



TO: Faculty and Staff in Academic Affairs and Idaho Geological Survey
FROM: John Wiencek, Provost and Executive Vice President
DATE: May 15, 2018
SUBJECT: University-Level Faculty Hiring

Over the past few months, I have taken time to reflect on what else we can do to accelerate our progress towards the goals of our strategic plan. I am frequently the beneficiary of novel and interesting ideas, or simply sound requests for additional investment. Unfortunately, I am unable to fund most of these requests due to a lack of resources currently under my discretion.

After much thought and reflection, I believe it would be beneficial to have a method to scrutinize all available, unallocated financial resources within academic affairs at a university-wide level. By using this broader lens when redeploying our resources, we could eliminate some historic constraints on our thinking and our funding decisions, and reach greater success sooner. I realize this is a significant cultural shift, but a shift that I believe is absolutely required for us to meet our mission as Idaho's land-grant institution.

In the spirit of shared governance, I recently discussed my thinking in this regard with the deans and Faculty Senate leadership. I discussed with them two initiatives and proposed they be implemented next fiscal year. In my opinion, both of these initiatives are vital to our success in meeting our strategic plan goals. Pacing is important and that is why I think it is necessary to implement these ideas soon since it will take many years to yield results. I plan to implement the process in a careful and metered manner, and it will take many years before any one college will see significant differences in their resource level.

First, it is my intent to provide an annual report of recent (perhaps 3-5 years of data) budget allocations and expenditures for all units in academic affairs. This annual report will share information about our university resources and the current

allocations on a unit-by-unit basis. Such a report allows for transparency, as well as perspective, on context and intentions for all resources deployed on campus. The report would be generated out of the Budget Office and reflect practices used in our annual reporting to the State Board of Education. It would address the request for an annual financial update to the Leadership Breakfast meeting. The report would be reviewed at a Leadership Breakfast so that everyone has a better understanding of the context and intentions for all resources that are deployed on campus. We would also make these reports accessible to the larger university community in an effort to improve communication.

Second, it is my intent to re-instate the university-wide faculty hiring planning process in order to take advantage of the aforementioned unique opportunities and synergies that may exist across and between units. This faculty hiring plan was first implemented around 2006 as a means for the deans and provost to assess university-wide faculty needs and opportunities. This process resulted in several joint appointments and was helpful in promoting interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research. During the transition to the current leadership, this practice was discontinued. In this refreshed implementation, all faculty vacancies will be evaluated to ensure that the position is appropriately serving institutional needs. This evaluation and hiring planning process will be conducted in collaboration and consultation with the deans. To be specific, we normally replace about 50 faculty positions across the university each year. I anticipate most positions will stay in the same college, but perhaps be invested in new innovative programs or interdisciplinary positions proposed by the college leadership and the faculty within the respective college. In essence, this approach will allow for adjustments to base budgets based on performance as well as potential for future contribution to the Strategic Plan.

Stated simply, this second initiative will bring the decision on faculty line allocations to the university level (with significant input from college leadership). Many colleges have shifted to dean-level control of faculty positions, but most still operate on a fixed number of faculty lines in a given department. In some cases, we have not adjusted faculty numbers in departments to account for relative productivity in student enrollment, research or outreach, nor have we looked to other innovative and strategic uses for currently available faculty positions. This static approach to resource allocation is not serving us well as an

institution. We need to rebalance our resource portfolio to provide quality educational/scholarly environments for ALL of our faculty and students. Thus, we will be carefully assessing each and every faculty line for new investment as they become available by faculty retirement or departure from the university.

As the process unfolds, we will monitor progress in order to identify and address situations where unhealthy incentives arise as part of this planning process. For example, we do not want people granting promotion and tenure just to save a faculty position. Thus, faculty vacancies that arise due to tenure denials or performance-based non-renewals will be reinvested, as a matter of standard practice, in the same unit if the personnel action was taken at the unit level.

The impact of this second initiative will not be evident for several years, as explained earlier. Starting July 1, 2018, we will monitor the total number of faculty vacancies so we can appropriately fund the strategic hiring plan in the following fiscal year. This change will be gradual and will be monitored to assure that we are meeting the needs of our students and our stakeholders. There are details that will be defined with the deans over the summer.

As always, I welcome your feedback and advice which can be shared via the provost's office email (provost@uidaho.edu).

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