Create an Annual Review Process Using APS Data

Annual Departmental Review Toolkit
Then hardwire those insights into your organization using our technology & services

Enrollment Management
Our Enrollment Services division provides data-driven undergraduate and graduate solutions that target qualified prospective students; build relationships throughout the search, application, and yield process; and optimize financial aid resources.

Student Success
Members of the Student Success Collaborative use research, consulting, and an enterprise-wide student success management system to help students persist, graduate, and succeed.

Growth and Academic Operations
Our Academic Performance Solutions group partners with university academic and business leaders to help make smart resource trade-offs, improve academic efficiency, and grow academic program revenues.

1.2B+
Student interactions annually

1M+
Individuals on our student success management system

1,300+
Institutions we are proud to serve

1
Goal: Make education smarter

Start with best practices research

➢ Research Forums for presidents, provosts, chief business officers, and key academic and administrative leaders
➢ At the core of all we do
➢ Peer-tested best practices research
➢ Answers to the most pressing issues
About Academic Performance Solutions

Now more than ever, institutional success depends on university leaders taking a strategic, methodical approach to university management—and that starts with the right data. Academic Performance Solutions (APS) is a solution designed to empower academic and financial leaders with the department-specific performance and cost data—as well as reliable peer benchmarks—they need to make more effective decisions.

LEGAL CAVEAT

EAB Global, Inc. (“EAB”) has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to members. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an “EAB Organization”) is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, members should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given member’s situation. Members are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of member and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Members are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its members. Each member acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the “Report”) are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each member agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a member. Each member is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.

2. Each member shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each member shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.

3. Each member may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or membership program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each member shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each member may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.

4. Each member shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.

5. Each member is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.

6. If a member is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such member shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

©2018 by EAB. All Rights Reserved. eab.com
# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary .......................................................... 5
- Introduction ........................................................................... 7
- Tool #1: Readiness Assessment .............................................. 11
- Tool #2: Milestones Timeline ................................................ 15
- Tool #3: Talking Points .......................................................... 17
- Tool #4: Follow-up Introduction E-mail Template ................. 21
- Tool #5: Pick Your Metrics ..................................................... 23
- Tool #6: Supporting Resources E-mail Template ................. 27
- Tool #7: How-to Guide for Locating and Interpreting Selected Metrics .......................................................... 29
- Tool #8: Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide ............ 35
- Tool #9: Reflection Guide ........................................................ 43
Executive Summary

Overview
This toolkit is designed to guide academic leaders through the process of creating and implementing an effective annual departmental review process. It provides resources and tools to help users:

- Understand the importance and impact of conducting departmental reviews annually
- Select metrics that align departmental and institutional priorities
- Leverage reports and analyses in the APS platform to measure departmental health and performance
- Decide on next steps to take after analyzing annual departmental reports

Intended Audience
Provosts, associate provosts, deans, department chairs, and others who are responsible for evaluating departmental performance will benefit from this toolkit the most. Readers should use this resource to inform their communications about decisions involved in the creation of their annual departmental review process.

Types of Tools Provided
Use these nine tools to inform how you develop a departmental review process that leverages the APS platform, as well as communicate the process to academic leaders. Throughout the toolkit, you’ll also find links to other helpful resources.

1. Readiness Assessment
2. Milestones Timeline
3. Talking Points
4. Follow-up Introduction E-mail Template
5. Pick Your Metrics
6. Supporting Resources E-mail Template
7. How-to Guide for Locating and Interpreting Selected Metrics
8. Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide
9. Reflection Guide
Introduction
Introduction to Annual Departmental Review

Six Principles to Guide Your Annual Departmental Review Process

Oftentimes, departments don’t have insight into the role they play in their institution’s long term success. Department leaders may think their decisions, such as those pertaining to hiring faculty or scheduling courses, solely affect their departments. However, all of these decisions gradually add up and ultimately impact their institution’s strategic priorities. To ensure institutional and departmental priorities are aligned, EAB recommends institutions conduct departmental reviews annually.

The most effective annual departmental reviews are those that are informed by data. Provosts and teams review data, set goals, and diagnose departmental challenges – ultimately outlining specific actions departments should take and why. This process encompasses a variety of criteria, so leveraging an agreed-upon data source is essential. These six principles can help guide your annual review process.

