



Office of the Provost

From: Charles Taylor, Chair, Presidential Council on Academic Affairs
To: Michael Williams, President
Subject: Academic Council, Final Report
Date: June 20, 2022

This charge is in continuation to the FY20 work completed

SITUATION:

HSC must remain competitive in offering high-quality, innovative programs that are important to current day learners that also address emerging and future needs of our surrounding communities and State.

BACKGROUND:

Universities and colleges continue to compete for students to reach enrollment targets. It is important to have a unified strategy for developing and supporting both undergraduate and graduate education.

ASSESSMENT:

HSC will matriculate its first undergraduate students in 2022 and has a long history of enrolling PhD students. HSC will need to identify specific, measurable undergraduate and PhD program outcomes and ensure learning strategies are deployed optimally to achieve these outcomes. A regular process for external comparison is required to highlight the many attributes of our programs while discussing challenges and opportunities to differentiate ourselves. A sustainable mechanism for funding and advancing these programs should be reviewed, particularly for PhD stipends that assist graduate programs across all colleges.

REQUEST & ACTIONS:

Timeline – June 30, 2022

1. Evaluate requirements and best practices for undergraduate education and recommend actions to enhance learning outcomes, career readiness, and program administration.
2. Evaluate requirements and best practices for PhD education at HSC and recommend actions to enhance learning outcomes, career readiness, and program administration.
3. Analyze the blend of learning strategies deployed across HSC programs and recommend actions, based on universal design for learning framework, to ensure all students equal opportunity to success.

PROCESS

The Academic Council reviewed the charges and divided the work across the following three teams:

- **Undergraduate Degree Team** – Evaluate requirements and best practices for undergraduate education and recommend actions to enhance learning and improve achievement of outcomes, evaluate career readiness & improve program administration.
- **PhD Program Team** – Evaluate requirements and best practices for PhD education at HSC and recommend actions to enhance learning outcomes, evaluate career readiness & improve program administration.
- **Universal Design for Learning Team**- Analyze the blend of learning strategies deployed across HSC programs and recommend actions, based on universal design for learning framework, to ensure all students equal opportunity to success.

Monthly meetings were scheduled for the entire Council to receive report outs from the teams. In between meetings, the work teams would reach out to subject matter experts as needed to inform their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

Charge 1: Evaluate requirements and best practices for undergraduate education and recommend actions to enhance learning outcomes, career readiness, and program administration.

Area 1: Enhance Learning/Achieve Outcomes

- Improve curriculum alignment and make that alignment visible.
- Stress the importance of curriculum alignment on different levels (program, curricular, course, module, lesson).
- Map curriculum focusing on processes to connect prior knowledge.
- Create alignment between faculty and students' perceptions of what has been taught. This will allow students to become more aware of their learning trajectory and cross-curricular learning trajectories.

Area 2: Experiential Learning

- Increase engagement via tools such as pre-made lab kits for students to perform lab assignments at home.
- Faculty-mentored research is considered high-impact practice that provides students with integrative and applied learning.
- Summer research opportunities are a high-impact practice that improve learning outcome achievement.

Area 3: Active Learning

- Provide guided small group (think-pair-share, problem solving, task-oriented) collaborations and guided class activities to improve achievement of learning outcomes.
- Utilize authentic data for students to practice plotting and/or interpreting data.

Area 4: Career readiness

- Faculty-mentored research is considered high-impact practice that provides students with integrative and applied learning. Student mentored research provides achievement in career readiness competencies, critical thinking, written/oral communication, teamwork and problem solving. These skills meet employer expectations.

