

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Chancellor's Proposal for Academic Planning Retrenchment

March 30, 2020

Institutional Priorities

Our institution's priorities are based on its role and scope as a public four-year metropolitan university offering a comprehensive curriculum through the doctoral level and maintaining a research portfolio at the Carnegie Research-2 level.

More specifically, our priorities are:

1. Maintain a solid liberal arts core as the basis for our general education curriculum. This is what makes a university comprehensive rather than something more narrowly defined such as a technical school or a conservatory. It is also what produces important, transferable skills such as those the Faculty Senate has defined for the core and skills in the major.
2. Provide programs that respond to the needs of the region, that have demand, and that prepare our students for viable career paths. Many of these will be pre-professional programs, but liberal arts programs can make this happen as well.
3. Provide graduate level programs that meet the demand for professional and/or advanced level preparation in areas that are in critical need for state and regional development.
4. Maintain a research portfolio appropriate to our Carnegie status. As an urban-focused institution, our research should be mostly applied and responsive to local, state, and national needs.

Preserving these elements of our institution does not necessarily mean that we have to offer them the same way as we have so far. Within our financial means, we must determine how much of each is enough to fulfill our mission and what is the best configuration to ensure sustainability.

Methodology

Recommendations from the Academic Planning Team (APT), the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee (FSAC), and from individual faculty members were reviewed and considered. Information and recommendations from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) was also considered, as was feedback from internal and external focus groups carried out as part of the academic planning process.

Numerous data points were used for analysis, but since the purpose of this retrenchment is “major reallocations of resources for academic or support services,” or in other words, to right-size our academic enterprise, I used as a baseline two key indicators: 1) Student FTE (full-time equivalent) to Faculty FTE ratios, and 2) SSCHs (student semester credit hours) to Faculty FTE ratios. These ratios are available at the department/school level only (not at the program level), so they are imperfect metrics for program review, but they are useful as a starting point to see which departments may be over-resourced for the number of students served. Using the full-time equivalent metric is preferable to headcounts for faculty or student enrollment because it standardizes the metric for all units. As a benchmark, I am using a Student FTE to Faculty FTE ratio of 12 and a SSCH to Faculty FTE ratio of 200 to set the minimums for departmental retrenchment review. These levels are about 20% below what I believe the average would need to be to maintain institutional sustainability.

Headcount enrollment and SSCH data were used at the program level to analyze the distribution of students within departments and schools. Other data considered includes, but was not limited to, graduation rates and course enrollments. It is worth reiterating here that qualitative information such as stakeholder feedback was used in conjunction with quantitative data.

This proposal is divided into two parts. Part one is a review of the liberal arts curriculum further divided into subject areas: arts, humanities, social sciences and communication, and sciences. Part two is a review of the pre-professional curriculum further divided into subject areas: business, education, health and human services, and engineering (including information technology). Graduate programs are reviewed within their subject areas. The Law School is excluded from retrenchment review. A third section provides a table of proposed academic program status with one of the following designations for each program: maintain, reduce, suspend, eliminate, review.

Part I: The Liberal Arts Curriculum

Arts

As a metropolitan university in the State’s largest city, UA Little Rock must play a role in supporting the arts through its curriculum and through its public interface. The arts play a vital role in building a vibrant, appealing community that attracts businesses, entrepreneurs and investment. The Walton family understands this keenly and has invested millions in the arts in Northwest Arkansas as part of a plan to create a destination community. This strategy has been very successful. Locally, Central Arkansas enjoys a wide range of arts organizations, but all struggle for sustainability on some level. The Windgate Foundation has been a significant local investor and others have stepped up to support the arts as well.

At UA Little Rock, our performing arts programs have been operating well below sustainable levels for a number of years, while our visual arts program has, until recently, been operating

below a sustainable level. The situation in the performing arts is critical and must be addressed through retrenchment.

Art and Design

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Art and Design	12.2	183

The Department of Art + Design has benefited tremendously from investment by the Windgate Foundation. The donation of funding for the Windgate Center of Art and Design has been a game-changer. Windgate has also invested in a student outreach specialist that will help build enrollment. While this department still needs to increase enrollment, it is moving in a positive direction. In addition, two of its instructors are grant funded.

The APT has recommended elimination of two undergraduate certificates and the MA in Art. The FSAC has recommended sustaining all three. I agree with the APT that there is little point in retaining the CP in applied art since it has had little to no enrollment for years. The photography CP is now gaining enrollment, so as an embedded program, I concur with the FSAC that this program should be retained. The MA in art does not currently meet viability standards and does not have the same career value as the MFA degree. Furthermore, faculty must take on overloads to accommodate the individualized instruction for the graduate students. The FSAC makes a good argument that since some of the graduate students in this program serve as teaching assistants, there is a net gain in revenue as long as faculty members are willing to continue with overloads. This is not sustainable in my view so I am proposing to eliminate the MA in Art.