1. **Find the Right Frequency**

   *Hold a formal evaluation conversation, at least annually*

   Annual reviews and planning conversations allow departments to make a greater number of immediate decisions about scheduling, hiring and promotion, and more.

   **What is an annual review?**

   • It is a back and forth data-informed discussion based on a common data set to ensure accuracy and efficiency, not an opportunity to grade a department or for a department leader to feel required to make a case for a budgeting decision.
   • Academic leaders, such as the provost and associate provosts, review data, interpret a department’s performance on its goals, adjust goals as necessary to prevent transition-driven disruption, and determine next steps for improvement or continued success with key decision makers.

2. **Make It Easy**

   *Minimize reporting burden on department chairs and other academic leaders*

   To have productive data-informed conversations, provosts and other academic stakeholders must agree on a single source of data that is accessible to all users.

   **Why is an agreed-upon data set important?**

   • Department chairs, who are typically asked to submit their own data or receive reports from others in their department, are neither trained nor can devote sufficient time to successfully complete reports or analyze data.
   • Different data sets result in wildly different results, which can make comparing results across departments inefficient and unproductive.

3. **Know Where You Stand**

   *Share data on internal and external benchmarks openly*

   As long as the distinction among different departments’ missions and goals is clear, an accessible dashboard of performance metrics improves transparency across departments.

   **Why should departmental performance data be accessible?**

   • Transparency in data fosters trust and cooperation across departments, regardless of whether or not they share similarities.
   • Departments can view the data and non-competitively benchmark their performance against other departments to focus on areas for improvement.

---

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
**Introduction to Annual Departmental Review cont.**

### Make It Matter

*Reward improvement with recognition and resources*

Tie or combine unit planning and improvement to discretionary resources in order to direct departmental efforts towards the right priorities.

**How should rewards be allocated?**

- Institutions should distribute rewards based on departmental progress against past performance, measured by a set of strategic metrics.
- Rewards, such as funding, should be discretionary and used for one-time expenses rather than for recurring expenses, like salaries.

### Open the Black Box

*Connect performance and data to major resource decisions*

To dispel the common belief amongst department leaders that long-term resource decisions are made in a “black box” – opaquely, arbitrarily, and/or subject to favoritism – provosts and deans should be transparent when making these decisions.

**How can provosts and deans open the “black box”?**

- Provosts and deans should make long-term, valuable resource decisions using data that is available to everyone.
- They should also provide reasoning for their decisions, so that department leaders can adequately prepare for future resource requests.

### Choose What’s Important

*Prioritize a small number of goals to focus on each year*

Annual departmental reviews should result in two to four strategic goals that have clear direction and are manageable in the allotted timeframe.

**Why is a small number of goals better than a large number?**

- A small number of goals allows departments to focus their strategy and actions on a few mission-critical items: areas to improve or areas in which they can contribute more to institutional goals.
- An overabundance of goals is often too broad for departments to focus on, which hinders their inspiration and progress.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Without departmental support, institutions cannot advance their strategic priorities. However, departments often underestimate their influence and impact on institutional success as a whole. To ensure departments understand their role in this endeavor and their goals are properly aligned with those of the institution, academic leaders must keep strategic priorities at the forefront when designing an annual departmental review process.

**Strategic Priorities:**

- **Cost Efficiency:** Is the department working to close its instructional capacity gap by making the best use of its resources given demand for courses?
- **Enrollment Growth:** Is the department aligning course offerings with demand, especially by term?
- **Student Outcomes:** Is the department promoting student progress?
- **Scholarship:** Is the department engaging in activities that contribute to institutional priorities, such as submitting publications?
- **Faculty Diversity & Inclusion:** Does the department foster an inclusive environment for faculty and support them throughout their careers?

**Academic Vital Signs**

EAB’s academic affairs research team has created **Academic Vital Signs**. This resource outlines best practice strategies and tools to help institutions create departmental review processes that integrate departmental performance metrics which reflect institutional priorities. These metrics should follow the seven criteria below.

- **Aligned**
- **Actionable**
- **Realistic/fair**
- **Difficult to game**
- **Measurable**
- **Simplified**
- **Time-bound**
Readiness Assessment

Before kicking off a new annual departmental review process for the first time, assess how prepared your institution is and identify ways to fill the gaps.
# Readiness Assessment

Designing and implementing a sustainable and impactful annual departmental review process is not an easy endeavor. It requires strategically crafting each aspect of the process and involves multiple stakeholders across campus. Take the assessment below to discern how ready your institution is to start this process.

