

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Institutional Effectiveness Committee

**UPDATE**

**Strategic Resource Allocation Study 2019  
Final Report Recommendations**

November 8, 2019

## **I. Introduction and Background**

Anticipating financial challenges due to years of enrollment decline, in August 2018 UA Little Rock administrators established the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC). Charged with serving as the university's clearinghouse for budgeting, planning, and continuous improvement, this 24-person committee of faculty, staff, and administrators set immediately to work. To establish as a baseline for developing a culture of integrated planning (whereby a campus ties annual budget allocations to units based on their alignment with university mission, strategic priorities, and continuous improvement), the IEC completed an ambitious Strategic Resource Allocation (SRA) Study in just six months.

The SRA Study required all 241 academic and non-academic programs to submit reports that the IEC evaluated on Value, Vision, Efficiency and Cost. After analyzing and scoring all programs, on February 1, 2019, the IEC submitted a final report to the Chancellor's Cabinet that included prioritized recommendations for improving effectiveness throughout the institution. In the report, the IEC stated the following:

As noted throughout this report, the SRA Study revealed a strong will to change across the campus community so that UA Little Rock can successfully weather the challenges ahead. Faculty and staff are yearning for stability and a path forward that shows them that the institution can once again thrive. They want to see a credible plan and leadership that will make UA Little Rock a place where students, faculty, and staff want to come and stay to learn and work.

[...T]he committee expects that the Chancellor's Cabinet will leverage this report for guiding expeditious, informed decisions. Following through on this report with immediate and sustained actions will require both careful change management and project management from senior leadership. (5)

Despite instability and diminished capacity in recent months (In addition to personnel attrition, spending freezes, and cuts of convenience, UA Little Rock is also currently undergoing a ten-year institutional reaccreditation, implementing a new ERP, and implementing a new integrated planning and budgeting process), the IEC is pleased that changes in senior leadership have resulted in significant actions on its recommendations. This Update documents UA Little Rock's progress towards becoming a more effective urban university dedicated to transforming the lives of students and the community through engaged teaching and research.

## II. Update on Prioritized Recommendations

The IEC's February 2019 final report prioritized sixteen institutional recommendations for immediate action. These recommendations, listed in order of priority, are restated from the original report here with updates on progress.

1. **Strategic Enrollment Plan.** The IEC identified addressing UA Little Rock's continuous enrollment decline as the most critical institutional priority. Insofar as UA Little Rock's revenue is largely tuition-driven, all programs are hurting from lower-than-anticipated enrollment and voiced support in addressing the campus enrollment issues. In response to a lack of strong centralized recruitment and retention efforts, many academic and nonacademic units have sought to address these issues on their own, often resulting in redundant, uncoordinated efforts. A coordinated strategy that is articulated in a Strategic Enrollment Plan document is needed.

This Strategic Enrollment Plan should include realistic, measurable and attainable goals, as well as realistic action plans, to recruit and retain UA Little Rock's diverse student populations. The plan should identify and coordinate the roles and responsibilities of units across campus. It should address strategic marketing targeted at different academic programs and student populations and coordinate the roles of all relevant campus stakeholders—especially faculty and department chairs—in student recruitment and retention. The IEC views an Enrollment Plan as an opportunity for UA Little Rock to reaffirm its commitment to supporting and educating the underrepresented, nontraditional, first-generation and lower income students of Central Arkansas. The IEC would like to see the plan address more wrap-around student services for low-income students, including funding and a process for providing small emergency loans or grants. This plan should also drive scholarship programming, housing philosophy, student support services and more. The process for developing a Strategic Enrollment Plan (which should happen with urgency) should allow for the engagement of personnel and units across campus, especially Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Marketing.

**Update:** In collaboration with the University Recruitment Committee and the University Retention Committee, the Division of Student Affairs is coordinating the development of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. A template was selected, and the Office of Institutional Research has populated initial data needed for the plan. The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan will be provided by the conclusion of fall 2019. This plan will address the areas listed in the IEC's recommendations, including "more wrap-around student services for low-income students, including funding and a process for providing small emergency loans or

grants.” It will also address “scholarship programming, housing philosophy, student support services and more.”