- Summer Research Fellows/Internship Opportunities
- Centralized research support for students across the university
- Synthesize learning with career planning
- Incorporate HSC Career Readiness Center team’s knowledge and skill base from before student entry and throughout academic programs. This will develop the students’ ability to articulate and demonstrate crucial career readiness skills as they pursue their desired career.
- Utilize pre-matriculation opportunities, internships and contact time with faculty

Area 5: Improve program administration

- Dedicated Associate Dean that will ensure clear/consistent policies and procedures for students and faculty.
- Dedicated student advisors who have experience or receive training to advise undergraduate students
- Strongly encouraged/required academic advising and support (First session required, encouraged thereafter)
- Utilize canvas tool, dropout detective, to assist with overseeing student progress for early intervention and retention.
- Provide representation in the HSC University Assessment Committee in developing a set of institutional learning outcomes or institutional-level expectations for learning, which represents the general knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that all graduates should be able to demonstrate at the time of graduation.

Charge 2: Evaluate requirements and best practices for PhD education at HSC and recommend actions to enhance learning outcomes, career readiness, and program administration.

Area 1: Administrative Oversight Recommendations:

There is a need for administrative oversight from a centralized office such as the Provost.

Rationale: Although the autonomy of Schools and College must be respected because PhD programs are quite different from one another, there is a need for University-level policies, standards, processes, and support to insure their high quality. We note that at some academic health science centers, there is a Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs who as a part of their portfolio of responsibilities oversees PhD education.

Area 2: Student Financial Support Recommendations:

The University must establish a mechanism for insuring funding for PhD students. The Provost’s Office should establish a “floor” for support packages that schools and colleges could exceed if they chose to do so.

Rationale: To successfully recruit and retain talented PhD students today, universities must be able to provide competitive stipends, waive tuition costs, and provide free medical insurance. Many universities provide conference travel support as well.

Area 3: Recruitment and Admissions Recommendations:

Each school and college with a PhD program must develop a systematic approach to recruiting PhD applicants that involves its research-focused faculty. The Provost’s Office needs to support and guide this effort in collaboration with the PhD program directors.

Rationale: Successful recruitment of talented PhD applicants depends heavily on the involvement of faculty who have active programs of funded research.

Area 4: PhD Program Purpose and Career Pathways Recommendations:

Each PhD program should have a clearly articulated purpose that is effectively communicated to applicants during the recruitment process. The Provost's Office should review and approve stated program purposes and expected career pathways.

Rationale: It is critical that the University only extend offers of admission to those applicants who are a good fit for a PhD program, particularly because of the financial investment the University makes in these students.

Area 5: Best Practices for Faculty-Student Mentoring Recommendations:

The Provost's Office should establish a set of faculty best practices for PhD student mentoring and maintain a faculty development program focused on this topic.

Rationale: In PhD programs, much student learning occurs outside the classroom and is dependent upon the quality of the professional relationship between the faculty advisor and their student. When successful, these mentor-mentee relationships evolve into professional partnerships that extend well beyond graduation.

Area 6: Program Outcomes Recommendations:

The Provost's Office should establish measurable program outcome measures to insure program accountability. These measures may include: new student enrollment targets, time to degree completion, number of student co-authored papers in the peer-reviewed literature, number of conference presentations by students, successful placement of graduates in program-purpose aligned positions, etc.

Rationale: Schools and colleges should be accountable for maintaining a high-quality PhD program, particularly because of the financial investment the University makes in these students.

Charge 3: Analyze the blend of learning strategies deployed across HSC programs and recommend actions, based on universal design for learning framework, to ensure all students equal opportunity to success.

The team conducted numerous interviews with program chairs and directors describing the current state of Universal Design for Learning and accessibility in our programs to shape recommendations. These interviews have resulted in the following recommendations:

Area 1 Grow Expertise:

Mobilize faculty & instructional designers to assist with UDL across all programs.

Area 2 Funding:

Provide institutional funds to pay for accommodating requests across all programs.

Area 3: Faculty Training:

Increase faculty participation and skill development pertaining to UDL.

Area 4: Online Quality:

Work with chairs & deans to consistently set expectations of what online courses should look like and scoring courses/setting goals.

Area 5: Templates:

Create institutional templates for items such as syllabi and implement across all programs.