Music, Theatre and Dance

I am considering these two departments together since they are similar in their metrics and since they face the same challenges. The APT has recommended eliminating the Department of Theatre and Dance with the argument that while the performing arts are mission-centric, we cannot support both departments at current levels. There is no explanation as to why Theatre and Dance was selected for elimination instead of Music although I understand that it was discussed. The FSAC recommended growing the Theatre and Dance program, although they offered no means by which to do so in the current budget climate. The implication was that a significant investment in facilities would solve the problem. Whether or not that is a valid assumption, the fact remains that there is no source of investment at this time.

Music and Theatre/Dance have the second and third lowest benchmark ratios respectively:

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Music	5.1	76.9
Theatre and Dance	7.0	104.3

Theatre and Dance ratios are better than Music ratios although both are far below the benchmark levels of 12 and 200. If we take the position that one or the other must be eliminated, there are pros and cons to considering each. Music has lower enrollment, but has an education degree with a clear career path that could be a recruiting tool. It has brought in strong recruiting faculty and has potential to grow with a recently overhauled department. Theatre and Dance has more students and a solid partnership with Ballet Arkansas. It also has a Dance BFA that is unique to Arkansas. Nevertheless, its career path options are limited even though many of their students have been successful in securing professional work in the industry. Both Music and Theatre/Dance require a wide range of faculty to cover the different performance areas with little crossover ability.

Arts departments will always have small class sizes in their major courses. This is the nature of arts education that requires one-on-one and small group instruction. However, this can be balanced by running larger general education classes to balance out the metrics and maintain sufficient numbers to support the enterprise. Furthermore, if one of the primary reasons for maintaining the arts programs is to provide an appropriate general education experience, these courses should be playing a larger role in the curriculum than they do currently.

The choice as I see it is to either eliminate one of these departments or find a way to combine the departments and reduce the workforce to a more sustainable level. I am proposing the latter with a combined faculty FTE reduction of 9.7. The two departments currently have a combined faculty FTE of 21.7. This includes all part-time instruction. One could argue that this approach could have the effect of making both departments weaker—that we would be better off eliminating one and leaving the other alone. That is certainly a risk factor. However, my decision is based on three factors: a) there is no compelling argument for choosing one over the other and none has been offered, 2) both have strong ties to the community through local arts organizations and both are important to the community, and 3) by maintaining both curricula even if scaled back, we maintain the option of rebuilding either or both in the future.

Humanities

English

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
English	9.4	140

The English Department attracts strong students with its Coopers Honors program and generally provides high-quality curriculum and instruction. However, it lost 27% of its student enrollment over the last five years and is currently over-resourced. I propose to reduce the faculty FTE by 2.

History

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
History	14.5	214.3

The MA in Public History has lost enrollment in recent years and should be monitored. It is currently viable, but may lose viability if enrollment doesn't pick up. The partnership with the Center for Arkansas History and Culture provides a potential career path through connections to other history-related organizations. Maintain programs; maintain current workforce level.

Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Philosophy and Int. Studies	13.1	194

I concur with the recommendation from both the APT and the FSAC to suspend the non-viable MA in Interdisciplinary Studies and re-evaluate. The Interdisciplinary Studies BA holds most of the department's majors while the Philosophy BA averages around 30 students a year. The fact that interdisciplinary instructors outside the department may be included in the faculty FTE for this department may inflate the student-faculty ratio somewhat. I concur with the APT recommendation for reduction. This department's faculty FTE should be reduced by 1.

World Languages

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
World Languages	13.1	194

Although I personally consider second language study an important part of a university education, I recognize that I now have the minority opinion on that issue. Second language study is not part of the Arkansas core and consequently is not part of the UA Little Rock core curriculum. Furthermore, the Faculty Senate removed the mandatory requirement of second language study from BA graduation requirements in 2013. Second language study across the nation has languished over the last twenty years and more and more campuses are dropping these requirements in large part to try to increase enrollment overall. Without requirements, language study is difficult to sustain as full major programs. Spanish appears to be the only one that can make it. I concur with the APT that French should be phased out and retrenched. Furthermore, since that leaves Spanish as the only language offering in the World Language BA, the name of the degree should be changed to Spanish and it should be placed in another department; most likely English.

Social Sciences and Communication

Criminal Justice

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Criminal Justice	18.1	263.19

This is a high demand area with fourth largest departmental enrollment. No changes.

