

May 13, 2011

Colleagues,

One of our major goals this summer in the Provost's Office is to complete the program expansion phase of the "academic growth plan." The central driver of the plan, from the perspective of this office, is our pressing need to increase the number of FT faculty members on campus. New tuition revenue is the only realistic means of rapidly and sustainably increasing our FT faculty ranks; therefore, enrollment growth and FT faculty growth are inextricably linked. Secondly, enrollment growth will help fund other academic program enhancements.

I am aware of, and sensitive to, the tremendous amount of work on our collective plate. The reorganization alone has posed leadership, academic, and administrative challenges that all need our attention. Yet the strategic groundwork we have spent so much thought and energy establishing cannot be soundly built upon over time without more full-time faculty and revenue for investing the academic programs. *Please contact me if you have any thoughts or suggestions that you feel might improve the process.*

What will the academic growth plan do?

The plan will plot enrollment expansion in existing and new programs over the next 4-5 years. In the past academic program planning has been predominantly ad hoc, but we are now at a point in our evolution as a University where it is crucial to conduct comprehensive, integrative planning that builds our strengths, drives the Strategic Plan, and provides consistent and dependable tuition revenue for investing in additional full-time faculty and academic programs.

What product will our planning produce?

We will establish a solid two-year program development pipeline with a projection for a third-year. Our goal is to launch 2 new or existing growth-enhanced programs for the fall of 2012, three for the fall of 2013, and an additional 3 for 2014.

The programs do not have to be evenly distributed across the colleges, but this project demands the pooled brainpower of our entire interdisciplinary decanal team with added assistance from colleagues in such areas as Enrollment Management. The end product be a framework for academic growth with the following components:

The fall of 2012

- The planning products for the two programs that will launch in the fall of 2012 will consist of a white paper with clear steps for faculty curriculum development, a developed launch and growth budget, and detailed plan for approvals. *The plan should be complete by September 2011.*

The fall of 2013

- The planning products for the three programs introduced in the fall of 2013 will consist of a white paper, planning steps, a launch and growth budget subject to modification in the fall semester, and projected planning steps subject to revision in the fall resulting from further research. *The plan should be finalized by the spring of 2012.*

The fall of 2014

- Planning products for programs projected for the fall of 2014 should consist of a white paper, working budget estimates, and an analysis of required approvals, and a clear description of future steps that need to be taken and who is responsible for them. *This plan should be finalized by the summer of 2012.*

We will present the package to the President's Council and Provost's Council in late summer.

Parameters

We will discuss the planning parameters in detail later, but I present the following overview to spur your thinking.

New programs and plans for the growth of existing programs could consist of graduate or undergraduate curricula. (Our Strategic Plan rightfully focuses on graduate growth to counter the declining undergraduate demographics, but a highly differentiated and well-positioned UG program could also be successful under certain circumstances.)

Program size and overhead

1. We are interested in programs that grow to a minimum of 100 or more students over a 3- to 4-year period.
2. We should be sensitive to the overhead of new programs. Programs that intensively use labs, studios, and require high levels of administrative coordination often produce less surplus revenue that we can then reinvest into new FT faculty and program enhancements. Whenever possible, our planning should maximize use of existing facilities, faculty, staff, and technologies.
3. Ideally program planning would be integrated: the growth of one new or existing program would support another.

A few things to keep in mind about State of Pennsylvania approvals:

1. Graduate programs require State approval and generally take up to 18 months to implement from the proposal stage.
2. Most undergraduate programs do not require state approval if they fall under our BS degree umbrella.
3. Five-year programs often require state approval.

Current state of the planning process

We are in the final stages of developing a predictive tool with our consultant, David Maddox, which will help us model the impacts and dynamics of enrollment and FT faculty growth, and analyze our current curricula. However, without thoughtful input, the model is simply a static group of formulas and rules. The academic leadership at the University needs to begin intensive, qualitative discussions (given context by data) about existing and new program growth which will provide the input for the model.

The planning stages this summer

Planning this summer will happen in 3 primary stages: 1) preliminary program research and concept development, 2) concept presentations by the deans at a retreat on June 21, 2011, and 3) post-retreat testing of the edited proposal with the model and by other means such as market research. The process will be successful when the deans have a plan in place to work with faculty on program development for the opening of school in Fall 2011.

I have provided below a few initial guidelines for our work together. The process should:

1. Focus on programs where enrollment could reasonably be predicted to grow by a minimum of 100 students over 3-4 years,
2. Include building existing programs and developing new programs (or both simultaneously),
3. Leverage existing capabilities and resources,
4. Demonstrate how and why new full-time faculty would drive growth,
5. Support academic excellence by strengthening existing curricula,
6. Lead to an initial plan for program growth by the beginning of classes in August 2011,
7. Incorporate the planned retreat on program growth on June 21.

It would, of course, be desirable to create programs that crossed the boundaries of colleges, divisions, and schools as we seek to create a more academically integrated institution.

However, our main focus is to plan for *responsible enrollment growth to generate more revenue for investing in the FT faculty*.

Your assignments

Please come to the retreat with a minimum of 3 concepts for growing the enrollment. I encourage you to work together on this project. The Provost's Office will support your work by providing data, (enrollment trends, demand, etc.) at your request, that would give context to your presentations and weight to your arguments.

The retreat will be a brainstorming session and a critical reality check. The result should be a group of more refined ideas that could then be tested and iterated by modeling and research. We will conduct a series of follow-up meetings with various directors and VPs to further edit our list of programs and refine those that appear promising. The goal is to have a plan for the faculty to engage in the program development process in the fall.

Limits of this work phase

Note that this exercise is focused primarily on mapping the relationship between enrollment growth *and new FT faculty to support this growth*. When the program expansion plan and associated revenues are calculated, we can then extend our planning to incorporate the allocation of FT faculty for such reasons as balancing our S/F ratios, improving retention, designating FT faculty for academic areas that are critical to the advancement of the Strategic Plan, and so on.

Again, if you have any comments or suggestions to optimize the planning process please let me know.

Regards,

Randy

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Provost, Dean of the Faculty