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**Preparing for RCM Assessment in a Low Information Environment**

RCM is a decentralized approach to budgeting that moves budget authority from central administration out to the individual schools/colleges/divisions. The schools and colleges are allotted the revenues they generate (primarily tuition) and the budgeting and management are controlled from within those units.

RCM has been adopted at many institutions across the country. While the basic methodology is the same at these institutions, the specifics of how the model is implemented and operated are unique. Wayne State University is committed to developing a model of RCM tailored to its specific circumstances and goals and avoiding the challenges encountered by earlier implementors.

RCM makes a sharp distinction between the schools and colleges, which are Revenue Generating Units (RGUs) and units like the University Libraries, which are Non-revenue Generating Units (NGUs).

**Usage by Individual Schools, Colleges, Disciplines**

In January 2017 as the RCM Steering Committee and developmental task forces were being formed, the University Libraries anticipated that their revenues would be dependent on charge-backs to the schools and colleges. It soon became clear that this will not be part of WSU RCM. We can analyze aspects of library services and collections use down to the department level. Further capabilities are worth pursuing to understand our stakeholders and how they use the libraries.

**General Usage of Library Services and Materials**

The possibility that aggregate data demonstrating the volume of services and resources provided to the university will be persuasive in budget negotiations remains. Special emphasize has been and will continue to be placed on Library material expenditures and the impact of inflation.

**Increased Efficiency with Fewer Dollars**

The earliest specific suggestion from a developmental taskforce was that the funds for the NGUs would come from the University’s state appropriation and general fund investment income. The funds would barely cover current NGU expenditures so such funding would compel those units to greater efficiency. Assessment will, of course, help libraries identify essential and nonessential services and resources as well as assisting with the development of greater efficiencies.

The RCM Steering Committee ultimately rejected this suggestion. It opted instead for a series of taxes on the schools and colleges that will finance subvention as well as the NGUs. As of the fall 2018 semester, they have tabled work on budgeting NGUs to focus on budgeting the RGUs. There have been suggestions that budgeting the NGUs will be subject to some sort of evaluation or review that will substitute for market forces in driving efficiencies.

**Satisfaction with Library Services & Materials**

In informal conversation, the RCM Steering Committee suggested that stakeholder satisfaction could play a role in such budgeting. Certainly, measures of satisfaction can play a role in assessment and improvement. But, with an organization with as many and as varies stakeholders as libraries, how could satisfaction alone guide budgeting? We are, however, developing a survey for our annual assessment program that will focus on this aspect of assessment.

**Periodic Program Review of the Libraries**

The RCM Steering Committee when speaking more deliberately suggested that the NGUs may be subject to periodic reviews (perhaps every three to five years) that would focus on identifying corrections (efficiencies) for the units. The review might even be conducted by an “outside agency.” This sounds like a process that will require the above assessment focuses in order to translate the value of the University Libraries into a form where corrections could be determined.

**Benchmarking Against Peer Institutions**

In the current budgeting system, Benchmarking against peer institutions often bears substantial persuasive force. Indeed, Wayne State University’s Office of Institutional Research and Analysis maintains a web page, Official Peer List and Affiliated Institutions (<https://oira.wayne.edu/institutional-research/peer-list>) to facilitate such benchmarking. The suggestion of an outside agency facilitating the periodic reviews would suggest that such benchmarking will become even more important.

Benchmarking in the University Libraries has historically focused on a small set of peers within the ARL Libraries: University of Cincinnati, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Louisville, Temple University, and Michigan State University (our aspirational peer).

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