Psychology

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Psychology	23.2	348.8

This is a high demand area with sixth largest departmental enrollment. No changes.

Public Affairs

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Public Affairs	9.7	135.8

The School of Public Affairs is currently operating below sustainable levels. Since the Public Administration MPA program is at its minimum faculty level for accreditation, I propose to reduce the Political Science BA area and therefore reduce the faculty FTE by 2. I concur with the recommendation of the APT and the FSAC to eliminate the International Studies BA and the Legal Studies BA.

Sociology and Anthropology

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Sociology and Anthropology	14.7	220.71

While the department enrollment as a whole is healthy, the Anthropology program currently has 24% of the enrollment with 45% of the faculty. However, since two of the four Anthropology faculty members have administrative assignments, I do not recommend any changes at this time.

Applied Communication

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Applied Communication	19.6	289.6

No changes.

Mass Communication

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Mass Communication	11.2	163.2

Over the last four years, Mass Communication was mostly above the benchmark level for sustainability. Since fall of 2017 it lost 26% of its enrollment. I propose a streamlining of curriculum and a reduction of 1 faculty FTE.

Rhetoric and Writing

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Rhetoric and Writing	12.8	188

No changes. Rhetoric and Writing offers the required composition courses for all majors and thus serves a vital role in supporting the core curriculum. This department should review its upper level and grad curriculum for greater efficiency.

Sciences

Biology

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Biology	20.8	310.7

The FSAC recommended the elimination of the Biology MA. However, since it is a cognate of the Biology MS degree and is combined with that degree for viability measures, I do not concur that it should be eliminated. However, I do concur with both groups that the Environmental Health Sciences BS degree should be eliminated. The recommendation from the FSAC to consider an interdisciplinary Environmental Sciences program for future development is reasonable. No other changes are proposed for this department.

Chemistry

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Chemistry	11.8	175

Chemistry is an important part of the sciences core, but it is currently operating below sustainable levels. I propose a streamlining of curriculum and a reduction of 1 faculty FTE.

Mathematics and Statistics

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Mathematics and Statistics	17.8	264.8

No changes.

Physics and Astronomy

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Physics and Astronomy	13.2	198.5

The FSAC recommended the elimination of the Physics BA, but since this degree is a cognate of the Physics BS and is combined with that degree for viability measures, I do not concur that it should be eliminated. No changes.

Earth Sciences

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Earth Sciences	17.3	256

No changes.

Part II: The Pre-Professional Curriculum

The pre-professional curriculum is designed to meet market demand for graduates in specific areas. If the graduates of a pre-professional program are not in demand by businesses and other community stakeholders and/or if the program itself is not in demand by prospective students who wish to pursue careers in those areas, then the program does not serve the purpose for which it was created and should be eliminated or revamped. While pre-professional programs are expected to make use of core skills produced in the liberal arts core, they are not generally considered to be part of that core education.

Business

Accounting

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Accounting	15.9	236.4

No changes.

Business Information Systems

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Business Information Systems	14	202.9

No changes.

Economics and Finance

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Economics and Finance	14.9	219.9

No changes.

Management

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Management	17.8	255.8

No changes.

Marketing and Advertising

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Marketing and Advertising	21.2	313.6

No changes.

Education, Health, and Human Services

Education

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Education	14.8	202.1

The School of Education is made up of the former departments of Teacher Education and Education Leadership. Teacher education is a significant community interest. Many of our external stakeholders have told us that they would like to see us concentrate on teacher education and produce more teachers for Central Arkansas. Education leadership programs have the potential of fulfilling priority 3: provide graduate level programs that meet the demand for professional and/or advanced level preparation in areas that are in critical need for

state and regional development. However, since these are not licensure programs, the demand for graduates is unclear and stakeholders have not expressed a need for graduate level education in this area. The administration programs do not appear to be a critical need for state and regional development.

The APT has recommended eliminating most of these programs. The FSAC is recommending several of the programs be given time to reorganize and that the rest be maintained.

I propose the elimination of the education leadership programs.

Communication Sciences and Disorders

This undergraduate program is the portion of the former Audiology and Speech Pathology department that was part of a consortium with UAMS. The consortium has been dissolved and the graduate programs moved to UAMS. This program may need some restructuring and a new home, but is still part of an MOU with UAMS and will not be part of the retrenchment proposal.

Counseling, Human Performance and Rehabilitation

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
CHPR	14.7	210.8

The APT and the FSAC have recommended the elimination of the Health Education/Promotion MS degree due to low demand and non-viability. I concur with this recommendation. The APT raises the possibility of eliminating the Sport Management MS due to strong competition from similar programs at other Arkansas institutions. It is also a one-person program and the IEC recommends scrutiny of these programs. This program was reorganized three years ago and is showing modest growth from that time. I recommend maintaining this program for now with further review in another two years.

