



**TO:** University of Idaho Faculty and Staff  
**FROM:** Scott Green, President  
**DATE:** April 30, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Program Prioritization Recommendations Approved

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The University of Idaho's mission is to deliver education, outreach and research that benefits the people of Idaho. From our deep and unwavering commitment to agriculture to our recent focus on cybersecurity, we have continued to evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of Idaho throughout our history. It is our responsibility to ensure that everything we do is relevant, cost-effective and impactful. That requires regular review and assessment of our offerings.

Thank you to outgoing Provost John Wiencek for leading the complex process of evaluating 338 academic programs these past few months. I especially appreciate the work of the Program Prioritization Task Force. Led by Rachel Halverson, department chair of Modern Languages and Cultures, the task force conducted a detailed assessment of designated programs and provided a thoughtful slate of recommendations for me to consider.

In general, the recommendations include:

- Ongoing monitoring of 39 programs;

- Restructuring three programs;
- Merging eight academic units into four, making the programs financially stronger and more efficient; and
- Closing 10 programs, eight of which were submitted voluntarily by the dean of the respective college.

## **The Impact**

While cost savings is not the main reason for engaging in this process, it is an outcome that is especially helpful in the current environment. Total cost savings expected from Program Prioritization changes are expected to be \$1,591,000 realized over time as the changes are implemented and courses are taught out.

The deans used the Program Prioritization results as a tool to meet their \$15.74 million in budget reduction goals, representing the majority of our overall campus budget reduction goal of \$22 million for FY21. This approach demonstrates the commitment and resiliency of our community to make tough choices in hard times.

## **The Process**

The task force of nine faculty, three staff and two deans began meeting in late 2019 to refresh the Program Prioritization process.

The task force implemented a two-step evaluation process. The first step focused on quantifying sources of revenue and contrasting revenue with expenditures, summarized by a metric referred to as “Return on Budget Allocated” or RBA. For programs with substantial negative RBA, additional analysis was conducted in a second step.

Step two included an opportunity for deans to self-identify programs for closure or significant change in curriculum or

structure. In addition, some recently established programs without the degree conferrals vital to the calculation of RBA were removed from further review.

Representatives from three program areas were invited to meet with the task force to discuss qualitative issues, contribution to the University of Idaho's mission and other mitigating factors. Following those discussions, the task force forwarded clear recommendations for all three programs to the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Committee (IPEC). IPEC supported those recommendations and forwarded them to me. I approved the following actions based on those reports:

- **Materials Science:** All programs and degrees within this discipline will be closed, with appropriate approvals from the Idaho State Board of Education. Students in Material Sciences will be taught out to degree completion with care and attention to their individual needs.
- **Music:** Individual programs or emphases within this large program will be reviewed and a consolidation plan implemented. Consolidated programs will continue to improve degree completion and incorporate additional budget reductions.
- **Geography and Geology:** These two departments will be merged, and faculty will work on programmatic integration and improvements for the future.

As a final step in this process, I offered to meet with each program to discuss this decision. I appreciated that some faculty and program leadership shared their views on the recommendations.

The top priority now is to implement these changes with our students and their continued success as the focus. In addition,

improvement in the programs identified for restructuring is vital not only to the future sustainability of those individual programs, but also to the future of the university.

We value every program at U of I and those who work within them, which makes these decisions even more difficult. Despite our best attempts at mitigation, though, they will have a real impact on our students and the careers of our colleagues. And yet, the value of continuous program assessment and improvement is also real, not only in times of scarce resources but also as a spark for innovation and collaboration. We have been evolving as an institution for more than 130 years; embracing the possibilities of regular assessment and adaptation will ensure we not only survive, but thrive, as a prosperity engine for Idaho and beyond for the next 130.

*Scott Green,  
President*

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