

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL
relating to
THE PROPOSED REDUCTION OF ACADEMIC UNITS

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Special Report of the Academic Priorities Council Relating to the Proposed Reduction of Academic Units.

INTRODUCTION

This Special Report of the Academic Priorities Council identifies the criteria and the process which should be used to identify academic programs that might be reduced. The contents are closely related to, but different from those of two prior Faculty Senate Reports, namely the Final Report of the ad hoc Priorities Council, (Senate Document 80-065A, dated May 8, 1990), and the Special Report of the Academic Priorities Council, (Senate Document 90-064, dated May 17, 1990). Whereas the 1980 document focused on the identification of programs “which should (a) receive additional resources, (b) continue at the existing level, or (c) experience a reduction in resources,” and the 1990 document dealt exclusively with the review of academic programs proposed for termination, this report deals exclusively with the review of academic programs proposed for reduction.

PART I: BACKGROUND

For well over two years, the Commonwealth has faced a continuing and progressively serious fiscal crisis. It has become increasingly clear to many, if not all members of the University community, that the campus will have to make major cuts in the years ahead in many areas, including the academic area. The necessity of taking this approach was confirmed at the Senate’s recessed meeting on September 27, 1990, when the Senate adopted a motion endorsing both termination and reduction of academic programs as ways to reduce the University’s budget over the next several years.

It was the ongoing fiscal crisis which led the Rules Committee to request the Academic Priorities Council to develop a set of procedures and criteria for program termination. This motion recommending the adoption of the policy and procedures was approved by a wide margin.

Because last May’s document (Senate Document 90-064) dealt exclusively with termination, the Rules Committee recently requested the Academic Priorities Council to develop a parallel set of procedures to deal exclusively with program reduction.

No one should assume that the Council has taken to this task with much enthusiasm. No one likes to see the University being dismantled or liquidated. On the other hand the Council takes the position that faculty involvement in these difficult issues is imperative; that it would be totally inappropriate to abdicate this important responsibility. The Council also takes the position that random, across-the-board cuts are potentially destructive to morale and quality.

It may be appropriate at this time to set forth some general premises that have guided the Council’s deliberations.

First, we wish to emphasize and dramatize that, in our view, being singled out for reduction is not a badge of disgrace. It may, in fact, signal nothing more than a change in enrollment demand, as the result of changing tastes. Many of us have seen the demand for programs go up, and then go down, as disciplines or majors become more or less fashionable.

Second, we note that the University is a public university, with a land-grant philosophy, and with major obligations to meet the higher education needs of young people as well as other client groups. We are mindful of the fact that the land-grant philosophy is one that emphasizes teaching, research and public service.

Third, we accept the premise that the University cannot be all things to all people. It is very doubtful that we can much long enjoy the luxury of supporting academic programs for which there is neither instructional demand at the undergraduate or graduate level, nor outstanding research productivity.

Fourth, we accept the premise that some disciplines and therefore some departments are more central to the idea of a university than others. One can conceive of a university that does not teach mortuary science, but it is more difficult to conceive of a university that does not teach those disciplines that go to the very heart of civilization and our civic culture.

Acknowledgments

In developing the present report, the Council reviewed, and freely borrowed from the work of both the 1980 and the 1990 reports. Hence, the careful reader of the earlier documents will note similarities of approach and language in several parts of the present report. The Council also reviewed, and benefited from a memorandum authored by Provost Richard O'Brien, "Criteria for Change: An Informal Listing of Potential Factors," dated January 26, 1990.

PART II: DEFINITION OF REDUCTION

The Council believes that a sharp distinction can and should be drawn between termination and reduction of academic units. We take the position that no program that is deemed central to the mission of the University should be terminated. Likewise, we do not believe that programs should be made to absorb repeated reductions, which in the end would be tantamount to termination. The Council also strongly believes that decisions as to how reductions are to be achieved should, in the first instance, be developed by the departments themselves.

Personnel negotiations shall be considered an integral part of the reduction process, providing that all such negotiations shall be conducted in a good faith non-adversarial atmosphere. Faculty members shall be given at least seven days to respond to any final offer that would result in a major change in their status.

Reduction

The term Reduction shall involve planned decreased in programmatic resources, as opposed to the normal method of reallocating positions. Reduction entails:

- a) A decrease in faculty salary accounts¹ of not more than 40% over a three-year period;
- b) The decisions as to how reduction targets are to be reached shall be made by the academic unit, in consultation with the appropriate dean and the provost;
- c) All personnel decisions made to achieve reduction targets shall be in compliance with all relevant articles in collective bargaining agreements;

¹ Salaries of tenured, tenure track, quasi-base non-tenure track or other non-tenure track faculty.

- d) **Provision for meeting the academic needs of undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled in that program, with phased reductions in enrollments;**
- e) **A program having met reduction targets within the three-year period shall not again be asked to make further reductions during the next three years, but it shall not necessarily be entitled to replace faculty vacancies arising out of normal faculty attrition.**

Termination

It is useful to contrast the definition of *Reduction* with the definition of *Termination*. The concept of termination was articulated in Sen. Doc. 90-064, and implies the following:

- a) **The non-renewal of contracts, as they expire;**
- b) **“Encouraged” retirement of faculty;**
- c) **The re-assignment of tenured faculty to equivalent, or near-equivalent duties in other departments, or in the administration, as may be appropriate, and to the extent possible;**
- d) **Provisions for meeting the academic needs of currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students;**
- e) **All personnel actions shall be in compliance with all relevant articles in collective bargaining agreements.**

PART III: PROCEDURES TO BE UTILIZED WHEN THE REDUCTION OF AN ACADEMIC UNIT IS PROPOSED

This section of the Report sets forth the procedures that are to be used when the reduction (as the term has previously been defined in this Report) of an academic unit (department, program, institute or center, hereinafter, referred to as “unit”) is under consideration. The entire cycle from Step 1 to the submission of the report and motion to the Faculty Senate Secretary is expected to be completed within a ninety day period.

