**Guide for Conversation with Divisional Leader**

**(AES Program Reflection Process)**

An important step in the external feedback phase of the AES Program Reflection (AES PR) process is a conversation that unit leaders have with a divisional leader after they’ve had their external feedback conversations. The purpose of this step is:

* to provide an opportunity for the unit leader to discuss highlights of the process (overall), their learnings, and the next steps the unit is developing based on their program reflection process.
* to ensure that units’ efforts and learnings in the AES PR Process are seen and considered in a divisional context (*and that efforts don’t end up in a black box*).
* to ensure that as the unit leaders are finalizing their future direction/plans based on assessment, learning, and feedback that they have any necessary divisional or institutional context that might need to be considered (e.g. divisional or college-wide priorities; potential challenges that unit leaders should be privy to, etc.)

These conversations need not be formal and need not necessarily take place with a divisional VP (i.e. It could take place with a dean or someone else within the division that holds a broad view/perspective of the division); however, they should provide an opportunity to elicit any final considerations that the unit leader should incorporate as they move toward finalizing their next steps.

Steps Prior to Conversation with Divisional Leader

*For Unit Leader*

* Compile notes from feedback conversation with external partner
* Based on feedback, determine if any adjustments should be made to the second part of the template document (and make adjustments)
* Share updated template document and any relevant complementary documents with divisional leader (**at least 1 week before** **scheduled conversation**)
* Share with the divisional leader which topics you may want to particularly focus on in your conversation (see “Focus of Conversation” section below)

*For Divisional Leader*

* Review materials provided by unit leader
* Prior to conversation, ask unit leader any clarifying questions you may have
  + Alternatively, prepare any clarifying questions you may have for the conversation itself

Focus of Conversation

Though informal, the conversation may benefit from having some structure to help ensure unit leaders walk away with what they need to finalize their next steps. The table below presents some suggested topics that could be covered in that conversation as well as some notes and guiding questions for engaging in the topics (*note: unit leaders should be sure to indicate if there are particular topics they’d like to focus on*).

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| **Topic** | **Notes** | **Guiding Questions for Conversation** |
| *Assessment of, and learnings about, the unit* | A topic of conversation that might be helpful is to discuss/unpack the key learnings from the unit leader’s engagement in the AES PR Process. This is an opportunity for the divisional leader to understand what’s been learned (and how it is informing the unit’s next steps). | * What did you learn about your unit’s work that surprised you? * What activities did your unit find to be the most impactful toward your goals? * Based on your learnings what were some things you decided to (or are considering) changing? |
| *SWOT Analysis* | This topic poses a good opportunity to glean additional perspective, thoughts, and ideas about how to leverage certain opportunities or strategies for mitigating certain threats, from a divisional/institutional perspective.  The discussion here need not focus on strengths or weakness unless the unit leader would like additional ideas for previously unseen strengths that they could potentially leverage or weaknesses that they should be particularly careful to try to mitigate. | * What opportunities did the process help you to uncover? Which ones are you particularly interested in leveraging? How might you go about that? * What threats surfaced in this process? In what ways are you currently thinking about how to mitigate the potential impact of these threats? * Are any of the identified opportunities aligned with divisional/institutional priorities? If so, what are the potential implications? * Do any of the threats pose a particular barrier to a divisional/institutional priority? If so, what are the implications? |
| *Overarching divisional and/or institutional context for next steps* | As unit leaders are finalizing their next steps from the process and incorporating into future plans, this conversation poses a particularly good opportunity to revisit the activities units will be continuing or introducing, from the lens of divisional or college-wide priorities.  This will help to ensure that unique or necessary opportunities are not missed as the unit leader finalizes these next steps. Divisional leaders should come prepared to provide that context. | * Are the division’s/college’s priorities reflected in the proposed activities/next steps? * What divisional/college-wide priorities should this particular unit keep in mind as it finalizes next steps? * Are there particular opportunities related to these priorities that the unit should consider? |
| *Needs Moving Forward* | The conversation could also provide an opportunity for unit leaders to brainstorm (with divisional leaders) what resource/support[[1]](#footnote-1) might be needed to help execute some of the particular activities/next steps.  Note that not all activities/next steps need be discussed, but if there are specific activities/planned next steps that the unit leader thinks could benefit from having some collective brainstorming for how to execute, this would be a good opportunity | * Are there particular next steps/activities that you think might require additional bandwidth, resources, or support outside of what is currently available within the unit? * What do you think it will take to successfully implement this/these activities? * What do we currently have within our scope that we could leverage to support their implementation? * Are there creative ways we could repurpose currently available resources/supports? * What do you need or need to know from divisional leadership in order to successfully implement? |

1. Resources/Supports can fall under a few categories:

   **Human Resources** – administrative, academic and non-academic staff, college assistants, work study students and external stakeholders working together to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services. Working together and problem solving with colleagues to find creative solutions to address resource shortages. For example, this may include reallocation of responsibilities, changes to organizational charts/supervisory structures, etc.

   **Physical/Material Resources –** the tangible resources such as the structures and facilities (classrooms, laboratories, library, offices, theaters, studios and recreational areas), hardware, software, vehicles, equipment and supplies that directly and indirectly contribute to the organizational goals.

   **Financial Resources –** sources of funding and a budgeting system that provides a comprehensive framework to identify the academic and fiscal strategy for accomplishing the college’s mission and goals.

   **Time Resources –** maintaining or increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of academic and administrative operations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)