

Eastern Washington University

Program Review

President's Recommendations

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May 21, 2021

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Process

The current review of the programmatic array at Eastern Washington University was initiated in late April of 2020. Around that time, as the scope and scale of the pandemic was becoming more clear, the university was informed by the state Office of Financial Management that it should prepare for a fifteen percent reduction in state allocation for the coming 2021-2023 biennium. This reduction was separate from the ongoing structural deficit that had been ongoing for several years.

That ongoing structural deficit had been driven by sagging enrollments and shifting enrollment patterns over many years. This deficit was known before the onset of the pandemic and was being addressed through institution-wide budget reductions in fiscal year 2018, 2019, and 2020. It was anticipated in April of 2020 that the adverse enrollment effects of the pandemic would amplify the negative pressure on enrollment and exacerbate the structural deficit into the foreseeable future.

As the provost in April of 2020, I undertook to notify the United Faculty of Eastern leadership of the severity of the planned cuts from the state and the expected negative enrollment reality. Based on the best information available at that time, I informed them that it was possible that the university would be forced to eliminate programs or faculty positions to meet the then required reductions in budget.

As stipulated in the collective bargaining agreement with the United Faculty of Eastern, programs can be considered for discontinuance through Academic Policy 303-35, Program and Course Management. After the required consultation with the faculty union had been completed, the new provost made an initial recommendation on program reduction or discontinuation to the program review committee of the faculty organization in October of 2020.

The process for considering reduction or elimination of a program is a lengthy process that allows for multiple points of input and discussion. The program review committee sought input from each of the departments or programs that were listed as potentially being reduced or eliminated. That committee made a recommendation to the undergraduate and graduate affairs committees of the faculty organization. Those committees considered the recommendations made and sought additional input and information that they determined necessary. Undergraduate and graduate affairs committees each made a recommendation to the rules committee of the faculty organization which then made a recommendation to the faculty senate.

As the process through Academic Policy 303-35 proceeded, the provost engaged with each department that was on the initial recommendation list. In some cases, the provost met with department faculty multiple times to receive input and ideas from the faculty. As those meetings continued there were alterations made to the provost's recommendation as a result of new information, ideas, or proposals.

The faculty senate received the recommendations made at each level for its consideration. Over the course of the spring meetings of the senate, the body invited members of potentially affected departments to present to the senate their response to the recommendation that had been made. After receiving significant input, the senate made a recommendation to the interim

president for his consideration and that recommendation was shared with the provost. The provost, having received all previous recommendations, has also made an independent final recommendation to the interim president pursuant to the policy.

This recommendation is made by the interim president to the Board of Trustees of Eastern Washington University. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to take final action on these recommendations.

Rationale

The necessity of taking a broad-based look at the programmatic array at the university was precipitated by an ongoing structural deficit amplified by pandemic-created, severely negative financial projections from the state and the expectation of further significant decline in enrollments. While some of these realities have been mitigated over the course of the year, there remains an ongoing structural issue into the future.

As the financial realities of the state budget in particular have improved, the emphasis in program review has shifted somewhat in focus. It is certainly still necessary to meet the budget target established by the Board in 2020 and the revisions thereto. However, it is possible to include more focus on a mission driven review of programs. Cutting to a budget number can be a deeply painful exercise but it is also one with clear metrics for success. Focusing on a mission driven approach to rightsizing or refocusing a programmatic array can be as painful but it also lacks the clear short-term success metrics.

As the provost notes in his recommendation to me, we have become a very broad based institution that has attempted to add a wide variety of programs to meet the desires of all constituents. While the addition of some programs over time has led to very successful local and regional partnerships and demonstrable responsiveness to broad regional needs, not all have. The university strategic plan is clear in the sense that the direction the university must take is toward meeting the needs of the region by providing access to exceptional educational opportunities to produce a highly educated and diverse workforce for the region and the state. If programs are not meeting those criteria or if the programs as configured are not a financially viable component of the institution, those programs need to be evaluated, and possibly reconfigured or eliminated. Being consistent about how the institution evaluates programs and reallocates resources when appropriate will be essential in the future.

Analysis of the needs of the regional workforce has been undertaken by Dr. Jones in the Institute of Public Policy and Economic Analysis over several years. Dr. Jones has recently extended that analysis to include workforce gap and also supply gap analysis. Research such as this can inform the direction that the university needs to move its programmatic array to continue to be a relevant and a prominent destination campus into the future.

