Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Planning

Report to the Senate – May 24, 2011

To the Academic Senate, Riverside Division:

On March 2, 2011, Faculty Senate Chair Mary Gauvain appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Planning and charged the committee to, “examine the academic mission and activities of the campus in the context of the current budget climate” and to “focus on ways to allocate funds and make changes to academic programs and the curriculum that preserve excellence as well as keep the campus on a positive and sustainable course that is aligned with the Strategic Plan 2020.”

The Ad Hoc Committee met eight times (two of the meetings with the Committee on Planning & Budget). The committee examined the potential impacts on University quality and financial feasibility of a broad range of ideas for meeting budget reduction requirements. The criteria used to assess suggested budget cutting ideas were that they must not damage the capacity of UCR to maintain the quality of research and instruction essential to the University mission and maintaining progress toward an AAU Profile for the campus.

One unavoidable conclusion was reached in the course of these deliberations: **Neither the members of this Ad Hoc Committee nor any Faculty Senate group have a sufficient knowledge of the diverse capabilities and needs of campus academic units to make an informed judgment regarding where academic programs can be reorganized, restructured or eliminated in ways that significantly contribute to budget balancing without doing serious damage to the University mission!** Nevertheless, it is clear that strategic decisions about budget cuts are imperative, as across the board cuts resulting in increased faculty work loads will further erode our research mission, erode the student educational experience, and lower the overall quality of the University. Thus, we concluded that, in order to meaningfully participate in the Senate’s shared governance responsibility to provide guidance for budget deliberations, it will be necessary to undertake a substantial study of our academic units by gathering and analyzing high-quality data regarding their current state of development, their strengths and weaknesses, their current research and instruction workloads, their centrality to realizing the goal of AAU status, and their capacity to absorb necessary budget cuts.

For this reason, rather than trying to identify budget adjustment strategies to meet immediate cost reduction goals, we propose that the Senate undertake an assessment of campus academic units using the following guidelines:

1. Each departmental level academic unit will undertake a self-study leading to a statement of mission and goals that includes:
a) Instructional workload analysis – sketching a 5-year history and 3-year projection of both undergraduate and graduate enrollment, class size, TA/RA utilization, individual faculty workload, estimates of faculty instructional quality.

b) Research productivity analysis – delineating faculty publications (number of publications, their placement in quality outlets, their citation rates), extra-mural funding (proposals submitted, success rate, and award sizes), academic honors/awards, identification of expected research productivity over the next 3 years.

c) Service responsibilities – professional, campus and community service activity summaries together with an estimate of the effect of these activities on campus reputation and functions, student recruitment, and individual faculty careers.

2. Each unit will be asked to prepare an assessment of their place in an AAU profile university (and describe what protections and/or development are needed to assure that place).

3. Each unit will be asked to provide a budget summary and projection covering the last three years and a two-year projection.

4. Information from the campus strategic planning process could be used to inform this planning process.

5. Upon completion of these self-study documents, the Senate should create a broadly representative Ad Hoc Committee (or a combination of existing Senate committees) to analyze and summarize the resulting information and advise Senate leadership regarding what priorities should be defended in budget deliberations with the campus administration.

It is the conviction of your Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Planning that, despite the substantial work involved, the Senate leadership will only be able to meaningfully advocate for and protect University quality in these Draconian budget times if this information is collected, analyzed and used in the budget development process.

Accordingly, the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Planning moves that the Riverside Division endorse the study proposed here, and direct the Chair of the Division to task the appropriate Senate committees to participate in the study as appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,
Douglas Mitchell – Graduate School of Education/Planning & Budget (Chair)
Malcolm Baker – Art History/Planning & Budget
Steven Clark – Psychology/Undergraduate Admissions Committee
Nosang V. Myung – Chemical and Environmental Engineering/Graduate Council
Anthony W. Norman – Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences-Emeritus/President, UCR Emeriti Association
Patricia Springer – Botany and Plant Sciences/Planning & Budget