2. **Comprehensive unit reviews.** Three programs stood out to the IEC because of their low effectiveness and critical role in determining the success of UA Little Rock. The IEC recommends comprehensive unit reviews of these units: the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, and the Office of Admissions and Recruitment. These examinations should explore appropriate resourcing, as well as the reasons behind low stakeholder satisfaction and high turnover of trained staff. Such a review should also seek to identify redundant functions, processes to streamline, and how best to leverage existing resources, personnel and structures to ensure maximum effectiveness and accountability.

**Update:** Two areas from Student Affairs were mentioned in the recommendation: the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships and the Office of Admissions and Recruitment. With the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (VCSA) in August 2019, the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships has undergone substantial changes in staffing, directorship, processes, and collaboration with other units. Notably, Financial Aid will be processing current and prospective students’ financial aid within 24-48 hours once required financial aid documents are received. Financial Aid staff are also cross-training with Admissions staff and conducting on-site, one-stop application days where students are both admitted and awarded eligible institutional scholarships.

The Office of Admissions and Recruitment has also undergone several personnel changes, including a new Director of Admissions and an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management. In collaboration with other offices across campus, Admissions has streamlined a number of processes and added capacity to recruitment. Admissions has also collaborated heavily with the University Recruitment Committee to analyze and improve processes and approaches impacting recruitment and onboarding. Students in this office are also admitted within 24-48 hours once all credentials are received. As of November 1, 2019, applications are up 51%, admitted students are up 43%, new freshman applications are up 74%, and new freshman admits are up 103% from this time last year.

A new director of Human Resources was appointed in October 2019, and she will be working on an improvement plan for the unit.

3. **One-person programs.** The IEC noted a high number of one-person and very small programs across the curriculum and in non-curricular units. Although some of these programs may be effective and viable, the IEC is concerned that they may lack the capacity to grow or pursue new opportunities. They also put the institution at risk if one faculty or staff member leaves the university. Curricular programs tied to one person can lack intellectual and pedagogical diversity, be too strained to provide adequate student support services, and limit continuous improvement to self-evaluation. For these reasons, the IEC recommends that these programs be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for possible restructuring, cross-training, termination, or an investment in resources.

**Update:** The Chancellor and Provost have requested that the IEC analyze these programs and making recommendations for potential cuts or potential needs for investment, with cost estimates. These recommendations will be reviewed as part of the Provost's Academic Planning process, taking place through May 2019,

4. **Finance and Budgeting.** The IEC had difficulty using the data provided by the Office of Financial Services primarily due to actual (versus budgeted) revenues and expenditures not being trackable at the program level for curricular programs. Additionally, the information provided reflected numerous organizational changes that makes analyzing resource allocation difficult. To this end, the IEC recommends that a model such as the Delaware Cost Study be utilized in order to better track program costs. The IEC also believes that the current budget model of incremental budgeting is inadequate because it continues to reward and fund areas that are unproductive, nonessential, and not tied to the university's mission and strategic priorities. It also perpetuates irresponsible end-of-year spending, which the institution cannot afford. The committee therefore recommends that the Division of Finance and Administration build a university-wide budget model with annual budget processes that strategically tie resources allocation to university mission and improvement. The IEC will not be able to proceed with Phase 2 of its charter and charge without this Division's commitment to creating a budget plan that links to the university's strategic plan. In order to support an annual budget model of integrated planning, the multiple offices spanning the functions of finance and budgeting should be better coordinated and integrated. The campus cannot plan and budget actual expenses without these functions' being better connected.

**Update:** Upon completion of building an institutional decision-support system with clean longitudinal student outcome data and interactive dashboards, the Quality Initiative Committee has committed to scrubbing financial data and building financial dashboards. As UA Little Rock implements the new WorkDay ERP, additional standardized financial reports and dashboards will be available at our

fingertips. A new Budget Director hired in the summer of 2019 is working with the IEC to develop a new annual integrated planning and budgeting process that integrates planning and resource allocation. A first draft of this process is currently under consideration by the IEC.

