

WOU FACULTY SENATE SUSTAINABILITY TASKFORCE
RESPONSE TO ARTICLE 15 TASKFORCE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Introduction and Summary

The members of the Faculty Sustainability Taskforce (FST) wish to first express our gratitude to the WOU Administration for the opportunity to respond to the invoking of Article 15. In what follows, we provide our response and request that our recommendations be taken into consideration prior to implementation of any further action.

The FST acknowledges that a variety of factors, both in and outside of our control, have contributed to a fiscal situation that requires immediate remediation to ensure the long-term health of our institution. Administration has granted an opportunity for faculty to provide input on proposed solutions by requesting that this taskforce develop separate models to reduce faculty salary and OPE by specified amounts. It is our assessment that providing thoughtful, specific, and carefully-considered strategies aimed at meeting certain budget reduction amounts (e.g., \$1M, \$2M, etc.) is impossible within the timeline provided to this taskforce (see Section V. for more information). However, we submit that, as originally conceived, the charge of this taskforce was, more broadly, to serve as a conduit for faculty input on the Article 15 process, rather than to specify how the budget should be reduced by targeted amounts. To this broader charge, we remain faithful. Accordingly, we provide several recommendations on how to proceed from here. In the short-term, we request that the Deans' reports, which are detailed, thoughtful, and well-developed, be further refined in consultation with program leadership (e.g., Division Chairs). Revised reports should then be forwarded on to Administration for consideration. Additionally, we provide several recommendations regarding the development of new policies, practices, guidelines, etc., aimed at promoting institutional sustainability over the long-term.

II. Taskforce Charge

The FST was convened to provide an opportunity for additional faculty input to the Article 15 Taskforce. Membership of the FST includes representatives from academic divisions, academic programs, and ex-officio members serving in various capacities (see Appendix A). The charge given to the FST was to provide separate models to reduce faculty salary and OPE by \$1M, \$2M, \$3M and \$4M. These varying planning levels of cuts are to allow the university to better respond to increasingly volatile and uncertain factors that may impact institutional health, such as declining enrollment and state funding. The timeline to do this work is short, with a final report due to the university president by October 28, 2020.

III. Summary of Review Process and Data Utilized

Per the request of the Faculty Senate President, the FST was convened at the beginning of Fall Term 2020, meeting weekly during the month of October. The taskforce is led by a chair and co-chair, who have coordinated members' efforts to review and analyze the available data (described below) in the interest of producing the requested report.

The following materials and data were made available by administration for review by the taskforce:

- Notes from Summer 2020 Article 15 panel discussions;
- July 2020 budget reduction scenarios and proposals from Divisions/Departments in the College of Education (COE) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), in addition to similar documents from the Library;
- Proposed CLAS budget-reduction suggestions from Dean Cassity (July 15, 2020);
- Proposed COE budget-reduction suggestions from Dean Girod (July 22, 2020);
- Various budget document summaries including Institutional Research (IR) Data on program-specific student credit hour production (SCH), revenues-expenses, enrollment trends, student census of majors, General Education enrollments and faculty salaries, amongst others.

IV. Key Factors Informing Taskforce Assessment

The FST recognized the following in making their assessment:

- a. There is a projected budget shortfall in the next fiscal year that requires immediate action, planning, and mitigation.
- b. University enrollment has steadily decreased over the past 10 years.
- c. The campus, state, and nation are currently engaged in an ongoing pandemic and public health crisis that is impacting (and will continue to impact) University operations, enrollment, and revenues.