1. **Does your institution have an annual departmental review process in place?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   
   If you answered no, you’re not alone. Many institutions don’t have an annual process in place. Instead, they rely on seven to ten year academic program reviews.
   
   Shifting to an annual process, which is less rigorous than traditional program review, allows institutions to evaluate departmental health more frequently and course correct when needed.
   
   ▶ Related resource: Academic Vital Signs, *Principle 1: Find the Right Frequency*

2. **Is your institution using quantitative data to inform your review process?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   
   Data helps tell a story because it provides context and support; however, many institutions don’t require quantitative metrics to be used in the review process. To gain a comprehensive look at departments, institutions should always require both quantitative and qualitative metrics.
   
   Embedding the use of data in daily routine and decision-making is essential to making it the norm. Assessing your institution’s data readiness is important before starting the review process.
   
   ▶ Related resource: Academic Vital Signs, *Defining ‘Unit’ Health in Higher Education*

3. **Is your review process clearly articulated in a document that serves as a guide for those providing the data and information?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   
   Because all departments are different and many institutions use both quantitative and qualitative metrics, a standardized document that serves as a guide sets departments up for a fair evaluation. It also eases the burden on department leaders or anyone else designated to provide the data and information, as it clearly outlines what is required and necessary to facilitate a productive discussion.
   
   ▶ Related resource: Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide, pg. 35
Tool #1

Readiness Assessment cont.

4

Are there budgeting or resource decisions currently tied to unit performance?

☐ Yes

☐ No

One source of resistance during the implementation of this new process may be fear of how the data will be used. When implementing a new annual departmental review process, institutions must be transparent about intentions. Explain how these evaluations will affect decisions, such as new faculty line requests or budget priorities. This sets departmental expectations, so departments will not feel blindsided or angered by decisions made as a result of the review process.

► Related resource: Academic Vital Signs, Principle 5: Open the Black Box

5

Do academic leaders, such as deans and department chairs, have the resources to use data?

☐ Yes

☐ No

When shaping a data-informed campus, it’s critical to provide academic leaders with the resources to use data. As an APS member, your institution has access to the APS platform. If your institution has not trained leaders to use the platform, please reach out to your dedicated consultant. If your institution has conducted training, offer your leaders resources to brush up on ways to use the platform.

Even if the data will be provided centrally for the review process, academic leaders still need to be trained in order to understand and interpret the data. This way, they’ll be able to provide additional context to support and explain the data.

► Related resource: On-demand training videos and other resources

6

Does your institution have a designated project owner to ensure accountability for this process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

To successfully launch and implement a new annual departmental review process, institutions must designate a project owner. Whether that be the provost, someone in the central office, or anyone else on campus – it’s critical to designate an individual to ensure deadlines are met and the process is correctly followed.

► If you answered no to any of these questions, please review the related resources and discuss next steps with your dedicated consultant. Once you feel prepared to begin creating an annual departmental review process, use the remainder of the toolkit to get started.
Milestones Timeline

Use this timeline to guide and track your progress as you design and implement a new annual departmental review process.
# Milestones Timeline

The high-level timeline below provides guidance for key steps to build and implement a new annual departmental review process. Please reach out to your dedicated consultant to put together a more detailed and customized plan for your institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Actual Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish goals and process timelines for launching a new annual departmental review process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Socialize the concept of the new process with deans. We recommend you find time during an existing meeting, such as a Deans Council meeting. <strong>Related resource: Tool #3: Talking Points (p. 17)</strong> Introduce your goals and timeline to department chairs and gather feedback. <em>Although someone may be delegated to lead this initiative, we strongly recommend the provost complete this step to ensure the new process is viewed as an executive decision.</em> <strong>Related resource: Tool #3: Talking Points (p. 17), Tool #4: Follow-up Introduction E-mail Template (p. 21)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Select specific metrics from the APS platform to include in your annual departmental report guide. <strong>Related resource: Tool #5: Pick Your Metrics (p. 23)</strong> Use the selected metrics and feedback to create a standardized annual departmental report guide for inserting data and qualitative metrics. <strong>Related resource: Tool #5: Pick Your Metrics (p. 23)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hold rollout meetings for department chairs to share the annual departmental report guide, metrics, and supporting resources, as well as answer questions. Send a follow-up e-mail to department chairs and deans with guidance and supporting resources for completing the annual departmental review guide. <strong>Related resource: Tool #6: Supporting Resources E-mail Template (p. 27)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Department leaders access the data to complete the annual departmental review guide, are given data from a central source, or receive support from college or department resources, such as an analyst. Collect the completed annual departmental review reports. <strong>Related resource: Tool #7: How-to Guide for Locating and Interpreting Selected Metrics (p. 29)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Hold departmental review meetings. Typical attendees include the dean, department chair, and associate provost. Prioritize the investments of resources and reward progress against goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Complete the Reflection Guide to plan for next year’s annual departmental review process. <strong>Related resource: Tool #9: Reflection Guide (p. 43)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talking Points