5. **Academic planning.** Sound integrated planning typically includes an Academic Plan, Enrollment Plan and Master Plan that align with the Strategic Plan. Unit-level Operational Plans are then developed to align with these primary documents. An Academic Plan integrated with both the UA Little Rock Strategic Plan and Enrollment Plan will ensure that curriculum and recruitment and retention efforts support one another, promoting mutual successes and a common strategic direction. The SRA Study provides the data to inform a sound Academic Plan that aligns curriculum with the university mission in addition to Central Arkansas' community and workforce needs. Any academic plan developed for this university must consider how student success--especially for non-traditional, first generation, and underrepresented students--can be supported through co-curricular programming and high-impact learning. An Academic Plan can also identify and eliminate redundancies, set curricular priorities, leverage Extended Education to provide opportunities for lifelong learning, and ensure that the curriculum is balanced with respect to program cost. In addition to recommending the development of a formal Academic Plan, the IEC sees this planning exercise as an opportunity to promote an institutional perspective and collaboration that can help to address a pervasive and detrimental sense of competition among academic departments and colleges, especially with respect to SSCH.

**Update:** At the October 25 Faculty Senate meeting, Provost Ann Bain announced that a process for Academic Planning would be announced within the next two weeks. UA Little Rock's 2020 Academic Planning will have three objectives:

- To create a strategic resource allocation plan for Academic Affairs
- To create an Academic Plan that will guide decision-making in Academic Affairs for next 5-6 years (to be updated in 3 years)
- To advance UA Little Rock's core mission as an urban university dedicated to transforming the lives of students and the community through engaged teaching and research

6. **Integrated operational plans.** Operational plans are unit-level plans in which the unit identifies short-term goals that align with the UA Little Rock Strategic Plan. The IEC recommends that each unit develop brief one-year operational plans that align unit activities and expenditures with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. These plans should include realistic, actionable goals that are regularly measured for success

and improvement and included in unit annual reports (annual report templates for academic departments already have these elements built into them). Coordinated annual reporting processes, improvement incentives, and targeted professional development (described in Priority #8 below) will be needed to support integrated operational planning.

**Update:** This has not been addressed but is expected to be a component of the annual integrated budgeting and planning process, described above in Priority #4.

7. **Integrated, centralized processes and services.** Processes and services across the institution—particularly those that cross business and academic units—should be mapped and analyzed for improving efficiency and student-friendliness. This process analysis is also an opportunity to document processes, which is important for establishing consistency and for orienting new employees. Processes should be automated where possible and appropriate and require only value-added signatures. Processes such as scheduling should also be evaluated for centralization in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. Priority should be given to improving and centralizing processes related to finance, budget, human resources, career services, student success, advising, student enrollment experiences, scheduling, diversity and inclusion, communications, IT Services, and student recruitment and retention. In the absence of coordinated, centralized services in the areas of career services, extended education, student support and advising, colleges and departments have reduplicated initiatives in an effort to serve students. This results in redundant, inefficient and inequitable access to these key services. Additionally, there is no coordination between the budget and financial areas to provide meaningful reporting to the various campus stakeholders.

**Update:** Student Affairs processes that impact incoming undergraduates are being mapped in order to improve efficiency and usability and to document dependencies among units for onboarding new undergraduates.

Because Military Student Success Center, International Student Services, and the Intensive English Language Proficiency Program directly relate to and impact enrollment, these offices have been consolidated under Enrollment Management. Similarly, Student Orientation and the Ask Desk have been consolidated into the Trojan Transition and Assistance Center.

During summer 2019, Academic Affairs restructured The Trojan Academic Advising and Support Center to include a Director of Academic Advising, Director of Personal Awareness, and a Director for Student Retention Initiatives.

