

APLU – Jim Woodell De-Briefing Telephone Conversation Notes: July, 09, 2014

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The APLU committee would like to see a marked-up version of the feedback/comments (roughly by mid-August). With this, they would like to receive 'process feedback' and suggestions for improvement of the process for next year. Jim said it can be in the form of 'what questions or remarks would you have for these reviewers?'

My initial thoughts:

- Examples put forth were simply having critical back-up processes for 'left-field' reviewers (like many grant and paper reviewers have). Perhaps a solution would be to supply additional backup reviewers in such cases to balance the grading process (one reviewer should not be the dominant force in the outcomes). For instance, I felt that a conflict of interest was implied in some of the comments of reviewer #2, which were really nothing but negative.
- Another suggestion was that APLU define 'economic development and innovation' relative within given contexts, so as to not compare larger urban based institutions with rural or regional-based institutions (apples to oranges). For instance, one of the reviewers commented on our lack of industry engagement, which seemed to be treated as dominant criteria in lieu of just a single category among others (we were stronger in community relations and regional effect in relation (in a place industry is simply lacking or not present). To me, the lack of industry brings to mind that innovation (creative problem solving) is key to overcoming the issues. Conversely, having large industries nearby in relation does not necessarily mean the institution has anything to do with economic property, but seems to be set as underlying criteria for institutional review in this case (reviewer #3).
- Each case should be judged by its own criteria. Reviewer one gave us high remarks, but was not enough to override the other two. Many of the reviews were either really great or completely negative. As such, neither really helps us much if we are to resubmit. A little common-sense re-appraisal based on such dichotomy could have gone a long way. I was under the initial understanding that we could possibly re-submit with clarifications and clean-up as needed. This would have been a good case for this. I would suggest that the APLU committee tell us more precisely where we fell short, need to improve, what we may have overlooked, or simply need to clarify. Otherwise we are shooting in the dark. In addition, where were the survey outcomes and metrics they were so much pushing? These seems to play little role in the reviewers comments.

Jim's General Comments:

He said that the committee generally liked our submittal. This is why they are coming back to us to re-submit. They also noticed the discrepancies with the reviewer comments (in particular reviewer #2), but went with their overall score anyway (stuck to the process). Some general comments from Jim brought to light that many of the shared subjects of the Carnegie (like our community outreach programs) were not quite as relevant to the APLU's subject of 'economic innovation' and should be clarified and geared more toward economic development (even though they seemed to understand that in many cases they are one and the same). He brought to light an instance was in section 1.7 which needed to be raised (described better) in that area.

He wants to know if we would be interested in a process which allows re-reviewing/resubmission in say a six-month period in lieu of waiting a year to be placed back into a pool of first-time reviews. I told him 'of course' that would be much better than resubmitting all over again with the possibility to have same negative outcomes.