governance representatives were considered in conjunction with the proposals themselves, institutional data, IHL policy, and other materials. Leadership in academic affairs thoroughly reviewed, discussed, and deliberated all materials in developing this comprehensive plan, which is driven by the proposals submitted by faculty and the responses to them from the ALC and Deans.

Late March 2017 – The resulting academic organization proposal for reorganization will be distributed broadly across academic affairs, beginning with the Deans and the ALC.

- ALC members will present this plan to their respective governance bodies and create mechanisms for a prescribed comment period.
- Chairs and directors will share the planning document with faculty, seeking input to refine the proposal.
- At the end of this period, the ALC will meet to review and organize input as appropriate. The plan will return to the Deans' Council for further review.
- The Provost will present the new academic organizational plan to the President for approval. Should any part of the recommendation be unacceptable to the President, the

proposal will be remanded back to the Provost who will seek advice from ALC and the Deans' Council for resolution.

### **Implementation**

This reorganization plan, Vision 2020, is designed to be implemented by the 2019-2020 academic year. To reach that goal, implementation will begin in stages starting in fall 2017. The processes and steps in the implementation will be discussed with Deans and the ALC, and a subcommittee of the ALC will advise the Office of the Provost on appropriate timelines and steps for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Given the context in which we operate, we must move as quickly as we can and as slowly as needed to ensure the outcomes we seek.

## **APPENDIX III.**

### **Administration and Faculty Leadership within Colleges\***

The overarching structure is one of relatively large schools, each led by a Director, a faculty administrator with a 12-month contract and significant leadership responsibilities. This person receives an administrative stipend as well as course reassignments.

Within each school, faculty leadership teams manage the curricular, assessment, and student success pieces as appropriate to the discipline. Generally, a department chair leads this work, and he or she remains a 9-month faculty member with at-rank pay in the summer to compensate for assessment, orientation, and other duties; he or she also receives 1-2 course reassignments during the academic year for their leadership. The department chair works closely with program coordinators, who manage the program-level curricular delivery, assist with assessment, and support recruitment and retention efforts. These 9-month faculty receive course reassignment to support their service on a three-year rotating term.

Details of each role and the associated duties are explicated below, although the list of duties is not intended to be inclusive of all possible worth but rather to provide guidance on the general responsibilities associated with each position.

#### **I. Director Role**

##### Description:

The Director of a school within a College serves as the primary point of contact for the Dean and the representative of the School on the College Executive Council. The Director is a faculty member who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Dean, although it is typical for a Dean to base his or her appointment on recommendations from the faculty in the School. The Director is evaluated annually by the Dean regarding his or her administrative work and by the governance committee in the school regarding his or her performance as a faculty member. The Director serves as the primary leadership for the school and has administrative, managerial, budgetary, and personnel oversight. In larger schools, the Director may also have an Assistant Director (para-professional) to manage the workload. It is expected that two administrative assistants in each school will provide professional support regarding communications, data management, student record keeping, and general administrative matters.

#### **II. Faculty Leadership Team**

##### **A. Department Chair**

##### Description:

The chair of a department within a school is a faculty member who oversees curriculum delivery, manages assessment of programs within that unit, and represents the programs during summer Orientation. Chairs are not administrators but rather faculty members who lead other faculty to effectively manage programs and advise the school director on matters related to faculty, student success, and curriculum. The primary duties of a department chair center on assessment,

collection of information, and general support to faculty and students in the unit. He or she is expected to be in residence for summer orientation sessions and to submit materials related to scheduling and advising during the summer months as needed. The department chair will serve a three-year term passed among associate and full tenured professors and as nominated and voted upon by the department faculty.

## B. Program Coordinator

### Description:

The coordinator of a program within a department is the primary point of contact for that degree program. Coordinators are not administrators but rather faculty members who are informed about degree requirements, relevant career paths for prospective students, and processes required to progress to degree in a timely fashion. The primary duties of the program coordinator are to provide information to the department chair and serve as a faculty representative of the program.