Before introducing the new annual departmental review process to leaders, fill out the worksheet to prepare for questions you may receive.
Tool #3

Talking Points Worksheet

Complete this worksheet as a starting point for crafting your talking points. Talking points should address anticipated questions you will receive regarding the new annual departmental review process.

Why will this process occur annually?

Consider: Frequently monitoring departmental health, aligning institutional and departmental priorities, promoting transparency

Why are we using APS data?

Consider: Lessening the burden on department chairs, gaining a comprehensive look at departmental health, being able to measure performance in a standardized way, making data-informed decisions
How will this process occur?

Consider: Deadlines, resources and support owners

How will the annual departmental reports be used?

Consider: Making data-informed decisions about new courses and programs, impact on budgeting and resource decisions, identifying high performing departments and departments to monitor, prioritizing goals for the next year

How won’t the annual departmental reports be used?

Consider: Faculty layoffs, program cuts, severe budget cuts
Follow-up Introduction E-mail Template

After introducing the annual departmental review process to deans and department chairs, send a follow-up e-mail to reiterate the new process, its goals, and your institution’s timeline.
E-mail Template: Follow-up Introduction

When launching a new process, it's critical to gain buy-in from the very start. By explaining and gathering feedback about the new annual departmental review process, you give your deans and department chairs a chance to become acclimated to the process before it's implemented. The first introduction to the new process should occur verbally, at which point there is an opportunity for discussion. Below is an e-mail template you can send to deans and chairs after the initial introduction. Deans may also consider separately sending the e-mail to their department chairs.

From: Provost (suggested)
To: Deans, department chairs, and/or individuals who have been designated to complete the departmental review guide
Subject line: Annual departmental review process

Dear [Names],

At [Institution Name], we're continuously striving to improve our processes to better support our campus and institution as a whole. [Time, such as last week or yesterday], I had the opportunity to share information about the launch of our new annual departmental review process. As we discussed, current academic program review, which occurs [time], is too infrequent to understand how we are making progress towards institutional goals. With our new annual departmental review process, we hope to [Please customize list with goals. Here are some examples to get started.]:

- More frequently monitor departmental health
- Align institutional and departmental goals
- Better support current and future departmental goals
- Promote transparency across departments
- Make data-informed budgeting and resource allocation decisions

This new process will occur annually and will be launched on [date]. I have asked [Name of designated project owner] to lead this initiative. Below is our timeline [Please customize list.]:

- Kickoff meeting with department chairs: [Date]
- Annual departmental reports due to [Name or office]: [Date]
- Individual department meetings: [Timeframe]
- Announcement of resulting decisions: [Date]

I'm excited to determine how we can better support our departments, as well as celebrate departmental achievements together. I'm looking forward to launching this new process. If you have any questions, please let me or [Name of designated project owner] know.

All the best,

[Name]
Pick Your Metrics

Select between five and ten metrics from the APS platform to include in your annual departmental review guide for department chairs or other designated individuals to complete. Before choosing your metrics, learn how one member embedded specific APS metrics into their review process.
Suggested APS Reports to Measure Departmental Health

There are many metrics in the APS platform to support alignment of your institutional and departmental goals. To select metrics from the APS platform for your annual departmental review process, consider what your institution hopes to evaluate and understand about departmental performance.

Below are six reports that cover a variety of metrics and can inform multiple departmental resource decisions. Use these as a starting point, but modify them based on your institution’s goals. Please see Tool #7 for the location of each metric.