Nursing

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Nursing	7.7	115.6

Nursing is the highest demand area at UA Little Rock and is consistently cited as a critical area of need by external stakeholders. The department currently has the highest enrollment (1,935) and has grown 150% in the last five years. Nursing is, by the design of its accrediting body, a labor-intensive program. The nature of the curriculum requires an 8-1 ratio in clinical courses with multiple adjuncts teaching in the same clinical environment. The department has 22 full-time faculty who all have full load teaching assignments. They use another 39 adjuncts to meet the requirements of the clinical curriculum, which drives up their faculty FTE number resulting in low ratios. This is an artifact of the unique structure of the Nursing curriculum and is not

indicative of low demand or inefficiency. Nursing programs assess students a clinical fee to offset the cost of the additional labor needed. No changes.

Social Work

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Social Work	11	145.1

Social Work is a high-demand area that is identified by external constituents as a critical high-need area. Much like Nursing, it employs a large cadre of part-time faculty in order to manage the field placement component of the curriculum. The Social Work Department has 15 full-time faculty who carry full loads and another 21 part-time faculty who largely manage students in the field work placements. Social Work programs assess students a field placement fee to offset the cost of the additional labor needed. No changes.

Engineering and Information Technology

The College of Engineering and Information Technology was originally created in response to a regional demand for graduates in this area in order to attract and develop high tech business and investment. Currently, the computer and information science areas are producing high-demand graduates and stakeholders continue to express strong interest in these areas. Additionally, these areas are strong in research. Construction management also has very strong support from local industry and continues to produce high-demand graduates.

There is sufficient student demand and community interest to warrant maintaining an engineering curriculum, but these areas have long been over-resourced for the level of enrollment they maintain. Systems Engineering has the lowest student to faculty FTE ratio at the institution and Engineering Technology the fifth lowest. These departments consistently run courses below the required minimum enrollment levels, and a number of engineering faculty do not have full teaching loads. The Construction Management and Civil and Construction Engineering Department has the eighth lowest student to faculty FTE ratio. Therefore, my proposal includes a reorganization and retrenchment of the engineering programs.

Computer Science

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Computer Science	13.6	194.9

Critical need area. No changes.

Information Science

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Information Science	11.5	151.9

This is a critical need area. Information Science is operating below the benchmark level. This department has a large number of graduate students and high research productivity, but the benchmark is set 20% lower than an average sustainability level to accommodate this type of variation. Therefore, I propose a reduction of .5 faculty FTE.

Construction Management and Civil and Construction Engineering

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
CMCCE	9.8	144.5

The APT and FSAC have several recommendations for programs in this department. They agree on the recommendation to suspend the Environmental Engineering BS degree. I concur with that recommendation. The FSAC also recommends suspending the Architectural & Construction Engineering BS with the argument that students mostly migrate out of this program into civil engineering and the lack of graduates with this degree appears to bear this out. Therefore, I concur with this recommendation. The APT recommends eliminating the MS in Construction Management due to declining enrollment and lack of regional demand. The FSAC argues for sustaining the program with the argument that it serves as an option for individuals with different undergraduate degrees to prepare to work in construction management. There is no evidence that this is occurring and the degree is not needed for career entry. I propose to eliminate this program. This department should be reduced by 2 faculty FTE. The engineering part of this department may be included in an overall engineering reorganization.

Systems Engineering and Engineering Technology

Fall 2019	Student FTE: Faculty FTE	SSCH: Faculty FTE
Systems Engineering	4.9	68.8
Engineering Technology	7.8	116.9

The APT and the FSAC both recommend eliminating the Systems Engineering program and the department is already migrating that program into the more conventional Mechanical and Electrical/Computer Engineering programs. I concur with this recommendation. APT also recommends a reorganization of the Electronic and Computer Engineering Technology programs (AET and BS) to make them more efficient. I agree that this is a step in the right direction, but more is needed.

The efficiency problem is substantially larger than these two modest strategies would imply. Both departments are far below benchmark levels with Systems Engineering having the lowest

metrics of all departments and Engineering Technology having the fifth lowest. Producing engineering graduates is still important to the regional economy and stakeholders still want UA Little Rock to be strong in this area. However, in its current configuration, the demand for these degrees is substantially below sustainability of current resources assigned to them.

I propose that both of these departments, and possibly the engineering portion of the Construction Management Department be thoroughly reorganized with a reduction in the curriculum, and substantially downsized to benchmark levels. The Systems Engineering Department should be reduced by 7 faculty FTE and the Engineering Technology Department by 2 faculty FTE.