V. Taskforce Assessment

After utilizing the information available and recognizing the factors listed above, the taskforce made the following assessment:

- a. For the reasons described below, the taskforce should not provide separate models to reduce faculty salary and OPE by \$1M, \$2M, \$3M and \$4M, as originally requested.
- b. The timeline given for the FST to address its charge was insufficient. The Faculty Senate does not typically engage in budget management, few members of the Faculty Senate and/or the FST have the specialized knowledge required to effectively manage and/or make recommendations regarding the budget of a large organization, the members of the FST do not have the requisite information or understanding of context to make informed decisions for areas other than their own divisions, departments, and programs, and, moreover, it would be inappropriate for faculty to make such decisions under such a short timeframe and without a much more thorough process of familiarization with departments and programs across campus. The University, like other large organizations, is a complex and dynamic system of interrelated programs, offices, and units, and it is impossible to predict all possible implications of any proposed cuts without thorough consideration of the existing relationships between these units. Given the above, it is unreasonable to expect a well-informed recommendation regarding specific budget cuts within 3.5 weeks.
- c. Considering the complexity of the task, a lack of requisite knowledge and expertise, and the short timeline, any recommendations of specific cuts from the FST may have unintended consequences and would likely generate disagreement, conflict, and animosity among faculty, staff, and administration. This would undermine the development and maintenance of a collegial and collaborative academic community, which is central to the health of all institutions of higher education.
- d. Deans and Division Chairs have already presented budget reduction scenarios. The FST believes these to be thoughtfully developed and endorses much of what is recommended in these reports. The reports represent an excellent starting point that, with some revision, should receive the full consideration of administration when developing a final plan.

VI. Taskforce Recommendations

The FST recommends the following:

- a. The Library, CLAS, and COE deans should openly review their proposed reduction plans with Divisions and Departments in their respective areas, and work as a collaborative team to revise and submit a cohesive, agreed upon faculty salary + OPE reduction plan. These systematic discussions should involve consultation between the Deans, Division Chairs, and if needed, Department Heads and other faculty as needed. We encourage the Deans to solicit feedback from divisional leadership, and then to submit any final recommendations to administration for review. If needed, the timeline for submission of any recommendations should be extended to accommodate these discussions.
- b. Any proposed cuts should be reviewed with respect to their impact on not only major and minor academic programs, but also the General Education program. Final decisions regarding cuts should be balanced in their impact on these programs.
- c. Short-term budget reduction decisions should be guided by the values of our institution and the faculty thereof. We are a liberal arts university that values a diverse set of offerings for our General Education program, and we assert that having a robust choice of majors is important to our student body. We serve many students who need an alternative path to degree completion through our Interdisciplinary Studies program, a large and strong program that, it should be noted, includes faculty from many different fields. We proudly serve many first-in-family students and our systems and programs should continue to be supportive. We are also striving to be an Hispanic Serving Institution, so we should consider the diversity of our faculty and work to increase representation.

Additionally, in the interest of ensuring the long-term sustainability of any actions and the future health of the institution, we make the following recommendations:

- d. Augment existing and/or establish assessment-, program-, and curriculum-relevant protocols with formalized, clear, and consistent processes for potential program development, review, and reduction that includes adequate timelines to properly evaluate academic program outcomes in the context of any proposed developments, alterations, reductions, or elimination (See Appendix B for curriculum-specific recommendations).
- e. Create an automated system of regular academic program IR data collection and reporting that provides annual success metrics such that Division Chairs and Department Heads can proactively devise strategies to advance productivity and revenue streams, aligned with well-articulated institutional goals in this regard.

- f. Develop a collaborative, proactive incentive system for improving academic program success metrics such as SCH/Faculty FTE ratios, numbers of majors, General Education course enrollments, etc. Productivity through contributions to research and service should also be included.
- g. Establish high-priority task forces, constituted by faculty, staff, and administration, that are charged with (1) developing strategies aimed at ameliorating the declining trends in enrollment at WOU and (2) developing strategies aimed at economizing class scheduling, maximizing course SCH/Faculty FTE packing ratios, and other activities that increase efficiency and decrease the need for program reduction.
- h. Finally, all recommendations regarding the development of new policies, procedures, etc., should be extended to not only tenure-track faculty, but also non-tenure-track faculty and staff, where appropriate. We are a community of professionals, serving in various capacities, and any action that benefits one group should also benefit other groups as well.