These three units collaborate to support and highlight the onboarding and persistence efforts of Enrollment Management. These three subunits of TAASC are engaged in maximizing efficiency and effectiveness from enrollment through graduation.

An IEC sub-committee is considering additional centralizations and combinations that will improve the effectiveness of UA Little Rock's operations.

8. **Professional development.** Both curricular and non-curricular program reports exhibited great unevenness in financial literacy and reporting, data literacy and usage, assessment and continuous improvement, project management, and report writing and documentation. UA Little Rock faculty and staff need proficiency in these areas in order to drive an effective institution. Investing in faculty and staff professional development will build not only employee capacity, but also institutional capacity to follow through effectively on the recommendations outlined in this report. Much of this professional development can be provided in-house. Insofar as assessment and continuous improvement underline all priorities and recommendations outlined in this report, the IEC recommends that professional development in continuous improvement take the form of a campus campaign.

**Update:** Members of UA Little Rock's Assessment Academy are working on scaling professional development in academic and co-curricular assessment for all non-academic units. Due to limited capacity, this in-house campaign will take place in academic year 2020-2021. A new Student Affairs Leadership Academy will also play a role in this professional development. It is hoped that, with the Chancellor's financial gift to the Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence, this faculty development organization will also be able to provide workshops in these areas.

9. **Faculty workload policy.** Curricular program reports regularly cited unreasonable and inequitable workloads, whether due to an inability to hire or an outdated workload policy that fails to address diverse instructional modalities (e.g., online), increased administrative responsibilities (especially in accreditation and assessment), graduate programs, and an R2 research classification. The IEC recommends reviewing the widely vetted 2016 workload policy proposal as a starting point for adopting an updated workload policy in 2019 that addresses consistent, systematic counts of instructional units in a context of fewer students and resources.



**Update:** The Provost's Office is performing a workload audit to determine the possibility of implementing the 2016 workload policy proposal given current financial and staffing difficulties.

10. **Centralized software licenses.** The IEC's systematic and collective review of 240 curricular and non-curricular program reports positioned the committee to identify both redundancies and needs across the institution. Rising to the level of an institutional recommendation was the need for centralized software licenses, particularly in the areas of statistical analysis and survey tools to allow for more equitable and economical access across curricular and non-curricular units. As a result, individual programs and research SRA 2019 Study 10 faculty often make redundant and expensive software purchases that are limited to a small handful of users. Programs with small maintenance budgets and grant revenue may not be able to access certain software tools at all. The committee believes there is an opportunity for cost-savings by doing an inventory of current licenses and centralizing the purchase of these. There could also be benefit in centralizing the purchase of computer equipment.

**Update:** Dr. Thomas Bunton, Chief Information Officer, is working to develop plans for the centralization of software licenses as well as computer purchasing. An initial audit of existing computational hardware and software has been conducted.

11. **Space allocation and management.** Program reports document inefficient uses of university space and maintenance of space-specific equipment and technology. As the university struggles to address deferred maintenance, a space audit could inform strategic decisions and should result in a plan to address deferred maintenance. A space audit could also inform strategic space allocation and management, energy conservation efforts, LEAN initiatives, and a future master campus plan. Centralizing space management and taking advantage of software solutions could also facilitate this process.

**Update:** Leadership acknowledges that managing space allocation is a critical issue but does not have the capacity to address it at this time. The institution has requested that the UA System explore adopting an affordable space management solution as an add-on to the WorkDay ERP. The IEC has submitted a recommendation to the Chancellor to consider mothballing or demolishing two depreciated buildings on campus and relocating the occupying units to better space.

12. **Industry standards.** Many non-curricular units demonstrated unfamiliarity with industry standards to use for benchmarking performance and success. The IEC recommends that

non-curricular units adopt industry standards and student learning outcomes (SLOs), such as those developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education for almost every function and unit imaginable in higher education (from financial services to grounds maintenance). Standards and SLOs would not only establish expectations of excellence in every unit, but would also promote accountability and a shared commitment to student learning. If a unit cannot ultimately connect its value to student learning, it does not belong on a university campus.

