

ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO TASK FORCE

Pruning Programs Committee

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COMMITTEE'S PRIMARY CHARGE: Pruning the undergraduate curriculum for unproductive programs through discontinuance or restructuring. The pruning programs committee has broken into subcommittees to address potential models and metrics for pruning and restructuring programs.

This taskforce was convened to identify academic programs for restructuring and/or discontinuance in the interest of cost savings. We hope that these recommendations will be used alongside a thorough examination of non-academic areas for potential cost savings. We recommend that academic programs not be the first place the university explores for cost savings but, rather, the last.

Up until now, the university's administration has not defined what it means to be a productive academic program. This task force was charged with defining the term, as well as the metrics for measuring productivity. As a subcommittee, we agree that a productive program is one that adds value to the university, but we have had difficulty developing a more detailed definition. Thus, we urge the university to pick up where this subcommittee has left off – by providing a clear and consistent definition of a productive academic program, by granting programs the opportunity to map to that definition, and by specifying the metrics that all units can use to measure productivity so that units understand how they will be evaluated.

While we have not been able to agree upon a definition for a productive program¹, we have outlined potential steps to take to evaluate the efficiency of academic programs and potential metrics to use to evaluate inefficient programs.

Summary of Recommendations – Provide your committee's recommendations in a numbered list in the space below.

1. provide a clear and consistent definition of a “productive” (or cost-efficient) academic program;
2. identify the metrics all academic programs should use measure productivity (e.g., SCH, majors, minors, degrees conferred, student-to-faculty ratio, growth/decline);
3. use Marla Johnson's program cost model to identify profitable programs (to use as examples) and unprofitable programs (to closely scrutinize);
4. scrutinize unprofitable (or inefficient) programs using two types of data: (a) quantitative data on productivity and growth/decline and (b) qualitative data on centrality to mission and value to university.
5. for more specific recommendations on cost-saving measures, please see the table below.

¹ At one point, the subcommittee discussed but did not develop consensus on using two main types of metrics to evaluate program productivity: (1) the number of students served (e.g., non-majors, majors, minors, SCH) and (2) the relative cost of delivering the program (e.g., cost per credit hour). It was noted that faculty scholarship (e.g., Research, Scholarship, and Creative Works) benefits students and could also be considered.

Detailed Discussion of Recommendations – Type your responses to the questions below in the space provided. You may add space as needed.

1. In what ways do these recommendations align with the guiding principles for all task force committees?

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ALL TASK FORCE COMMITTEES

1. ***Claim intentionally as our mission the education of first generation and other underrepresented groups. Initiatives should be structured and delivered to promote the academic progression and success of these students. Students who don't belong to these populations will also benefit.***

Response: When we identify the academic programs that are growing and declining and that are productive and unproductive at UNC, we will be able to make strategic decisions about the university's future. Identifying areas of strength and weakness within an organization are always helpful for strategic planning and mission execution. In adopting these recommendations, the university will be able to use its resources more efficiently to meet students' needs for academic support, advising, career exploration, and degree completion.

2. ***Commit to ensuring that every student, graduate and undergraduate, is career-ready by the time they graduate. Programs and services must be able to demonstrate in concrete ways how they prepare students for professional lives after graduation.***

Response: While admirable, this is a new principle, and it is not one this committee addressed. Thus, some programs may already be addressing students' career-readiness through internships and career fairs, but it is not currently an issue addressed in Annual Program Reviews or 5-Year Reviews. The University has not yet provided academic programs with consistent guidance on what constitutes a productive program or how academic programs will be evaluated, which has created confusion about the metrics for departments and unit to use (e.g., increase SCH, increase majors, improve graduation rates). The lack of guidance has also hindered the administration's ability to hold programs accountable for growth/decline and efficiency/inefficiency.

3. ***Use our institutional learning outcomes as a framework for developing and delivering programs and services. Each task force should be able to show how its recommendations and strategies align with and support some or all of the institutional learning outcomes.***

Response: This committee did not address ILOs.

