



March 13, 2017

Dean's Review of the PPR Report

Mechanical Engineering

The PPR Report and the External Review Team Report for Mechanical Engineering (ME) has been reviewed at the dean's level. Here are the findings and follow up activities:

Strategic Plan

The ME department has experienced multiple leadership changes over the last few years. While the frequent change in leadership placed the department in a reactive mode than more directed and focused approach based on the goals of the program, the department is currently under a stable and forward-looking leadership. It is important that department strategic plans are aligned with the College and University strategic plans. The College, under the new leadership, is in the process of developing a College Strategic Plan. Departments and programs in the College will be asked to develop their own strategic plans in alignment with the College plan after an approved College plan is in place.

The department consists of nine assistant professors and two full professors. Several of the faculty members, although assistant professors, have excelled in their professional development and contributions to the department over the years. These faculty members are clearly in a position to mentor the new hires. In addition, the dean's office has taken a proactive approach to providing the support and guidance needed by the assistant and associate professors in the College to successfully navigate through the Retention, Tenure and Promotion (RTP) process.

Enrollment

The ME department has seen unprecedented growth in enrollment, consistent with the national trend. The College has already implemented multiple strategies to meet the student demand. Offering more classes on Fridays and Saturdays, raising the admission criteria of graduate admission and adding more online courses are few steps the College has already put into operation. Faculty hiring decisions have become more intentional and purposeful, driven by FTES (Full-Time Equivalent Student) and SFR (Student Faculty Ration) data. The College has also initiated conversations on enrollment management and improving student performance in

bottleneck courses. Departments and programs in the College, including ME department, will play key roles in these initiatives.

Research

The College has successfully been able to repurpose space within the ECS complex and meet the research space needs of all the current faculty members in the ME department. In addition, a College Space Assessment Committee was appointed during AY 2015-16 to determine the percentage utilization of all areas in the ECS complex and make recommendations for better utilization including repurposing. The dean's office has reviewed the committee recommendations and is in the process of repurposing and renovating some of the areas to provide increased faculty/student research and student project space. Dean's office has also awarded five incentive grants of 3 WTUs each in Spring 2017 to encourage and support faculty research and to increase faculty engagement in pursuing external grants. Additional travel and professional development funds are also made available by the dean's office.

The issues raised by the Review Team have thus been adequately addressed.