**Update:** Student Affairs is incorporating the six Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) domains for their student learning and development outcomes. As a pilot, Assessment Academy has charged 5 co-curricular (Counseling Services, Military Success, Study Abroad, Ottenheimer Library, the Student Success Workshop Series within the Trojan Academic Advising and Support Center) units with building 5-year plans based on CAS standards. The IEC expects all other units to follow this example.

13. **Incentives for collaboration and improvement.** As UA Little Rock builds a culture of institutional effectiveness and accountability, faculty and staff need motivations to collaborate across siloed units to improve processes and student learning. In a climate of reduced resources, small micro-grants or non-financial incentives (e.g., a one-time reprieve from annual reporting, public praise and recognition) can be meaningful incentives. Unit heads can also lead with a “growth mindset” (psychologist Carol Dweck’s term), fostering a positive, safe environment that rewards identifying areas for improvement and experimenting with solutions.

**Update:** In academic year 2020-2021, the Provost’s Office will budget small incentives for improving student learning outcomes. During this academic year, the Provost’s Office is expanding its annual faculty excellence awards to include awards in advising and assessment. The integrated budgeting and planning process to be implemented in academic year 2020-2021 will also incentivize improvement by linking resource allocation to improvement initiatives.

14. **Improvement plans for low-performing programs.** The IEC recommends that programs scoring lower than 2.0 in Vision, Value, or Efficiency be reviewed by unit heads and the appropriate Vice-Chancellor to discern whether or not a documented improvement plan would be appropriate to address areas of concern. These plans should include meaningful improvement goals with action plans that can be measured and monitored. Attaining these goals should be celebrated and incentivized, and programs failing to demonstrate improvements should be held accountable.

**Update:** All units under Student Affairs and Enrollment Management have submitted detailed responses to their IEC scores and feedback. The Chancellor has tasked the IEC with creating a process by which all low-performing programs respond to their scores and feedback with an improvement plan.

15. **Converting academic minors into certificate credentials.** Now that academic minors are no longer a university-wide requirement, many minor programs are withering across the curriculum. The IEC recommends additional review of all minor programs, particularly stand-alone interdisciplinary minors and those minors carrying designated budgets (e.g., Presidential Studies and Non-Profit Leadership Studies), for viability, further cost analysis, and relevance. Additionally, program faculty should strongly consider the possible advantages of converting academic minors into certificate programs: raising the profile of the program to better market to students as a value-added credential and receiving credit in the state's new productivity funding formula (academic SRA 2019 Study 11 minors do not receive funding formula credit, but certificate programs do). Academic minors can be converted into certificate programs without changing student learning outcomes or content, and most minors can also convert to certificates without changing the total number of credit hours (A CP can consist of 6-21 undergraduate semester credit hours; a TC of 21-45 hours).

**Update:** Developing.

16. **Embedded stacked credentials.** Existing certificate programs should be fully embedded in a larger degree program to ensure efficiency with respect to faculty workload and healthy course enrollments. Advisors should proactively advise students to declare and apply for graduation in stacked credential programs both so that the student can obtain a value-added credential and so that lower-credentialed programs remain viable and receive credit in the productivity funding formula.

**Update:** Developing.

### III. Other Significant Improvement Actions

- **Improve UA Little Rock.** At a May 1 Chancellor's Open Forum, some faculty suggested creating a mechanism for submitting suggestions and concerns oriented towards improving the institution. On May 2, Improve UA Little Rock ([ualr.edu/improve](http://ualr.edu/improve)) was announced to allow members of the campus community to submit feedback and suggestions for improving our university. During its first six months of life, Improve UA

Little Rock received a total of 92 submissions from faculty, staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders. A biannual report outlines actions taken on the submissions and states that submissions help to prioritize improvement initiatives and identify structural issues that need to be addressed.