The time-table provided in this document shall be advisory rather than prescriptive, and is intended to provide a framework for the process to be carried out, rather than a rigid time frame for completing the reduction process.

- Step 1. After consultation, either the Provost or a Dean shall propose the reduction of one or more academic units by developing a brief(s) setting forth the reasons why reduction is being proposed, and specifying the extent of the proposed reduction. In preparing the briefs, the Provost and/or Dean shall address each of the criteria listed in the Reduction document, especially those that pertain to scholarly and creative activities.**

- Step 2.** The unit(s) in question shall be given 14 days² to provide an initial written response, and to convene a meeting with the Provost and Dean to discuss the proposed reduction. In preparing their initial written response to the Provost's or Dean's brief, affected units shall address each of the criteria listed in the Reduction document, and label them accordingly.
- Step 3.** After the unit's response has been received, and if the Provost decides to proceed, he shall, within 7 days, cause an executive summary of the brief(s) and the unit's response to be distributed to all faculty members within the MBU faculty. Individual members of the MBU faculty may send comments to the Provost, within 7 days of receiving the executive summary.
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- ² In all instances, the references are to calendar days.
- Step 4.** The Provost shall consider all the materials received and shall determine whether to proceed with a Faculty Senate review. Should the Provost decide to proceed with a Faculty Senate review, he shall, within 14 days of receiving the unit's response, forward the brief, the unit's response, and the comments submitted by other parties (if any) to the Faculty Senate Secretary.
- Step 5.** The Secretary shall forthwith advise the Rules Committee of the Provost's request, and shall forward all relevant documents to the Academic Priorities Council.
- Step 6.** The Council shall conduct a review, which shall include, but not be limited to, the use of all the criteria listed in Part IV of this report, and such special criteria as may be suggested by the unit. The Dean of the MBU and representatives of the unit shall be invited to meet with the Council.
- Step 7.** Within 42 days of the Council's receipt of the Provost's request, the Council shall prepare a preliminary report, which shall be sent to the unit(s) involved. The unit(s) shall be given 7 days to provide a response.
- Step 8.** Within 7 days of receiving the response, the Council shall prepare a Faculty Senate Special Report, which shall include a synopsis of the unit's response if one has been submitted, and an appropriate motion, which shall be in the form of a recommendation to the campus Administration.
- Step 9.** The Academic Priorities Council shall submit its Special Report to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate together with a request that it be placed on the agenda of the next Faculty Senate meeting.

In the process of arriving at a Recommendation for Senate action, the Council shall ensure fair and impartial consideration of the criteria enumerated in Part IV of this report, as well as any special criteria identified by the unit.

PART IV: THE METHOD AND THE VARIABLES

The Council believes that the best indicator that a unit should be a candidate for reduction is a showing that, compared to other units, it does less teaching.

The following variables are all intended to measure instructional demand and effectiveness, i.e., the quantity and quality of undergraduate and graduate teaching provided by a particular unit over a five-year period. These are:

1. Enrollment and enrollment trends at undergraduate and graduate levels.
2. Instructed student to faculty ratios at undergraduate and graduate levels.
3. The ratio of students to total instructional resources, that is, to the total teaching resources, when faculty and teaching assistants are combined.
4. The number of majors per faculty member.
5. The number of baccalaureate degrees awarded per faculty member.
6. The number of master's and doctoral degrees awarded per faculty member.
7. The amount of instructional activity (e.g., lectures, labs and discussion sections) per faculty member.
8. The results of any systematic processes used to evaluate the quality of instruction, provided by the affected unit(s).

Should the analysis of instructional loads show that a unit is receiving excessive resources, it will then be appropriate to ask: Are there other compelling reasons to continue to provide resources at the present level?

Accordingly, the next step will be to focus on a group of variables intended to assess research and publication productivity to decide if the unit's accomplishments in this regard are so impressive that they justify its teaching contribution. The analysis will of necessity focus on quantity rather than quality, and will focus on at least a five-year period.

9. The number, format and quality of publications per faculty member.
10. The number of creative and artistic performances per faculty member.
11. The proportion of the faculty who have produced scholarly publications or artistic performances.
12. Research-related funds received from exterior sources, provided that variable is deemed relevant to the unit.

The affected units may provide evidence relating to the quality of their research, scholarly and creative activities.

If neither teaching loads nor outstanding scholarly or artistic productivity justify present levels of funding, the Council will take additional considerations into account. Each unit under review will have the opportunity to show that there are other compelling reasons why present funding levels should be maintained.

Accordingly, the following questions will be addressed to decide if the proposed reduction would be so severe that it would irreparably damage the unit in one of these ways.

13. Will reduction irreparably weaken the University's traditionally strong commitment to equal opportunity and affirmative action?
14. Is the intellectual liveliness of the unit so vibrant that reduction will endanger this quality?
15. Is the unit's uniqueness so important that its resources should not be reduced?
16. Does the unit provide a service role to the outer world that will be irreparably harmed by resource reduction?
17. Is the unit so central to the mission and life of the campus that reduction cannot be contemplated?
18. Is the national reputation of a unit so outstanding that it should not be reduced?

The responsibility for providing the data shall rest with the Provost and Dean, in the preparation of the initial brief(s), and with the affected units for all other criteria enumerated in this report.

PART V: THE MOTION

VOTED: That the Faculty Senate recommend the adoption of the Procedures for the Review of
11-91 Academic Units proposed for Reduction, as set forth in Senate Document 91-014B.

For the reductions proposed in October 1990, it shall be understood that Day 1 shall be October 15, 1990.