

7.4 Guidelines for Visiting Committees

Procedure

The following sections provide details of the procedures used to identify, schedule and host a visit of a departmental visiting committee.

Purpose

A Visiting Committee is an advisory body that is charged by the Provost to assess and facilitate programmatic and operational developments within an academic unit and to report its findings to the Provost and the President. Visiting Committees are expected to:

- Represent the frontiers of the discipline nationally and internationally, as viewed from academia, industry and government circles;
- Evaluate the status and progress of the academic unit with respect to peers and the state-of-the-art in the discipline;
- Share long-range projections relevant to the discipline, thus identifying opportunities and possible future courses of action for the academic unit;
- Understand the operating environment for the academic unit at Mines and within the larger context of student and recruiter interest in the discipline, as well as in industry and government sponsored research; and
- Provide objective and constructive advice to the President, Provost, Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer (VPRTT), Dean, and Department Head regarding programmatic and operational developments within the department.

The Provost establishes a rotating schedule for visits by Visiting Committees. Typically, visits will occur once every three years. Visits are scheduled through the Office of the Provost in concurrence with the Office of the President. A schedule of upcoming visits is available through the Office of Academic Affairs.

Visit Arrangements

Department staff coordinates all logistics for the visit, including Visiting Committee Members' travel arrangements (including appropriate travel forms; please look at Mines' travel policies), lodging reservations and transportation, food arrangements if necessary and conference or board room reservations.

Department staff should establish the availability of the President and the Provost prior to selecting a date by contacting the Provost's office. Visiting committees should normally be held during the months of September, October, November, January, February, March or April.

The visits are normally 1½ to 2 days in length and should include opportunities for interaction with administration, students and faculty.

Procedures for Nominating Visiting Committee Members

1. The Department creates a recommendation list, which should include titles, complete addresses, current email addresses, and a brief biographical statement, approximately six months before the visit. A typical Visiting Committee consists of three to five external members. The Department Head, in consultation with the department faculty, should construct a list of seven to ten potential Committee members.

At this time, the department should not contact/make commitments with potential committee members concerning membership on a Visiting Committee.

2. The list is forwarded to the Dean and Provost, who will coordinate with the Department Head, the VPRTT, and the President to select a final visiting committee. The Visiting Committee is a Committee that reports to the Provost, and as such the Provost has final authority in approving Committee members.
3. Once approval of a Committee is conveyed to the department, the department makes initial and informal contact with the potential Visiting Committee members to gauge their interest in serving on the Committee. The list of those potential members confirming their interest is forwarded to the President's office and copied to the Provost.
4. The Provost's Office prepares and mails formal letters of invitation to the members identified on the list (a sample letter is attached below).
5. The Provost's Office acknowledges all responses to the formal letter of Invitation and notifies the President and the Department.

Example Letter

Date

Dear Dr. XXX:

I am writing to invite you to serve on the Visiting Committee for our DEPARTMENT at their upcoming meeting scheduled for DATE.

This is a critical time in the evolution of many of our departments and academic programs at Colorado School of Mines (Mines). We have challenged each to develop long-range "pathways of distinction" plans to become differentiated from other similarly-named programs at other schools, link more strongly to other programs at Mines, and ensure that we are producing highly-valued graduates and innovations from our educational and research efforts.

To this end, we have instructed each of our academic degree-granting units to consult with an external Visiting Committee, composed of experts with diverse backgrounds and interests appropriate to the mission of that unit and the University. Visiting Committees provide the University with short- and long-term programmatic recommendations and an external perspective on efforts and changes needed to accomplish their long-term plans.

As a Visiting Committee member, you are invited to participate in a visit to review progress and future plans, research activities, and faculty and student development. Visiting Committee visits are scheduled for approximately one and a half days. The morning of the first day will be devoted to formal presentations and discussions on materials distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. During the afternoon, committee members will have opportunities to meet with faculty members and students. On the second day, the Visiting Committee will prepare a short draft report to present to campus leadership during an exit meeting. A final report from the committee will be sent to me following the visit, and you will receive responses coordinated through the Provost's Office following our internal review and discussion.

Appointments to the Visiting Committee are for one term. Members of the Visiting Committee will be reimbursed for travel costs associated with their visit to Mines, unless the member's employer is able to cover the cost.

I understand that you have expressed an interest in serving and sincerely hope you will be able to accept this important appointment. I hope to see you in MONTH.

Sincerely,

Rick Holz

cc: DEAN
DEPARTMENT HEAD

Visit Agenda

The agenda for each Visit must include the following elements:

Day One

1. An initial meeting of the Committee with the Provost, the Vice Provost, the VPRTT, the Dean, and the Department Head (1 hour, usually 8:00-9:00 AM, usually in the Coors Board Room, which may be reserved through the President's Office as soon as the draft agenda is prepared). Academic Affairs will arrange for coffee and pastries for this meeting.
2. Various departmental meetings and activities, organized by the Department Head in consultation with departmental faculty. These normally include but are not limited to meetings with program faculty and students.
3. A meeting will be organized by the Department Head in consultation with the Dean's office. This meeting will include the Visiting Committee and the Dean of the appropriate portfolio.
4. An 'afternoon coffee' will be organized by Academic Affairs in consultation with the President's office. This meeting will include the Visiting Committee, the President, and the Provost.
5. A working dinner will be organized by the Department Head in consultation with the visiting committee members.