4. ***Establish performance targets for key metrics associated with student success. Some metrics to consider are: (a) retention and persistence (overall and among subgroups); (b) 4- and 6-year completion rates for undergraduates; (c) social mobility index; (d) post-degree placement.***

Response: The committee noted that the following metrics should be used to evaluate program growth/decline over the last five years:

- UG majors

- UG minors
- MA students
- PhD students
- retention rates
- 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates
- student-to-faculty ratios
- SCH production
- SCH per full-time faculty

5. *Commit to transparency in reporting progress and outcomes related to the implementation of committee recommendations. A clear strategy for collecting, analyzing, reporting and using performance data should be embedded in the plans that emerge from the task force recommendations.*

Response: In an effort to promote transparency, all of the draft reports for this committee were posted to the SharePoint folder for the Academic Portfolios Task Force and the preliminary recommendations have been shared at various meetings.

6. *Decisions will be made based on the needs of the institution, not those of individuals, disciplines, colleges.*

Response: Decision makers should use data, consider context, and stay true to the university's mission in this process. Data-informed decision making should help to ensure that decisions about academic programs are made to benefit the institution, not individuals, disciplines, or colleges.

2. *What resources would be saved or required to implement and sustain these recommendations? Remember that resources include human, financial, technology, and facilities.*

Potential savings could come from a reduction in staffing, adjunct budgets, low-enrolled courses, and un-retained students. Please also see the recommendations listed below for additional cost-saving ideas.

3. *How would implementation of these recommendations improve existing programs and services?*

As stated above, when we identify the academic programs that are growing and declining and that are productive and unproductive using quantitative data and context, we will be able to make strategic decisions about where to invest and curtail the budget to promote the university's future. Identifying the areas of strength and weakness within an organization is always helpful for strategic planning and mission execution. In adopting these recommendations, the university should be able to use its resources more efficiently to meet students' needs for academic support, advising, career exploration, and degree completion.

4. What services or programs could be phased out because they would no longer be needed or because implementation of the recommendations would represent a more effective and efficient use of university resources?

It is possible that if shown to be highly inefficient or no longer in demand, some degrees or programs may be combined with other programs, restructured to promote growth, or (as a last resort) eliminated to cut waste. It's also possible that if data identify a program as highly efficient or in high demand, some degrees or programs may be enhanced with additional staff or faculty. These highly efficient or high demand programs could also be used as models to help other less efficient programs restructure.

5. Who would be primarily responsible for implementing these recommendations and have those individuals/units been consulted?

The president and provost will be primarily responsible for implementing these recommendations. Admittedly, we noted that restructuring and reimagining UNC's academic portfolio represents a challenging task for various reasons, including the institution's organizational climate, leadership structure, and decision-making history.

First, UNC's organizational climate is in transition. On one hand, faculty and staff expect transparency from the administration, but at the same time faculty and staff are concerned that proposed budget cuts may negatively impact their livelihoods. We anticipate that there will be significant concern when the task force reports are released. We want openness, but we are not accustomed to having it and can take potential cuts personally, which creates an awkward dynamic. UNC faculty and staff have not traditionally been invited to participate in the administration's decision-making process. So, while we welcome the shift in approach, we admit that it has been both uncomfortable and empowering to be part of these discussions (making for some long and difficult meetings).

Units on campus have also been asked to cut in the past. Those programs that resisted were often rewarded by not having to make difficult cuts, while programs that complied were left unfairly penalized. This has led to inequality across units and colleges, feelings of resentment across units and colleges, and a sense that resistance might prevent cuts. To fully embrace the recommendations, promote fairness, and reduce inequality, the administration will need to address the organization's climate.

Second, efforts to examine the academic portfolio may prove particularly challenging at UNC where deans and chairs have not traditionally been empowered to make and implement restructuring decisions within their respective colleges and units. In fact, when this subcommittee asked deans to identify academic programs within their colleges to potentially cut or restructure, they expressed reticence. UNC's deans overwhelmingly replied that it was not their responsibility to identify programs to cut or restructure. They indicated the Provost's Task Forces should do the work instead. As a result, we hesitate to recommend a plan that requires deans to make these difficult restructuring and pruning decisions. We also feel that asking deans to make across-the-board cuts (e.g., 10% cut to each college) could reinforce existing inequalities across the university.