## Suggested APS Reports to Include in Annual Departmental Review Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority</th>
<th>APS Report</th>
<th>How It Informs About Departmental Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Efficiency</td>
<td><strong>1</strong> Percentile Distribution of Credit Hours Taught and Trends in Median Credit Hours Taught</td>
<td>Provides insight into underutilized instructional capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2</strong> Top Courses With Section Consolidation Opportunity Chart and Low Fill Rate Courses Report</td>
<td>Pinpoints courses with potentially collapsible sections or that can be offered less frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3</strong> Median Class Size Benchmark</td>
<td>Compares a department’s median class size to the benchmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Growth</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> Comparison of Demand vs. Capacity by Department</td>
<td>Illustrates how a department may be facing capacity constraints, has room to grow, or has resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>5</strong> Trends in Attempted Credit Hours by Course Division and Term</td>
<td>reallocation opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Outcomes</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code</td>
<td>Displays DFW rates and ranges in section completion rate for department’s courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case in Brief: Specify Metrics in Annual Review Process

University of Central Missouri, Achieving Standardization with Data

Like many institutions, University of Central Missouri (UCM) - a public master’s university - did not use standardized data for program and school-level review. At UCM, departments are called schools. In previous years, UCM’s Institutional Research office created lengthy, custom data packs for each school to include in their annual reports. School chairs then attached these data packs to their self-written narratives, which varied quite extensively in content and typically comprised the majority of the reports.

Through their partnership with APS, UCM now has easy access to standardized metrics. By requiring APS metrics be used in annual review documents, UCM has achieved standardization and transparency across campus.

Process for Preparing Reports

UCM’s annual review process starts at the program level and progresses up through the college level, each level building upon the previous. By requiring each level to complete required templates, UCM inspires collaboration and transparency across academic leaders.

1. Program- and School-Level Reports
   Each program completes the required template. After, each school collects them to create a school-level report covering:
   - Major goals and accomplishments
   - Evaluation of program’s status
   - Major goals and action plans for next academic year
   - Program assessment progress
   - Review of printed and electronic material

2. College-Level Executive Summary
   Dean compiles school-level reports to generate an executive summary.
   Purpose of summary:
   - Deliver high level overview of college performance and health using data
   - Advocate selective college initiatives to the Provost

3. Annual Review
   Committee evaluates all executive summaries. Comprehensive bottom-up generated reports allow committee to:
   - Evaluate accomplishments and plans
   - Transparently assess how schools used information to improve their curriculum and processes
   - Establish or update current goals

Formalizing the Review Process for Sustainable Use

- Standardized data and templates used in review process
- Established clear expectations for preparation and goals of review process
- Coordinated across planning units to ensure future goals are related to priorities beyond the school

APS Metrics Required in Reports:

1. Median Class Size
2. Median Class Capacity
3. Median Course Completion Rate
4. Class Fill Rate
5. Number of Collapsible Sections
6. Trends in Distinct Course Offerings by Course Type

Tool #5
Supporting Resources E-mail Template

After holding the kickoff meeting with department chairs, send more information about your institution’s selected metrics and supporting resources.
E-mail Template: APS Metrics, Training and Support

It’s important that department leaders understand which metrics will be used in the annual departmental review process so that they have a full picture of what their departments will be evaluated upon. It’s also critical to provide department leaders with training and support. Noting the possibility of some individuals being averse to process change, providing resources upfront to ease their fears will make the change more bearable. Below is an e-mail template to help communicate with department leaders. Deans may also consider separately sending this e-mail to their chairs.

From: Provost or designated project owner (suggested)
To: Deans, department chairs, and/or individuals who have been designated to complete the departmental review guide
Subject line: Supporting resources for annual departmental review process

Dear [Names],

Thank you for joining us [time, such as last week or yesterday] at the kickoff meeting for our new annual departmental review process. During our time together, we shared what information we will be gathering for the review, including metrics available in the Academic Performance Solutions (APS) platform.

The included metrics were hand-selected by [Names, such as the provost or APS value leader]. Each was chosen based on its alignment with our institutional priorities. For example, we selected [name of metric, such as 3 Year Growth in Attempted Credit Hours] to help measure [specific strategic priority, such as enrollment growth]. Below is a list of the chosen metrics [Please customize with your selected metrics. Below are a few to get started.]:

- Percentile Distribution of Credit Hours Taught
- Low Fill Rate Courses
- Median Class Size

We ask that [department chairs, deans, or other designated individuals] complete the attached annual departmental review guide, which includes these metrics, and submit them to [Name or office] by [deadline]. I've included resources below to support you in finding and interpreting the data. [Please customize list with your resources. Below are a few to get started.]