VII. Action items

The tasks at hand, as listed above, can be divided into action items delineated based on the timeline required for planning and implementation:

- a. Short-Term Immediate Action Item
 - i. Finalize budget reduction strategies for academic program costs, as stated by the President. This should begin with Dean/Division Chair consultation regarding relevant proposed reductions, potential modification of college-level reduction recommendation reports, and resubmission of said reports to administration. Administration should take any revised recommendations into consideration for inclusion in the administrative budget plan presented to the WOU Board in December.
- b. Longer-Term Action Items
 - i. Convene working groups to address recruitment and retention issues in the interest of addressing declining enrollment trends, as well as to address existing inefficiencies in program delivery.
 - ii. Optimize strategies for IR data collection, analysis, dissemination, and utilization by academic program areas.
 - iii. Develop and establish and/or augment existing formalized processes for program development, review, management and reduction. In particular, the institution needs to develop a clear, data-driven process grounded in principles of shared governance by which program “sunsetting” may be engaged, as needed.

Appendix A

Taskforce Membership	
Erin Baumgartner	General Education
Laurie Burton	Curriculum Committee
David Janovick	CAD
Steve Taylor	NSM
Mark Perlman	HUM
Elizabeth Brookbank	LIB
Shaun Huston	SS
Ethan McMahan	BS
Bojan Ilievski	BUS
Breeann Flesch	CS
Terry Gingerich	CJ
Chung-Fan Ni	Deaf Studies
Ken Carano	Education
Jeff Armstrong	HEXS
Ex Officio Members	
Mike Baltzley	Data Support
Hilary Holman-Kidd	Data Support
Melanie Landon-Hayes	FSEC and Grad Studies
Annika Joy Thompson	Admin/Scheduling/Support

Appendix B

Curriculum Recommendations for Taskforce

To maintain a current and vibrant set of curriculum offerings to best serve WOU and Oregon students, and to guide development of new programs in high-growth or emerging fields, we recommend a campus wide approach and support for both focus on, and efficiencies in program and course offerings. In parallel with a regular process to evaluate program efficacy at the student outcome and the financial levels, faculty should be provided information about emerging fields, suggested curriculum development ideas from reports such as the Hanover Market Opportunity Scan (1) and the Stamats New Academic Program Analysis (2), and should be provided support for the time needed to develop new programs to attract student interest and to develop new pathways to enhance student degree completion.

A uniform and consistent curriculum development process with equal support opportunities for all faculty should be defined, disseminated, and used throughout campus. Such a process should be used to support existing programs as well as to support development of new programs and pathways. We would like to see a method provided for existing programs to request resources and reinforcements for ideas that will strengthen current offerings. We also believe that acknowledging areas of success is an important part of this process. We note that a uniform process to support curriculum development does not yet exist at WOU. For new revenue streams, the Hanover and Stamats reports show areas where WOU can grow and focus to attract new student interest and these and evolving ideas should be supported. The current ad hoc process does not afford equal opportunities for faculty in all areas to participate in the development of new programs. Report recommendations, development opportunities and other relevant information can be disseminated to faculty through existing Faculty Senate committees, such as Curriculum for undergraduate programs and Graduate Studies for graduate programs.

The deans' report and enrollment numbers identify a lag in graduate enrollment in key areas; Contemporary Music, M.M., Criminal Justice, M.A., Elementary Mathematics Specialist (K-8), M.S.Ed., Management & Information Systems, M.S. and Organizational Leadership, M.A., and this, along with the recent shuttering of the eMAT program, despite an incoming cohort of close to 20 graduate students, reflects a systemic issue in support for and marketing of existing graduate programs. The process for both supporting existing programs and building new programs has been particularly uneven in our graduate offerings with differential tuition approaches, and other special deals. We hope the hire of the new Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will result in increased numbers for previously vibrant graduate programs, and increased work with faculty to support existing programs and to develop new and attractive graduate programs and program pathways, certificates and specializations, including programs that are natural graduate level next steps for existing WOU undergraduate programs, pathways that are designed to help encourage current WOU students see WOU as a viable graduate school opportunity.

1. Market Opportunity Scan, Undergraduate Bachelor's Programs, Hanover
2. New Academic Program Analysis: Potential Graduate Programs, Stamats