As an alternative, we recommend that deans and faculty from each college (selected by fellow faculty members) be included in the initial evaluation of programs, once profitability data are available from

Marla Johnson. Faculty and deans have a unique perspective on programs that can add context to the discussion about potentially restructuring and/or discontinuing programs. We recognize that the President and Provost will make final decisions about how to move forward, but we recommend that deans and faculty from all colleges be consulted in these decisions.

Third, in the recent past at UNC, a dean has implemented the administration’s difficult decision (with the support of a provost) to restructure a program, but the decision was quickly overturned following backlash. We recognize that, in some cases, public opinion can raise awareness about problems or help the university maintain a positive face. Thus, in moving forward, we recommend that the administration take as many factors as possible into consideration before discontinuing programs; the university will need to clearly articulate the need and rationale for difficult program cuts. These decisions should not need to be revoked under public scrutiny, assuming the rationale has been clearly articulated. Restructuring decisions are difficult and contentious, and we’ll need to be patient, strong, and compassionate throughout the process – holding steady to our vision that we are working to improve UNC for the benefit of our students.

6. **Action Plan – complete the table on the following page outlining the concrete actions required for implementing your committee’s recommendations, performance metrics (how we would know UNC is making progress and/or achieving success), who would be responsible for implementation, and whether implementation would begin in the short or long term.**

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

After considering 19 metrics to evaluate the health of academic programs at UNC (e.g., number of majors, SCH, DFW rates), we consider the cost to deliver a program to be an important metric. Although we do not recommend cutting unprofitable programs outright, they may possess the greatest potential for cost-savings. Decision-makers should think carefully about cutting programs that are currently making money for the university, lest we dig ourselves into an even deeper financial hole. Of course, all programs should identify and address potential inefficiencies.

Program Cost Model

UNC’s Marla Johnson has developed a model to evaluate the profitability of UNC programs. Johnson’s model should be used to identify unprofitable programs, and unprofitable programs can be more closely scrutinized using two types of data: (1) quantitative data on productivity and growth/decline and (2) qualitative data on centrality to mission and value to university.

Program Data

1. Quantitative Data (or Metrics) – please note that the below list is suggestive, not exhaustive.
 - a. **Five Year Trends in Program Growth/Decline**
 - UG majors
 - UG minors
 - MA students
 - PhD students

- retention rates
- 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates
- student-to-faculty ratios

To identify specific academic programs to restructure, prune, or enhance, it would be helpful to have these data by the specific degree, minor, or certificate conferred, not by the program, department, or unit. It will be important to manage the impact of decisions to minimize disruption to students' progress toward degree completion and to avoid the loss of students.

b. Student Credit Hour Production

- student credit hour production
- student credit hours per full-time faculty

c. Quality of the Program

Faculty evaluation criteria from individual units should be used to evaluate productivity in RSCW, instruction, and service, as disciplinary standards vary. RSCW enhances programs by attracting new students and raising the profile of the university. Digital Measures may provide a data source for a program's RSCW productivity. In addition, to evaluate the quality of a program's instruction, service, and scholarly activity, the university could:

- examine promotion guidelines and criteria, annual program reviews, and 5-year program reviews and outcomes
- examine factors related to external accreditation, if applicable

2. Qualitative Data

a. Centrality to Mission

- How does the program fit into the university's mission (e.g., statutory and public mission), as well as the branding of who we are as an institution of higher education in Colorado?

b. Value to the University

- service courses (e.g., LAC sections, LAC FTE)
- synergy between existing programs