- APS User Guide: Includes definitions of all metrics
- APS platform: Resources and Release Notes tab includes how-to guides
- APS Support team: Name of dedicated consultant with e-mail address, name of value leader with e-mail address
- On-demand training videos

If you have any questions, please let me or [designated project owner] know.

All the best,
[Name]
Once department chairs or other designated individuals receive the annual departmental review guide to complete, share this how-to guide with them so that they can more easily locate and interpret the metrics. The how-to guide is based on the six recommended APS reports in this toolkit. If your institution selects different metrics, please reach out to your dedicated consultant to determine the best ways to use the reports.
Use APS to Improve Cost Efficiency

Get Started: Set Your Filters

- Department Name: Select a department name
- Term: Remove academic terms that might require separate analysis for instructional capacity, such as Summer
- Course Type: Remove course types that might skew course data, such as Individual Instruction, Practicum, and Studio

Within APS, there are several ways to identify opportunities to improve cost efficiency. Assess teaching activity, credit hour production, class size, and fill rate to prioritize opportunities.

Percentile Distribution of Credit Hours Taught and Trends in Median Credit Hours Taught

Find it: APS Dashboard, Instructional Staff tab, Instructional Workload by Instructor Type section

Use the charts to view credit hours taught per instructor type. Credit hours are weighted by the percent responsibility associated with each instructor teaching that section. To understand if there is underutilized instructional capacity, compare your observations to your expectations for instructional workload per instructor type.

Understand Instructional Workload at Your Institution

- Are tenured instructors primarily teaching small classes?
- Is there greater reliance on adjunct instructors each year?
Tool #7

Use APS to Improve Cost Efficiency cont.

2 Top Courses With Section Consolidation Opportunity and Low Fill Rate Courses

Find it: APS Dashboard, Courses tab, Section Consolidation Opportunities – Multiple Section Courses and Opportunities for Expansion or Consolidation – Single Section Courses sections

Use the chart and report to determine which low-enrollment single- and multi-section courses have potentially collapsible sections. If you identify an opportunity to collapse sections or even cancel a course, you can reallocate instructional staff to a high-demand course. This will allow you to grow credit hours in popular courses, while using instructional capacity.

Consolidate Multi-Section Courses
• Do any courses have an unnecessary number of sections that can collapsed?

Assess Single-Section Course Offering Frequency
• Is there an opportunity to cancel or offer courses less often during a year?
• Where could these resources be reallocated to?

3 Median Class Size

Find it: APS Benchmarks Dashboard, Course Planning tab, Department-Level Course Planning Benchmarks section

To assess SCH production, use the chart to compare the department’s class size to the cohort benchmark at each course division. Consider increasing maximum capacities in high-demand courses, such as lower division lectures, to be comparable to the cohort benchmark. In instances where your courses are larger than the benchmarks, consider if this is an opportunity to reallocate instructional resources in order to invest in smaller courses. This may be more appropriate in upper division or graduate courses.

Compare Your Institution’s Class Size to the Benchmark
• How does your institution’s class size compare to the cohort benchmark?
Align Course Offerings and Enrollment Growth

Institutions can leverage APS to identify where course offerings are not meeting student demand. Departments may be offering too many or too few courses.

4 Comparison of Demand vs. Capacity by Department

*Find it: APS Dashboard, Department Scorecard tab, Capacity Planning section*

Use the chart to evaluate if departments have room to grow or are experiencing possible capacity constraints. For departments where student demand outpaces course offerings, consider increasing course caps or adding sections. For departments where student demand is low, consider consolidating sections or offering courses less often.

5 Trends in Attempted Credit Hours by Course Division and Term

*Find it: APS Dashboard, Students tab, Enrollments section*

Filter for off-peak times, such as summer and winter. Many students take summer courses to catch up after withdrawing from or failing critical courses. Use the chart to view credit hour trends and pinpoint opportunities to offer additional courses, such as courses in the summer that are in high demand during regular terms. Not only would offering more courses during summer help students, but it would also help the department generate additional student credit hours.

Another opportunity to meet student demand and increase credit hours is by offering online courses. Consider offering courses that students commonly transfer in for credit after summer term, which they often complete at their local institutions.

