



FACULTY SENATE

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 21, 2019
To: Chancellor Andrew Rogerson
Faculty Senate
From: Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate
Re: Response to IEC Strategic Resource Allocation Final Report
Number: FSM-2019-01

The final IEC Strategic Resource Allocation report proposed 16 recommendations listed in order of priority for the Cabinet to consider. Of those recommendations, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee identified four pressing issues that we believe merit immediate consideration as they relate to processes critical to the success of this institution.

- Strategic Enrollment Plan – We concur that this is of utmost importance for an institution of this size. Given the breadth of our program offerings at all levels, we need an enrollment plan that fosters long-term enrollment by providing realistic and quantifiable goals for student recruitment and success.
- Faculty Workload Policy – We agree with the IEC’s findings that an updated and equitable faculty workload policy is required for continued faculty development and productivity.
- Comprehensive Unit Reviews – We agree that just as academic units are regularly assessed, non-academic units should undergo regular and methodical assessment for productivity and quality. The report singles out the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, and the Office of Admission and Recruitment as needing attention. Because these units are either central to the success of our students or central to the health and welfare of the faculty, we would agree that attention to these areas is urgent.
- Academic Planning – We agree with the IEC’s finding that academic planning guided by the university’s Strategic Plan is necessary to provide a well-reasoned and intentional direction for curricular areas rather than merely rely on market forces.

While we do agree with the aforementioned recommendations, the report included recommendations about academic programs that we believe should be addressed by the faculty and by Academic Affairs rather than the Cabinet.

- Converting minors into certificates – Academic policy regarding minors and/or certificates are curriculum matters that should be taken up by the Faculty Senate to determine whether and how to go forward.

- Embedding and stacking credentials – Credentialing within academic programs, whether as part of certificates, badges, or other credits, are issues related to curriculum alignment and program completion requirements. These issues should be taken up by Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate, which will determine whether and how to proceed.
- Single-person programs – We believe that the recommendation of increased scrutiny of single-person programs grossly oversimplifies the issues by connecting program quality to size and conflating a number of complex issues. With respect to academic programs, we do not agree that a “single-person” program identification is an appropriate criterion for restructuring or elimination, even when considered on a “case-by-case” basis as suggested by the report. Single-person academic programs should be evaluated by the same criteria as other academic programs.

Many programs are struggling as a result of faculty attrition through departure and retirement without replacement. Without comprehensive academic planning along with an accompanying strategic enrollment plan, these programs would be inappropriately scrutinized based on the number of faculty rather than their quality or potential. We reject a system of oversight that reinforces the “Matthew Effect” in which programs with a resource advantage experience an accumulated positive effect and programs with a resource deficit experience an accumulated negative effect. Focusing on individual programs without investment in the larger academic enterprise will leave even our strongest programs vulnerable.

In addition to the above points, the Executive Committee calls for a faculty and staff-driven review process that meets the HLC’s requirements for shared governance. A more thoughtful and detailed program review process, guided by the UA Little Rock Strategic Plan, should inform institutional strategic resource allocation. Rather than evaluating programs in the context of scarce resources and productivity, this process should be routinized and include a robust examination of curriculum and services by faculty and staff to ensure the university’s mission is met. Broad campus-wide input into the reporting criteria, rubrics, and guidelines will increase confidence in this initiative and its results. If this initiative is to continue, we encourage the Cabinet to work jointly with the Faculty Senate and other constituencies in the spirit of transparency and shared governance.

The Faculty Senate shares Chancellor Rogerson’s concern about the University’s financial well-being, and we believe that the path to academic excellence and financial sustainability can best be achieved cooperatively, with active faculty input and involvement. In order to provide a balanced and diverse curriculum, the institution must strike a balance between *costs* and *value* with academic quality as the driver for decision making. Consequently, we recommend that the SRA be used as just the beginning of a process and that any resource allocation decisions should instead result from an open strategic planning process.