POTENTIAL COST SAVING MEASURES

The subcommittee recommends that the above factors be considered prior to any decision-making about the restructuring, pruning, or enhancing of academic programs at UNC. We realize that no set of metrics can capture the particularities of every program on campus. Thus, we recommend that all programs that are being considered for restructuring and/or discontinuance be notified immediately, and faculty, staff, and students should have the opportunity to provide detailed information about their program and explanations for any concerning data, as well as additional data. For example, some programs hold external accreditation; those accreditation requirements should be weighed in decision-making. Programs should also be given the opportunity to identify potential ways that they

might save money within their unit. Feedback can be solicited either in written form or through focus groups. Discontinuing programs should be considered a last resort; restructuring options should be considered first. Please see below for additional recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Examine faculty teaching load, course releases and reassignments, and use of adjuncts		
Performance Metric(s): faculty teaching load, sch per faculty		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review policies/practices on course releases to reduce inequality and inefficiencies • consider requiring grant funded buy-outs for research-related course releases • assign full-time faculty to intro, LAC, and first-year courses to promote student success • consider making instruction a part of other staff/administrators' FTE to reduce reliance on adjuncts 	provost and deans	short (i.e., could be addressed immediately) and long
Recommendation 2: Examine course enrollment caps		
Performance Metric(s): course enrollments by program		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zero cap courses until other sections are full or offer fewer sections • raise course caps for LAC and intro courses to 65, unless there is a pedagogical concern • raise course caps on upper-level courses to 30-40, where possible • examine equity in course caps within and across units • train department chairs on course scheduling to promote efficient enrollments, identify course/curriculum bottlenecks, and manage healthy DFW rates • examine enrollment and DFW rates of non-prime time scheduled courses (e.g., 8am, 2:30pm) 	deans and department chairs with oversight/guidance from provost	short and long
Recommendation 3: Enhance opportunities for pedagogical training/workshops		
Performance Metric(s): evaluation of faculty instruction in annual/biennial reviews and comprehensive reviews		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restore CETL (or something like it) to train faculty on high-quality teaching strategies • include pedagogical experimentation and improvement as a factor in faculty evaluation • encourage peer-to-peer observation of instruction to create a culture of excellence in teaching and academics 	provost, deans, department chairs	short and long
Recommendation 4: Improve the efficiency of the curriculum		

Performance Metric(s): perhaps degree completion rates?		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine course duplication with other programs on campus; consider combining programs and redundant courses (e.g., Akron's BS in Math and Applied Math programs were redundant; Math was restructured and Applied Math was kept) • consider the impact of course substitutions on course enrollments (e.g., transfer credits, independent studies, streamlining process) • consider cross-departmental offerings (e.g., rather than hiring adjunct faculty, look for qualified faculty in other units to teach courses) • consider dual-listing (or double numbering) 400-level and 500-level courses, when possible/appropriate • examine all degree tracks within each program, department or unit 	provost and deans	short and long
Recommendation 5: Improve fall-to-fall retention and graduation rates		
Performance Metric(s): DFW rates for departments, courses, and instructors and 4-year, 5-year and 6-year graduation rates by degree		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide guidance on healthy DFWs for dept chairs and faculty (e.g., is a 20% DFW for an Intro course high/low/just right?) • examine DFW rates and graduation rates to see if better advising, teaching, or curriculum plans could improve student success • examine DFW rates in non-prime time slots (e.g., 8am, 2:30pm) • connect with students regularly to ensure that they are being advised well, and also that they are aware of helpful resources on campus • examine graduation rates for 4, 5, and 6-years • guide/train department/program chairs on ways to improve graduation rates 	provost, deans, and chairs	short and long
Recommendation 6: Examine program and administration costs for potential restructuring or enhancing		
Performance Metric(s): programs' cost per credit hour (e.g., faculty/staff cost per credit hour)		
Actions	Responsibility	Short or Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider differential tuition rates for programs with high costs per credit hour • to save on course releases for department chairs, chair stipends and admin staff, combine low-enrolled majors under one department, such 	provost and deans	short and long

<p>as Department of A and Department of B become Department of A and B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ estimate cost savings before making decisions and consult departments to avoid Charting the Future mistakes ▪ consider disciplinary similarities and differences when exploring program combinations (i.e., two completely unrelated programs should not be combined because this could cause problems for faculty evaluation) 		
Recommendation 7:		
Performance Metric(s):		
Action	Responsibility	Short or Long Term