

Faculty Advisory Committee Report

October 24, 2023

On September 12, 2023 the UNK Administration invoked Article XII of the Collective Bargaining Agreement to call into being the Faculty Advisory (FAC) Committee. The committee was given the following charge:

In accordance with Article XII, section 3, the following criteria shall be utilized.

- a. *Program viability shall be the controlling consideration in all instances.*
- b. *A reduction in force shall be made in such a way that the remaining members of the faculty possess necessary qualifications to perform assigned duties needed for offering the programs which remain on a variable basis.*
- c. *Faculty members with higher academic preparation, after considering program viability, shall be given retention preference in laying off faculty members that are similarly situated. However, if faculty members have the same academic preparation, the member with more years of teaching service in the Kearney administrative unit of the University shall be retained.*

The Committee is being asked to provide recommendations to the campus administration for a faculty reduction in force;

The Committee shall advise the administration in developing prioritization and reduction plans that reflect the University's Strategic Goals and Priorities as defined in the Strategic Plan. UNK's budget is expected to align with the University's commitment to students and operationally links financial resources to this commitment.

The Faculty Advisory Committee is charged with providing feedback on eliminating faculty resources that fail to contribute to the strength of the University's programs and services. (for the full charge document see Appendix A)

The administration presented an initial Reduction in Force draft proposal from the Deans' Council to the committee and outlined the following list of recommended procedures:

The Committee will:

- *Establish a process for prioritizing faculty repurposing and reduction recommendations;*
- *Participate in informational activities to build awareness of University fiscal conditions, constraints, and opportunities;*
- *Participate in information activities to build awareness of academic conditions, constraints, and opportunities;*
- *Conduct interviews or solicit resources as needed to inform reduction discussions;*
- *Provide feedback regarding all reductions requests as submitted to the Administration;*
- *Provide recommendations on rationale for selection or non-selection of staffing reductions;*
- *Present recommendations to the Chancellor regarding reductions;*

- *Share information with their constituencies regarding the Committee's process and outcomes;*
- *Make recommendations to the Chancellor by October 24, 2023.*

From September 25, 2023 through October 24, 2023 the FAC met six times. The committee endorsed a policy of full transparency on all documentation and information and committed to being open to all commentary and input from the campus community.

The FAC contacted all departments mentioned in the draft proposal and asked for their input with regard to proposed faculty cuts and program and degree alterations. Further, the FAC contacted all departments across campus and asked them for their input. The FAC received from the administration all data from the UNK Factbook and extensive additional data from the UNK budget. The FAC received data from the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Post Secondary Education. The FAC monitored and reviewed public comments and official statements from Varner Hall and the University leadership. The committee has been diligent and focused with regard to its charge to insure program viability as a controlling consideration.

It is imperative that the UNK Administration communicate to the Board of Regents (BOR) and the NU President that making the proposed level of cuts communicated by the UNK Administration to the FAC will fundamentally change UNK's ability to fulfill its mission. As a result of its interactions, deliberations, and dialogue across the UNK community, the Faculty Advisory Committee presents the following:

Advocacy:

- UNK Administration ensures that the Board of Regents and the NU President understand that due to UNK budget cuts over the past two decades, UNK is not only very lean but the past cuts have limited UNK's fiscal flexibility., This means that any additional cuts at UNK will have a more direct effect on the student experience than they have in the past.
- UNK Administration ensures that the Board of Regents and the NU President understand that unfunded mandates for tuition remissions take away funding from the revenue line and contribute to increases to expense lines in the UNK income statement. In this way, both primary revenue streams (state funding and tuition funding) for the UNK campus are reduced.
- UNK Administration ensures that the Board of Regents and the NU President understand the strategic consequences that program cuts, including cuts in arts and humanities, would have on rural Nebraska, the rural health initiative, and the diversity of students on the UNK campus.
- UNK administration advocates to the CCPE that UNK and Kearney uniquely meet the needs of rural communities and students who desire a comprehensive university experience in central Nebraska.

Specific Academic Budget Reductions:

- We recommend the following academic budget reductions. Departments have acknowledged these reductions are difficult but workable, and they are in the process of developing plans to move forward in the event these reductions take place.
 - Cyber Systems – 2 positions.
 - Kinesiology and Sports Sciences – 1 position.
 - Art and Design – 1 position.
 - Communications – 1 position.
 - English – 3.5 positions.
 - Mathematics – 2 positions.
 - Music, Theatre, and Dance – 2 Music and 1.5 Theatre positions.
 - Physics – 1 position.

This is a total of 15 faculty.
- We do not recommend any further reductions in the departments above or in other departments that were proposed by the UNK Administration in the initial plan. Any further reductions to these departments or any other departments would have a severe impact on the viability of their programs and ability to serve students. Furthermore, reduction to tenured faculty may create legal and future faculty recruiting issues for the UNK campus.
- The following are programs that the FAC recommends cutting (C) or reworking (R) into emphasis areas within a comprehensive degree. Some of these programs already have initiated the workflow needed to change and combine with existing programs to ensure the student experience through this process is as seamless as possible.
 - BT: Business Administration – Business Intelligence Emphasis BS (C)
 - CAS: Journalism BA/BS (R)
 - CAS: Sports Communication BA/BS (R)
 - CAS: Geography 7-12 Teaching Subject Endorsement (C)
 - COE: Recreation Management BS (C)
 - CAS: Musical Performance Comprehensive in Instrumental Emphasis (R)
 - CAS: Music Comprehensive in Business Emphasis (R)
 - CAS: Musical Theatre (R)
- The FAC recommends departments strategically and continuously review structure, curriculum, and programs in efforts to find efficiencies while meeting student needs.

Other academic considerations:

- FAC recommends a considered and strategic look at the general studies (GS) program, with consideration to returning GS back to Faculty Senate oversight. This action would eliminate administrative costs and workload associated with the program.
- FAC recommends reviewing the use of reassigned time.
- FAC recommends reviewing the use of administrative release.
- FAC strongly recommends UNK Administration consider the educational needs of Nebraska over the next 5-10-20 years and consider all programs, not based on current

strength, but what may be needed to ensure success of the rural health initiatives, the success of state workforce initiatives, and to position greater Nebraska into a stance of strength.

- FAC recommends reviewing and revising UNK policy on summer teaching to see if compensation or teaching load changes might have a positive effect on the budget.
- FAC recommends that advisory, assistant, and associate positions to UNK administrators be considered for elimination.
- FAC recommends that University stability is a high priority. FAC is concerned that retention of both students **and** faculty will suffer if reductions at the level proposed by UNK Administration takes place and that UNK will in short order not have viability as a campus, let alone viability for the programs that are currently under consideration for cuts.
- FAC recommends that if reductions of the size proposed by UNK Administration are required, they are announced immediately and then implemented over a course of a few years through both phased personnel reductions, retirements, and removal of vacant faculty lines.

In conclusion, the FAC was charged with making recommendations to the UNK Administration regarding faculty reduction in force and advising UNK Administration in developing prioritization and reduction plans reflecting the University's strategic goals and priorities. All recommendations communicated above reflect the Committee's determination and commitment to maintain the viability and institutional integrity of the University of Nebraska at Kearney.