- **Mobile Summer Institute on Scientific Teaching.** The UA Little Rock Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence, the STEM Education Center, and the Office of the Provost hosted this faculty workshop on the science of learning in May 2019. Over four days, more than 30 faculty learned active learning strategies to improve student success and increase graduation rates on campus.
- **Online Quality Assurance.** In response to student concerns raised in Spring 2019 about the quality of online courses, instructional designers in the Office of Scholarly Technology and Resources are implementing an Online Course Design Quality Assurance program in Spring 2020. Modeled on the Quality Matters Assurance Standards, UA Little Rock's Quality Assurance program will support faculty with professional development and incentives to implement best practices in online course design and delivery.
- **IT Governance.** In order to ensure that finite Information Technology resources are aligned with the most critical campus needs, IT Services has centralized all departmental IT staff and initiated an effort certification study to determine how best to reduce duplication and improve efficiencies. An IT Governance Group has been charged with evaluating IT needs and ensuring the alignment of IT services with institutional priorities.
- **Ask BOBB.** In an effort to stimulate collaboration and transparency, the university's business offices are hosting an Ask BOBB (Business Office Brown-Bag) for the campus community on November 5. Over lunch, faculty and staff can learn about the key functions of Admissions, Bursar's Office (Student Accounts), Financial Aid and Scholarships, Records and Registration, Transfer Student Services, and the University Information Desk. The business offices also hope to gain feedback from the event for improving services.
- **Diversity Initiatives.** In order to better coordinate diversity initiatives, the Multicultural Center, Anderson Institute on Race and Ethnicity, and SASI all now report to Dr. Mia Phillips, who will serve as a permanent member of the Diversity Council as Director of the Multicultural Center once the charter is updated.

- **Coordination of Student Enrollment Experience.** Several units both inside and outside of Student Affairs worked closely with the VCSA to contribute to the Prospect to Census document as well as the Unit-Level Onboarding Dependencies document which outlines many of the processes that prospective students must go through in order to become a Trojan.
- **Concurrent Enrollment.** A new high school concurrent enrollment coordinator was onboarded in August 2019, and plans to better resource the program as a cost center in FY2021 are underway.
- **Graduate School and Records Reorganization.** The IEC recommended better integration of Graduate School processes with undergraduate processes and procedure. In response to this recommendation, the Assistant Dean position from the Graduate School was transferred to records to create a new Associate Registrar position. This transfer of personnel and knowledge has resulted in increased capacity and efficiency.
- **Marketing.** UA Little Rock hired a new marketing director in April 2019. Over the past several months, he has engaged stakeholders in building a new marketing strategy, to be deployed in late fall.

#### IV. Conclusion

Concluding its February 2019 SRA Study Final Report, the IEC stated, “It is clear that--despite a campus community that is stretched very thin--UA Little Rock’s faculty, staff, and administrators are invested in doing the hard work to change the institutional culture and ensure a vibrant, effective university. UA Little Rock is too important to fail” (22). As the university continues to face challenges in the coming year, the IEC celebrates the work that has been done to improve the institution. Although more hard work lies ahead, UA Little Rock is on its way towards constructing a culture of planning, improvement, and accountability.

As UA Little Rock faces difficult decisions in the months to come with respect to strategic resource allocation, the IEC reaffirms its guiding principles:

- An institutional perspective that prioritizes the university’s long-term health and high quality learning experiences that transform students above personal and unit-level concerns
- Shared governance among faculty, staff, and administration that ensures broad participation, feedback, and collaboration across all units

- Continuous improvement and accountability through assessment and benchmarking in all units
- Realistic, data-informed institutional planning that aligns enrollment, financial, and academic plans, as well as operational plans in every unit, with the institution's strategic plan
- Transparency through clear communication, documentation, and shared data made available to appropriate stakeholders
- Action that is consistent with UA Board and UA Little Rock policies, accreditation standards, and state and federal laws

The IEC asks that UA Little Rock's stakeholders--students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and friends--embrace these principles as we shoulder our financial challenges and engage in planning for the future of our city's university.