Teach-Out

It must be emphasized that the university is committed to fulfilling its obligation to students who have declared majors in departments or programs that may be reconfigured, reduced, or eliminated.

From Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities policy:

“A teach-out plan is a written plan that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study. In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, the institution is required to submit the teach-out plan to NWCCU for approval prior to its implementation.”

“The institution must immediately provide written notice to NWCCU, the USDE, and appropriate state agencies as soon as it is aware of a circumstance that requires a teach-out plan.”

“The institution must submit teach-out plans and teach-out agreements to NWCCU for review and approval prior to implementation. The institution must identify an estimated teach-out period during which time it will complete the teach-out plan and any teach-out agreement(s). The length of the teach-out period could range from 12 to 18 months for a plan based solely on transfers to other institutions to 24 to 36 months for a traditional teach out of a closing academic program.”

“In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, NWCCU will review the teach-out plan(s) to ensure it meets its Standards for Accreditation and Policies including, but not limited to: the teach-out plan is comprehensive and capable of implementation; the teach-out plan provides for the equitable treatment of students to complete their education; the institution specifies and provides written notice to students of additional financial charges, if any; and, the institution provides specific details and custodial agreement to create a long-term repository for student academic records and transcripts and will indicate how transcripts will be made available to individuals impacted by the closure without charge during the teach out period.”

The provost, working through the deans and departments, will ensure that each student currently declared as a major in any department or program recommended for reduction or discontinuance has a pathway through that major. If the final action by the Board of Trustees instructs that some programs be reduced or eliminated, major declarations or graduate admissions will be stopped for that program as immediately as possible without violating prior commitments.

Current Consolidations, Revisions, and Discontinuances

As the process outlined above proceeded over the past several months, many programs that were originally recommended by the provost for some alteration acted themselves. This self-assessment and action included some additional alterations to structures that were not originally

identified for consideration. The result of this self-assessment and action was the elimination of several programs.

The following degrees have been made inactive or eliminated:

Bachelor of Music/Jazz

Bachelor of Music/Musical Theatre

Master of Music/Performance

Master of Music/Jazz Studies

BA and BS Journalism

BAE Visual Arts Education/Secondary (Elem and Sec. combined into one K-12 degree)

Supply Chain/Operations Management (BAB)

These reductions have already been approved by the university's internal processes and have been approved by the provost.

The following programs are recommended to continue with substantial changes identified by the department:

BM Music (Instrumental Performance, Piano Performance, Vocal Performance)

BM Music, Composition

BA Music, Liberal Arts

“Self-Support”

The provost has recommended that several programs be allowed to move to an online accelerated format working with our online program managers, Academic Partnerships. There have been some notable successes in some programs that have moved to that delivery modality. Allowing programs to move to that platform carries some significant initial cost for program development and ongoing cost for faculty compensation. The startup costs will have to be recouped through enrollment over time.

The provost highlights the challenges inherent in effectively shifting costs from Index 1 dollars to Index 2 dollars in these programs, particularly faculty costs. The nuances of those challenges are beyond the scope of this recommendation. However, it should be possible to move some Index 1 expenses onto Index 2 to produce savings for the institution. Those challenges are certainly exacerbated in new programs that do not yet have a manageable revenue stream. Those challenges become insurmountable if the programs are ultimately insufficiently popular and are allowed to languish in ongoing unsustainable deficits.

In concurrence with the provost's recommendation, I support moving three programs onto the Academic Partnerships platform. As a part of this concurrence with the strategy, I will continue to work with the provost on the timetable for review and evaluation of the success of these programs in producing a positive revenue stream that is sufficiently robust to cover all program expenses including faculty salaries and benefits. Failing to do that will require further evaluation by the university.

The three programs that I am recommending for this move are the following:

BS in Business Management Education

MA in History

MM in Music

This recommendation is also in line with the desire of the faculty in these programs and was reviewed by the program review committee of the faculty organization.

Program Revision and Discontinuance

Banking is a university process by which a course, program, major, or minor is removed from the catalog. While it is not possible for students to enroll in a banked program, the university retains control of that program. If, at some point in the future, the university wishes to return the program to the catalog, the process for doing so is internal and does not require action by the state or our accrediting body. Banking provides the most control over curriculum for the institution in the future.

