Faculty Vision for the University of Arkansas at Little Rock

October 2019

Recognizing that enrollment in higher education, specifically at UA Little Rock, is continuing to decline and that budget deficits are a reality that must be addressed, the faculty believes that this institution has both significant opportunities to embrace as well as challenges to resolve so that the campus continues to fulfill its role in making higher education accessible to those who can beneﬁt.

In a period when the market for higher education is becoming less traditional and “up-skilling” is needed, UA Little Rock is uniquely positioned and able to offer needed education and degrees for this shifting population. While the institution’s role and scope informs decisions made in both curricular offerings and administrative functions, it is important to reaffirm that research and teaching go hand in hand.

Therefore, UA Little Rock will embrace and enhance its Carnegie ranking by recruiting students for and promoting academic programs that enable us to distinguish ourselves from competitors, assuring that UA Little Rock graduates are well-informed, critical-thinking citizens with appropriate knowledge and needed skills. We will provide undergraduate, masters and doctoral programs that serve the needs and future of the state, the region and beyond.

Providing access to education and teaching a largely non-traditional population of students\* requires faculty dedication and commitment to assisting students to overcome their challenges and accomplish their personal education goals. It also requires support personnel who understand that their primary role is to facilitate student success. UA Little Rock will continue to encourage all employees to work collegially, cooperatively and transparently to assure that students are welcomed, well served and well educated.

A new focus on flexibility in course offerings along with strategic planning to encourage multiple course delivery methods is requisite to meeting the opportunities our student population and potential student population seek. Changes and efficiencies in curriculum and course offerings, as the responsibility of the faculty, will be informed by the institution’s mission, role and scope, and fiscal challenges.

To this end, UA Little Rock will design recruitment and retention strategies that include a focus on the metropolitan student tendency to connect with academic programs more directly than with the institution as a whole.

In non-academic areas, the importance of implementing forward-looking, end-user-focused systems, processes and programs cannot be overemphasized. Workflow efficiencies are critically needed across the university. Student services policies and procedures must be reformed to meet the needs of this diverse community and reflect current best practices. UA Little Rock will analyze the ratio of administrative to faculty positions (including academic administration) and lower non-academic costs in line with peer institutions.

UA Little Rock will review and modify workflow procedures, with a goal of requiring one approval level beyond the initiator of any required document before it is processed. Should additional levels of approval be necessitated by state regulations or other regulatory parties, these will be recognized as exceptions and clearly identified. Cross-training and more than one employee authorized to process/approve documents is an essential reform to mitigate current bottlenecks.

UA Little Rock will develop by spring break 2020 a comprehensive recruitment program that establishes measurable benchmarks to recruit graduate students both at masters and doctoral levels and non-traditional in addition to traditional undergraduate students. A 3-year plan for improvements and efficiencies in non-academic areas with measurable benchmarks and professional evaluation will be completed by May 1, 2020. Stakeholders including faculty and students will have opportunities to engage in developing and evaluating these initiatives.

The faculty believes that enhancing our reputation for inclusiveness, re-energizing our mission to serve a diverse population of students, and reforming our recruitment and student services processes will produce positive results in the current environment.

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\*In fall 2019, UA Little Rock has 1526 graduate students (19%) and 6553 undergraduate students (81%) (by head-count).  We have an incoming freshman class of 651(9.9%) and an incoming undergraduate transfer class of 874 (13%). For the 3913 continuing undergraduate students, 2483 (63%) are full time and 1430 (37%) are part-time.

According to the formula used by ADHE, the preliminary student to faculty ratio for fall 2019 is 13 to 1, (a higher ratio than 12 to 1 from fall 2018).

Planning and Finance Committee

October 25, 2019