

SRAP Update: March 15, 2018

Dear Colleagues,

As I watch the review groups go about their work, and listen to the conversations about SRAP in a variety of settings, I can't help but note how much we are learning about all of the important work that goes on at St. Olaf. We get caught up in our job responsibilities and don't necessarily think about what goes on in other areas, how our work may impact other areas, how we serve our students, or how we might do things differently. Provost Sortor in an earlier setting gave an analogy of the SRAP process as looking under the hood of a car to see how the engine is working and assessing what improvements might be made to make the engine work more effectively. We're learning about the St. Olaf engine, and what fuels that engine, in every review group meeting and conversation about SRAP. These conversations are generating ideas that need to be thoughtfully explored. Having creative conversations with our colleagues within, and across department boundaries, and bringing a variety of perspectives to those conversations will ensure that we emerge from SRAP having strategically aligned our resources and make us an even stronger institution than we are now.

One question I've been asked this past month is "Where are we in the SRAP process?" The answer is that both of the review groups are reviewing and discussing departmental questionnaire responses and asking follow-up questions. The financial aid strategies group is working with their consultant and met with members of the President's Leadership Team, the admissions and financial aid folks this week to identify strategies in which the College can increase its net tuition revenue. The more we can maximize our revenue, the less we'll need to curtail expenses. The benefits strategy group is analyzing St. Olaf's benefits line-up against that of other similar institutions. I expect that all of these groups will be formulating recommendations on generating revenue, eliminating expenses, investing in programs, or downsizing programs for Steering Committee consideration within the next month. These recommendations will be shared with the community for feedback during late April/May. The recommendations will also include rationale supporting the ideas and mapping out the potential implementation timelines. We'll do a preliminary report to the Board at their May meeting. The Steering Committee will make their SRAP recommendations over summer so that PDA can announce a first set of SRAP decisions at the start of the fall semester. There will be SRAP decisions that need additional vetting or discussions into the fall.

I've also been asked "Who will make the final SRAP decisions?" The steering committee is tasked with presenting the President with a set of SRAP recommendations. PDA will make his recommendations to the Board of Regents for final approval. Obviously, those recommendations pertaining to curricular areas will go through the appropriate governance process as identified in the Faculty Manual. Those recommendations pertaining to non-curricular areas will be vetted with the appropriate stakeholders and vice presidents and implemented as part of the annual budget development.

At this point in the year we normally would be in the midst of developing a preliminary FY18-19 budget. Because the SRAP activity continues and we don't have any recommendations yet from the review groups, we've purposely delayed the FY18-19 budget development. Only those decisions already made, such as the transition to Barnes & Noble Bookstore, can be factored into our planning at this point. As units are planning for their FY18-19 programs, they should assume a flat budget level, consistent with the FY17-18 amounts approved last October. Any SRAP decisions having budget implications will be implemented as budget adjustments when the decisions are made. Remember,

implementation of the SRAP decisions will most likely occur over the next several years, so we'll all need to be patient as the budget implications are identified.

Non-Instructional Review Group – Roberta Lembke reports that her group has completed the budget manager interviews. Interviewees are appreciative of the time to be able to discuss their questionnaire responses and provide additional clarifying information. The group will now consider all they've learned and develop their SRAP recommendations. Roberta is encouraging individuals to reach out to her or the SRAP-NI group (srap-ni@stolaf.edu) if you have more information you wish to share or simply have questions regarding their process.

Instructional Review Group – Dan Dressen reports that his group is meeting regularly reviewing groups of academic responses at each meeting, and will have a SRAP retreat session over spring break. The group has developed the following principles to inform their deliberations and recommendation decisions:

1. St. Olaf is a liberal arts, residential, undergraduate institution that includes a limited number of applied and professional programs.
2. St. Olaf's mission and the priorities set forth by the current version of the strategic plan, articulate a clear set of goals that should inform curricular and staffing plans.
3. The college's approved curriculum should be supported by sufficient tenure and tenure-track faculty lines. Curriculum includes both general education (with its set of priorities, such as writing, quantitative skills and cultural knowledge) and majors/concentrations (also to be considered: prerequisites for majors).
4. The faculty endorse student learning and a curriculum that are disciplinary, interdisciplinary and integrative. Staffing plans should reflect support for all three principles.
5. The college needs to track and respond to student demand and promote inclusion, mindful of balance with other principles and awareness of inevitable changes in society and culture.
6. The student experience is a consequence of a variety of teaching practices and learning environments (curricular and co-curricular) meant to address the question, "what do we want students to encounter". Considerations include class size at different levels of the curriculum, pedagogy, and a balance of long (essentially tenure/tenure track) and short-term members. The student experience is a priority in this planning process.
7. Fairness in Faculty work should be a goal of staff planning, so that teaching, service and advising responsibilities are shared as equally across the academic division as is possible.

I appreciate the diligence with which faculty and staff have approached the SRAP questionnaire responses. I also thank the review groups for the enormous amount of time that has been spent on carefully reviewing each response, seeking clarification and additional information when needed, and having creative, and difficult, conversations as they deliberate their SRAP recommendations. As I've said before, this is extremely hard work, but it is also necessary work to ensure a solid financial future for St. Olaf. Thank you for your time and patience as we continue this process.

Best,
Jan

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