Source: Academic Performance Solutions.
Advance Student Outcomes with APS

A critical point in every student’s career is the beginning of their education. By using APS to evaluate final grades, institutions can identify opportunities to bolster student outcomes – particularly in critical prerequisite or first-year courses.

6 Earned Credits and Final Grades by Course Code

Find it: APS Dashboard, Students tab, Final Grades and Course Completion section

Use the chart to calculate the DFW rate and understand the percentage of students not earning credit for critical courses, such as 100-level prerequisite and high-enrollment courses. To calculate the DFW rate, use the Final Grade filter to select any grades where students will not earn credit for the course – typically any D grades, F grades, and withdrawals. The ‘% Students Receiving Selected Grade’ column shows the DFW rate.

Often, instructor variation contributes to high DFW rates – similarly prepared students can have different experiences based on who teaches the course section. By redesigning courses to incorporate standardization across instructors, such as use of standardized tests and the same materials, institutions can reduce section variability in course completion rates.

Pinpoint Courses with High DFW Rates

- Which courses have the highest percentages of DFW rates?
- Does the course have multiple sections?
- Is there a high range by section (%)?
Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide

This document is an example of a departmental review guide, compiled from different institutions’ annual review guides. Use this, as well as a case in brief about a member who centrally produced department-level reports to facilitate data-informed conversations, to help inform the creation of your own guide.
Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide

This document is compiled from several different institutions’ annual review guides to provide a starting point for the types of questions and metrics that may be appropriate. Use this as one input to help create your own departmental review guide.

Introduction
A. Department Name: Click to enter text.
B. College Name: Click to enter text.
C. Name of Department Chair: Click to enter text.
D. Mission Statement: Click to enter text.

Goals and Accomplishments from Previous Year
A. Goal 1: Click to enter text.
   i. Was this goal accomplished? Click to enter text.
   ii. If No, is this goal still feasible? Explain why and any progress made.
   Click to enter text.
B. Goal 1: Click to enter text.
   i. Was this goal accomplished? Click to enter text.
   ii. If No, is this goal still feasible? Explain why and any progress made.
   Click to enter text.
C. Goal 3: Click to enter text.
   i. Was this goal accomplished? Click to enter text.
   ii. If No, is this goal still feasible? Explain why and any progress made.
   Click to enter text.
D. Goal 4: Click to enter text.
   i. Was this goal accomplished? Click to enter text.
   ii. If No, is this goal still feasible? Explain why and any progress made.
   Click to enter text.

Current State of the Department

Many measures help provide insight into departmental performance and health. In this section, use data in the APS platform to provide required metrics for your department.

A. Enrollment
   APS Platform, Department Scorecard tab, Enrollment section
   i. Trends in Student Enrollment
      Paste bar chart here.
        | Metric          | N |
        |-----------------|---|
        | # Students Enrolled |   |
        | Enrollment 3 Yr Trend |   |
        | Total Attempted SCH  |   |
        | SCH 3 Yr Trend      |   |

Start by establishing a mutual understanding of goals before diving into departmental metrics.

For each metric included, provide instructions for where to find the metric. If this data is provided centrally, provide the metrics and allow for further exploration by including the location of each metric.
The Intercurricular Dependencies by Department analysis helps inform student demand by including the shares of department major and service major enrollment.

Because each course type is pedagogically different, it’s important to view metrics for each separately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Median Class Size</th>
<th>% Classes with Size &lt; 10</th>
<th>Median Section Fill Rate</th>
<th># Collapsible Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Filters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assess courses with low and high demand to inform resource reallocation decisions.

Consider including student progress metrics, such as course completion rates, in your institution’s guide.
Tool #8

Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide cont.

The DFW rate will help inform which courses may need to be reassessed.

Consider instructional staff activity when analyzing instructional capacity.

Have departments explain their future goals, as well as how they hope to achieve them.

---

**D. Instructional Staff**

**APS Platform, Instructional Staff tab, Headcount and Instructional Full-Time Equivalent (IFTE) by Instructor Type section**

i. Trends in Instructional Staff Headcount
   
   Paste scatter plot here.

**APS Platform, Instructional Staff tab, Instructional Workload by Instructor Type section**

ii. Percentile Distribution of Student Credit Hours (SCH) Taught
   
   Paste bar chart here.

iii. Trends in Median Student Credit Hours (SCH) Taught
   
   Paste scatter plot here.

