

RCM 5 Year Review: Initial Hearings

Hearing 16: Liberal Arts

March 30, 2005

Administrative Representatives: Tammy Goldberg, Bruce Mallory, Leigh Anne Melanson, David Proulx

Background: Provost Mallory provided background on the RCM five year review and context for the hearing. David Proulx reviewed some of the results of RCM to date.

Questions and Comments from Participants:

- Asked about credible **governance** structures. Dave Proulx responded that the establishment of such structures has been up to the unit; in the case of the colleges it has usually been the dean to drive organization of such. Some units have more formal governance mechanisms than others. Bruce Mallory described the University Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee (UCAPC) designed to guard against inappropriate competition between academic units. For instance, UCAPS has recently been asked to review a request to renumber Thompson School courses. The committee is one mechanism in place to guard against unintended consequences of RCM.
- If RCM is supposed to be an **incentive** structure, shouldn't it reflect and promote pedagogical goals rather than trying to guard against unwelcome activity? As an accounting mechanism it should reflect the **values** that drive the institution rather than mitigating against unintended consequences. RCM does not include incentives that speak to the educational realm.
- Need to examine research funding that does not bring in the full **IDC** rate. There are often good reasons for undertaking this research. There is a limit to the direct costs that can be built in to some grants. Deans are sometimes hesitating to support these because of the assessments.
- Will RCM be reviewed every five years? Bruce Mallory responded, yes. Dave P. noted the review committee will consider the **review schedule**. Bruce reminded all that when RCM was implemented the academic plan had not been completed – during this review we need to determine whether RCM supports the goals of the academic plan.
- Will the **hold harmless** and pre-existing agreements be examined during the review? Dave P. responded, yes, everything is on the table. The hold harmless was a way to make the financial transition of units into RCM a net zero exercise, with units entering RCM no better or worse off than they had been under the old budget system. That said, there were known areas that needed to be addressed even then, and those issues will be examined during this review.
- **Library funding** needs to be examined. RCM implementation froze the library in a permanently underfunded state. For two decades we've known that journal costs inflate well above normal inflation. The library needs more funding.
- There is no mechanism for the library to communicate with colleges, schools, and programs regarding how important hard-copy journals are to these units. There needs to be a conversation among all units and the library to find out what journals are essential, but the discussion has not changed. Also, there are flaws in the measures of use – for instance there is no way to capture use of journals in the library and then reshelved by the scholar. Bruce responded that Claudia Morner, UNH Librarian, is working to rationalize the journal issue, including interviews.
- Bruce also reminded the assembly that RCM will not compensate for any structural budget problems the institution may have. RCM will not increase funding.
- When RCM was implemented UNH examined **credit hour weighting** at comparator institutions. Maybe it's time to re-examine these. Bruce responded that the source of information was the Delaware Study and indeed this data will be re-examined.
- Requested that the impact of decisions on the lower-paid employees in our community be examined – make sure we incorporate our **humane values**.

- What has been the impact of RCM on the **quality** of education at UNH? Are there models to look at quality? Bruce responded that discussion is ongoing between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs regarding how to measure the undergraduate experience. Currently we rely on program reviews done at the department level – which is the appropriate level for such assessment. The NEASC reaccreditation effort included a goal of measuring institutional effectiveness.
- An observation: There is a **perception** in the community that RCM is kind of Monty Python, kind of crack-pot, and that RCM makes it harder to make sound academic decisions. This is the perception.
- Suggestion: Find institutions where RCM has really allowed the institution to achieve academic goals; study it and adopt it here. Also, find institutions where RCM has been a catastrophe and study what happened (so that we don't repeat their mistakes). Bruce responded that RCM is not meant to improve academic quality, but rather is a budget system intended to make financial decisions transparent and to allow tracking of the results of such decisions. In the old budget system, we had no idea where units were hemorrhaging dollars, which units were effective and which were not. There was no assessment of academic quality in the old system either. With RCM, we can see where there are deficits and where there are surpluses, where investments have been made and the results of those, etc.
- RCM is a revenue allocation system. Does it help or hinder **academic goals**? People are concerned – UNH is a very lean institution. We can't play games with our revenue. Is RCM helping, hurting, or indifferent? If RCM is indifferent or hurting academic goals it should not be used.
- Requests examination of the appropriateness of **fees** imposed on academic areas. Units are charged what seems to be inordinate sums by the MUB, catering, etc. This encourages departments to go outside UNH for services.
- Don't confuse bad financial times with problems with the RCM model. We need to parse out what difficulties are due to the model and what is due to increased funding constraints. The earlier years of RCM were easier because there was a higher level of funding. Bruce noted that it's hard to separate the forces at work; also, the lag times built into RCM calculations have an impact. One of the guiding principles of RCM was **simplicity** and we've strayed somewhat from that. We need to return to this.
- The RCM model was developed in different economic times. Is it still relevant now that times have changed? Bruce noted that RCM guides how resources are allocated – whatever level of resources are available.

Dave P. reminded all that the review committee welcomes follow up comments via email or the link on the RCM review website.