I recommend that the following programs be altered, banked or eliminated in the following ways:

The MA in Music should be eliminated. This, coupled with the MM moving to the AP platform, will allow the shifting of some instructional resources away from graduate education, a decrease in institutional aid at the graduate level, and an increase in focus on undergraduate programs. That may allow some of the previously banked undergraduate tracks in music to be recreated in the future. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

MS in Communication Studies should be banked. While there are several ideas for invigorating the program, there does not appear to be a fully formed plan to do that at this point. The provost also notes that the faculty expressed that the current expertise in the program may not align with some of those goals. By banking rather than eliminating the program, it will be possible to restart the program when there is a clear path forward such as a 4+1 or stackable curriculum. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

Art History should be continued with a reduced faculty complement. The program has shown some growth in the recent past. If that trajectory can be maintained the program should continue. I will work with the provost to ensure that appropriate metrics are closely monitored and that appropriate review and actions are undertaken if the program fails to flourish. There

should be a comprehensive review again in two years. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost and from the senate.

Physics should be continued. This recommendation is contingent on the program continuing to provide a high level of service to other majors in the program. The provost will continue to monitor the number of majors and graduates closely and work with the department and faculty to move those numbers in a positive direction. It is contingent also on the achievement of efficiencies and reduced cost from a different model of BAE degrees in STEM. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost and from the senate.

Economics should be continued. Four retirements from the department have resulted in significant salary and benefits savings to the university in excess of \$430,000. As a result of those retirements, the department undertook significant revisions to its curriculum that will allow most positions reduced due to retirement to remain unfilled. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

Health Services Administration should be continued. This program was already engaged in an internal move to a fully online modality. This is not associated with Academic Partnerships. The focus on education and placement of veterans is an important mission driven approach. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

BS in Public Health should be significantly altered. The BS program should be relocated to the PHHA program. This will allow efficiency through shared courses to reduce instructional costs, eliminate assigned time for a program director, and allow revision to the degree to allow for the creation of a 3+2 feeder program into the MPH.

Outdoor Recreation and Recreation and Tourism Management should be significantly altered. The program faculty have proposed revisions that would significantly reduce faculty instructional costs by combining three majors into a single track. I support that proposal. There will be immediate savings generated by eliminating the need to fill positions that have seen faculty departures. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

Therapeutic Recreation should be merged with Occupational Therapy. This change is contingent on agreement that the program move to being semester-based or that OT move back to a quarter-based calendar. If this is possible, there will be reduced costs and increased efficiencies through shared curriculum and teaching. This is consistent with the recommendation from the Provost.

Program Review

In many cases contained in these recommendations, it will be essential to monitor the progress of the altered, reconfigured, or reduced programs and those that are moving to AP very closely. The programs that are contained in this report were each identified because they were not performing at a level that was acceptable or sustainable. For those that are recommended for alteration or combination, the intent is to provide a stable platform for growth in the future. If that is not possible, the institution needs to recognize that quickly and take appropriate action.

The provost's recommendation to me contains a description of his vision for program review in the future and I wholeheartedly endorse his vision.

Efficiencies and Program Growth

While not fully germane to this set of recommendations, I fully endorse the vision of the provost for gaining efficiencies and growing programs. Many of these efficiencies such as multi-year scheduling and multiple term registration are well understood practices at other institutions that should be seized by Eastern and implemented.

Other known inefficiencies are more difficult. The provost's recommendation notes the complexity of functioning on two different academic calendars. Those difficulties, inefficiencies, and barriers created are multiplied by the dizzying array of parts of term, weekend, and other calendars that underlie the two main calendars. I strongly support an initiative to move Eastern to a single calendar.

Many other efficiencies are proposed by the provost and adopting and implementing those will streamline processes and increase efficiency and student success.

As noted above, program growth through moving courses and programs into the Accelerated Partnerships model has been achieved in some cases. But this is not the panacea for all struggling programs or majors. There must be a serious discussion about the extent to which EWU wishes to move toward more online offerings at either the graduate or the undergraduate level. There are mission tradeoffs that might attend continuing or even accelerating that trend and those should have a more thorough discussion.