

CAP's Criteria for Academic Priorities

In its task of establishing the academic priorities of the College, CAP members have formulated a set of *criteria* to guide our work of assessing various aspects of our educational offerings at Smith (referred to below as “programs,” in the widest sense, i.e. whether carried out within a department or an interdisciplinary program, whether a whole discipline – such as engineering – or only a sub-field, whether it is a request, for example, for staffing, curricular initiatives, funding, etc.) Probably no proposal could – or ever should – satisfy all of them, but we think each represents an important element for the committee to consider:

- ***Excellence*** – our estimate of the program’s (actual or potential) excellence, measured against the best (established or emerging) national standards for similar programs – we should do whatever we do at a high level of quality;
- ***College Goals*** – our estimate of the program’s fit with (or contribution to) the College’s goals, including those being identified through the curricular review process. (See the College’s strategic plan, the Smith Design for Learning, at <http://www.smith.edu/planning/design/documents/SmithDesign-0807.pdf>.) Our assessment will be informed by our knowledge of best practices in higher education, especially at leading liberal arts colleges;
- ***Faculty interest***, expertise, enthusiasm, and commitment – we should support programs our faculty are enthusiastic about offering;
- ***Students*** – we do our best to support programs our students show that they want through enrollments and other measures;
- ***Diversity*** – does the proposal address the College’s commitment to ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, and geographic diversity in its curricular content? Is the position likely to attract a diverse pool of candidates? Not every proposal can or should, but if other things are equal, the CAP should give priority to proposals likely to further our common purposes and the College’s goals in this respect.
- ***Synergy*** – does the proposal invite interaction with or support the curricular endeavors of other departments and programs? Our resources will always be limited, so collaborations have a special attraction;
- ***Consortial Considerations*** – does the proposal address Five College interests and shared resources? Is there evidence that the proposers have consulted with their Five College colleagues? Does the proposal show efforts to use the consortium connection for both short and longer-term needs?
- ***Innovation*** – does the proposal promise innovative teaching and materials? Not every program can or should, but we must be sure to incorporate the best of emerging fields and techniques into our curriculum;
- ***Vision*** – do the proposers have a compelling vision for the next three to five years for their discipline and their curriculum?
- ***Costs*** – in money, space, faculty FTE, library and other resources, including possible Five College economies – other things being equal, if we can achieve our goals in a more economical way, that will allow us to stretch limited resources.