---

**D. Costs**

**APS Platform, Costs tab,**

i. Trends in Cost Per Credit Hour by Account Category
   
   Paste the scatter plot here.

---

**Goals and Accomplishments for Upcoming Year**

Identify 3–4 goals for the upcoming academic year. For each goal, please include the projected action plan, desired outcomes, and timeline, as well as how it aligns with departmental and institutional goals.

**A. Goal 1:** Click to enter text.

i. Is this goal being carried over from the previous year? Click to enter text.

ii. Action Plan: Click to enter text.

iii. Desired Outcomes: Click to enter text.

iv. Timeline: Click to enter text.

v. How does this goal align with departmental and institutional goals? Click to enter text.

**B. Goal 2:** Click to enter text.

i. Is this goal being carried over from the previous year? Click to enter text.

ii. Action Plan: Click to enter text.

iii. Desired Outcomes: Click to enter text.

iv. Timeline: Click to enter text.

v. How does this goal align with departmental and institutional goals? Click to enter text.
Sample Annual Departmental Review Guide cont.

C. Goal 3: Click to enter text.
   i. Is this goal being carried over from the previous year? Click to enter text.
   ii. Action Plan: Click to enter text.
   iii. Desired Outcomes: Click to enter text.
   iv. Timeline: Click to enter text.
   v. How does this goal align with departmental and institutional goals? Click to enter text.

D. Goal 4: Click to enter text.
   i. Is this goal being carried over from the previous year? Click to enter text.
   ii. Action Plan: Click to enter text.
   iii. Desired Outcomes: Click to enter text.
   iv. Timeline: Click to enter text.
   v. How does this goal align with departmental and institutional goals? Click to enter text.

Comments
Any additional comments/thoughts? Click to enter text.

Provide space for departments to provide comments on the information they’ve provided in this document, or on information they may not have included but would like your institution’s leaders to know.
Case in Brief: Craft Discussion Points for Conversations

St. Ambrose University, Engaging Leaders with Data for Annual Reviews

Historically, the review process at St. Ambrose University (SAU) – a private masters university – was hindered by lack of departmental data and insight. Manual data collection and analysis were time-consuming, which made it impossible to review all departments.

With easy access to critical metrics in the APS platform, SAU streamlined their review process to put standardized departmental data at the center. SAU centrally created department-level reports, which allows academic leaders to collaborate and engage in data-informed conversations to illuminate existing efficiencies and potential opportunities.

Targeted Questions Prompt Collaboration and Opportunity Identification

SAU’s Faculty Finance Committee (FFC) is responsible for diagnosing departmental health. With the help of the finance team, the FFC armed itself with data to have informed and efficient conversations with academic leaders across all departments.

Sample Questions from Department-Level Report:

1. Student counts and major counts have decreased the past four years. Is this all due to overall undergraduate student declines?
2. Class sizes are strong and seat utilization is also very high. The median and 25th and 75th percentile for seat utilization are all over 100%. Are the section caps correct in the system?
3. The single section courses all have low seat utilization. They all appear to be 300 and 400 level courses. Is this due to the low major counts? Can these courses be taught less often?
4. Full-time, tenured faculty teach almost 100% of all sections. This is very high and is probably the reason for the fully allocated loss the last three years. Is there a way to lower this number?

Campus-Wide Impact of Data-Informed Conversations

By using data to drive and inform conversations with academic leaders, SAU was not only able to review all departments, but also achieved administrative and financial results.

- **700 Hours** saved in manual data collection and analysis
- **$446,000** reallocated faculty lines to two growing and new programs
- **100%** departments reviewed, instead of a select handful
Once your institution has completed the annual departmental review process, use this guide to reflect. This will help you proactively prepare for next year.
Reflection Guide

Once your institution has completed the annual departmental review process, use this guide to reflect. This will help you proactively prepare for next year.

Ask the following questions to gather feedback from academic stakeholders who were involved in the process. To promote honest candor, we suggest you request anonymous responses.

1. How effective do you think communication about and throughout the process was to academic leaders, such as yourself?

2. Do you think the process accomplished its goals?

3. Which parts of the process do you think went well? Not so well?

4. How would you grade the entire process? In what ways could that grade be improved for next year?

To inform strategy for next year’s review process, answer the questions above and use the collected feedback. Additional questions for initiative leaders are below.

1. How did the proposed and actual timelines compare?

2. What would you like to share internally with academic stakeholders about this initiative?