Day Two

1. An exit meeting with the President, Provost, the Vice Provost, the VPRTT, the Dean and the Visiting Committee members to be held in the Coors Board Room to discuss what their recommendations would be to the Mines administration (approx. 2 hours). Lunch boxes will be provided by Academic Affairs.

Visit Expenses

The Provost's office will provide reimbursement (up to \$4,000 per visiting committee) for air travel, hotel and ground transportation charges, along with all on-campus working meals. The department must cover any other expenses. The department is responsible for scheduling all committee travel (*Please look at Mines' travel policy.*) After the event, the department should submit an accounting of expenses to Academic Affairs for reimbursement.

Visiting Committee Reports and Institutional Response

1. The Visiting Committee will send its report directly to the Provost with a copy sent to the Executive Assistant of the Provost, and that office will provide copies of it to the Dean, President, and the Department Head.
2. The Provost will direct the Dean and the Department Head to draft a response to the Visiting Committee report in a format approved by the Provost.

3. The Provost will work with the President to finalize the institutional response to the report.
4. The final version of the response is signed by the Provost and sent directly to each Committee member by the Provost's office. Copies are provided to the President, Dean, and Department Head.
5. The Committee's report and institutional response are shared with the Board of Trustees.

Visiting Committee Information Packet

Visiting Committee Information Packet Template (Word)

The Provost and President must approve the proposed agenda and any materials sent to the Committee prior to them being sent. The welcome letter, approved agenda, and supplementary materials should then be sent to committee members in the form of a Visiting Committee Information Packet for their review prior to the visit, and copied to the President and Provost, by the Department Head or Dean. These materials should be provided electronically to each committee member.

The format of the Visiting Committee Information Packet is provided below, and should be completed eight weeks in advance of the meeting and sent to the Dean and Provost for approval at least four weeks before the visit. The Dean and Provost will provide collective feedback to the Department Head and works with them to submit a final copy to the President at least two weeks and a half before the visit.

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introductory Material

- 1.1: Welcome Letter (Required, provided by department)
- 1.2: Critical Questions to be Considered (Required, provided by department in consultation and approval from Dean and Provost; example questions are provided at the end of this section)
- 1.3: Departmental Overview (Required, provided by Department, recommended organization provided below)

- 1.3.1: Introduction
- 1.3.2: Report Organization
- 1.3.3: History of Department
- 1.3.4: Department Today
- 1.3.5: Departmental Mission and Goals
- 1.3.6: Faculty Workload
- 1.3.7: Research
- 1.3.8: Departmental Finances

- 1.4: Visit Logistics (Required, provided by Department, recommended organization provided below)

- 1.4.1: Visit Schedule
- 1.4.2: Visiting Committee Membership and Contact List
- 1.4.3: Campus Map

Part 2: Institutional Context (Provided by Academic Affairs 8 weeks in advance of meeting)

- 2.1: Institutional Strategic Plan (Required): AA provides link to the President's Strategic Plan.
- 2.2: Institutional Data (Required): AA provides link to Institutional Research data visualization website.

Part 3: Departmental Data (All sections provided by Department)

3.1: Departmental Faculty (Required, recommended organization provided below)

- 3.1.1: Overview
- 3.1.2: Summary
- 3.1.3: CVs

3.2: Undergraduate Programs (Required, recommended organization provided below)

- 3.2.1: Overview
- 3.2.2: Undergraduate Program Administration
- 3.2.3: Trends, Strengths, Needs, Opportunities

3.3: Graduate Programs (Required, recommended organization provided below)

- 3.3.1: Overview
- 3.3.2: Graduate Program Administration
- 3.3.3: Trends, Strengths, Needs, Opportunities

3.4: Research Activities (Required, recommended organization provided below)

- 3.4.1: Overview and Areas of Expertise
- 3.4.2: Peer-reviewed Publications
- 3.4.3: Funding Sources
- 3.4.4: Research Center Activities
- 3.4.5: Research Expenditure Overview: Department, Faculty and Research Centers

3.5: Peer Department Analysis (Required, recommended organization provided below)

- 3.5.1: Section of Peer Departments
- 3.5.2: Faculty, Research, Students and Staff Comparisons
- 3.5.3: Summary

3.6: Facilities (Required)

Sample Set of Questions for Item 1.2

1. Overall, what are the department's strengths? (e.g., students, faculty, leadership, reputation, aspirations, organization, education, scope of research, impact on the field, etc.)?
2. Are there any areas in which the department is truly exemplary relative to similarly-named programs at other universities?
3. Overall, what are the key opportunities for improvement and investment, particularly with respect to student preparation/success, research impact, faculty development, and reputation?
4. Overall, what metrics should the department focus on when tracking their progress?
5. Do you see opportunities that are being missed and could be realized with the current college structure?
6. What opportunities are there for departmental undergraduate programs to be distinct and differentiated from those at other institutions?
7. What opportunities are there for departmental graduate programs to be distinct and differentiated from those at other institutions? What opportunities are there for the graduate programs to be more self sufficient financially?

8. Relative to other top programs, how does our instructional delivery compare?
9. Relative to other top programs, how does our external engagement compare?
10. Relative to top programs, how productive are the department programs in areas of education and research? How familiar and aligned are they with Mines' strategic plan?
11. Relative to top programs, how would you assess the engagement of departmental faculty and students in evolution of the programs?
12. What opportunities are there for departmental research programs to be distinct and more impactful? Do you consider the efforts to be largely isolated or collaborative?

Last Revision:

July 6, 2023