

12 June 2013

TO: University of Idaho Board of Regents/  
Idaho State Board of Education

cc. Mike Rush, Executive Director  
Tracie Bent, Chief Planning & Policy Officer  
Matt Freeman, Deputy Director and Chief Fiscal Officer  
Selena Grace, Chief Academic Officer

FROM: Don Burnett, Interim President

Katherine Aiken, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

RE: University of Idaho Focus for the Future: A Response to the State Board of Education's  
Program Prioritization Process

The State Board has directed the institutions to undertake a process of prioritizing programs in a manner consistent with Robert C. Dickeson's prioritization principles (ref. Dickeson, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*). The Board has particularly directed the institutions to identify, in the Board's June, 2013, meeting, the framework and targets associated with the process, to use a quintile prioritizations approach, and to communicate to the Board the criteria and weighting to be used after consultation with their respective campuses.

***Building on the University of Idaho's past experience and achievements in prioritization.*** The University plans to use the framework we previously established as part of a Dickeson-based prioritization process for academic programs. It will need some modification for the non-academic programs, although the modification will be modest and will retain – by analogy as needed -- the basic principles of the process applied to academic programs, including accreditation standards.

In 2008-09, the University undertook an examination of all academic programs and have continued using this in an ongoing internal review process (results in Addendum 1). We utilized the following criteria derived from the Dickeson book:

- Centrality to the University's mission
- Cost-effectiveness
- External demand
- Internal demand (e.g., service as a foundation or prerequisite for other programs)
- Impact
- Productivity
- Quality

- Size and scope of the program
- Synergies (e.g., contributions to interdisciplinary teaching, research, and outreach)

The University of Idaho now respectfully requests that the State Board take account of this university-wide prioritization effort in reviewing the University's response to the Board's current prioritization directive. These criteria align with the State Board's listing of Dickeson's criteria referenced in the May 17, 2013 Board memo (illustrated in Addendum 2). Our process did not produce a quintile ranking of programs; however, it did identify programs that were strong, those in need of improvement in order to be sustained; and those to be closed or consolidated. The result was that 37 academic programs were, in fact, closed or consolidated. Savings were applied to budget reductions that were mandated in Fiscal Year 2009 and continuing years thereafter. In addition, approximately 15 other programs were placed on a "watch" list for needed improvement.

The process, initiated by the University President and the Provost/Executive Vice President, was implemented by the Provost/EVP. The process was inclusive and comprehensive. Deans and senior administrators rated all programs according to the foregoing criteria. The process enlisted the active participation of the college deans and department chairs, in consultation with their respective faculties, staff, students, advisory councils, and other stakeholders; the Faculty Council (now known as the Faculty Senate), which provided advice during the process and approved the ultimate closures and consolidations; the President's Cabinet, which also provided advice during the process and implemented the outcomes; and the Board of Regents, to whom the outcomes were reported and by whom program closures and consolidations were ultimately adopted (Addendum 4).

**Framework.** The University proposes to use an inclusive, comprehensive process as established since 2008-09. Deans and senior administrators have already conducted two meetings to create a preliminary plan of action. The plan will provide for deans, department chairs, senior administrators, faculty and staff leaders as well as student leaders to participate in program review, and the process will include administrative as well as academic programs. The process will also include our center locations and the extension director. Once the process is completed, we will assign our programs into quintiles for consideration.

One of the lessons learned from the previous prioritization process was that very deep program and personnel cuts would be required in order to generate relatively modest budget savings on a recurrent basis. The academic programs with the greatest potential cost reductions are also, in many cases, programs with substantial student enrollments and/or structural connections to other academic programs. Moreover, the university is now operating 20% more efficiently than it was a decade ago; that is, using inflation-adjusted dollars, our revenue per student FTE is 20% less than it was in 2001. Much efficiency in the University's operations has already been achieved through the blunt force of budget actions and our previous prioritization work.

**Targets.** Rather than seeking deep program cuts we believe the target of opportunity lies in establishing an ongoing framework that establishes a "focus for the future" with the following emphases:

- **Prioritized Faculty Hiring.** All new and vacated full-time faculty positions must be invested in high-level University strategic priorities, including “cluster hires” that advance subject areas, student success, research revenue opportunities, accreditation achievement, and solutions to the most important societal problems. All academic units, including academic units in which the new or vacated faculty positions originate, will be required to make investment proposals according to priority areas identified by the Dickeson-based prioritization process for academic programs. No faculty investments will be made in low priority areas. Thus, faculty resources will migrate, beginning immediately, to higher University and State of Idaho priorities. Investments will reflect all dimensions of the University of Idaho’s mission: teaching, research, outreach, and extension.
- **Program Review.** A rigorous review must be conducted of programs placed on a “watch” list during the University’s previous prioritization process, as well as other programs found to be low priorities according to the criteria used in the current prioritization process. Such programs will be considered for remediation if they are indispensable to a core mission and if specific remediation steps can be taken cost-effectively; otherwise, they will be considered for closure or consolidation to generate net resources for higher priority uses.
- **Enhanced Operational Efficiency.** We will review the efficiency in administrative units and “programs” as defined in the State Board’s directive (and accompanying staff memorandum). These units and “programs” will be evaluated according to the same process and criteria used in the academic unit prioritization process, to the extent they are applicable directly or by analogy. Particular attention will be paid to opportunities for University-wide centralization or decentralization and standardization of equipment and procedures (e.g., in information technology, personnel administration, and fiscal management). The timing of the evaluation of nonacademic units and “programs” may be affected by the pace at which the academic programs are evaluated, because the academic program array will determine in part the distribution of administrative support for the academic programs.

***Criteria and weighting.*** The University of Idaho proposes to use criteria, and to ascribe weights, as depicted in the accompanying chart which, in turn, is based upon the Dickeson model. It also reflects the University’s prior experience with prioritization which is correlated to the State Board’s policy on program approval (III.G.7) and has already undergone internal approval through our Faculty Senate process. The criteria are articulated in a manner intended to facilitate evaluation through an inclusive, participatory process. Though the issues of weighting may evolve in discussion and application, at this time we plan to weight centrality to the University’s mission, cost effectiveness, external demand, quality, productivity, impact, and size more heavily than initial data review, internal demand, and synergies. Having said that, we strongly believe in the evaluative insights that will be provided by each of the criteria.

Thank you for the opportunity to articulate the University of Idaho’s process outline for further discussion at the upcoming State Board meeting.