

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY



SRSU Policy: Academic Planning and Financial Exigency

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Policy Reviewed by: Executive Vice President and Provost

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Changing patterns of enrollment and/or critical reductions in revenues may necessitate strategies to bring programs and staffing into alignment with enrollment and the financial realities of the university. Program and staffing realignment may be undertaken according to the following policies and procedures:

A. Academic Planning

The demand for classes in specific academic disciplines fluctuates over time as student career choices and the educational needs and preferences of society change. As a result of these fluctuations, the number of full-time-equivalent faculty allocated to a department or program may also fluctuate—expanding in periods of growth and contracting in periods of retrenchment.

1. The executive vice president and provost has the responsibility of adjusting departmental faculty size during such periods of growth or decline, so that overall all departments are treated equitably and the educational goals of the institution are achieved. Of course, tenured faculty may not be arbitrarily dismissed as a result of these periodic adjustments to departmental FTE faculty. Thus, the executive vice president must ensure that each department maintains a healthy balance between tenured and non-tenured faculty. If too few faculty are tenured, there can be no departmental continuity; if too many are tenured, there might be insufficient flexibility.
2. The executive vice president's decisions to create new programs, expand or reduce existing programs, and adjust FTE faculty allocations will be based on careful academic planning conducted with full faculty participation. The emphasis of this continuing planning process may vary from time to time as institutional circumstances change, but the academic plan should, as a minimum, include the following:
 - a) historical data on average class size, graduation rates and the student-teacher ratio for each department, together with a departmental statement on the educational implications of present class size;
 - b) a demographic analysis of departmental faculty, e.g., rank, age, tenure status, and field; and
 - c) faculty and administrative judgments regarding the precise role each department plays in the realization of the broad educational goals of the institution.

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B. The Academic Planning Committee

The Academic Planning Committee shall be an at-call standing committee at the behest of the Executive Vice President and Provost for Academic Affairs. Its mandate is the periodic examination and analysis of academic programs within the university with the intention of making recommendations to Academic Affairs and to the Executive Cabinet regarding constrictions and expansions of academic programs. The intention of this body is to maintain and ensure the educational and fiscal health of the institution through careful management of academic programming. The provost shall appoint membership of the committee, consisting of six faculty members (four of whom must be tenured) from a list of ten nominees (eight of whom must be tenured) submitted by the Faculty Assembly and fairly representing a variety of disciplines across colleges. In addition, membership will include the academic college deans from all campuses, the graduate college dean, and three department chairs (at least two of whom must be tenured). In addition, the executive vice president and provost shall be an ex-officio member.

C. The Exigency Planning Committee

The president will activate the Committee immediately upon receipt of any recommendation from the vice president for Academic Affairs that tenured faculty may need to be dismissed or other faculty terminated before the expiration of their term contracts because of financial exigency or that a department or program should be phased out for educational or monetary reasons.

The president shall appoint six faculty members (four of whom must be tenured) from a list of ten nominees (eight of whom must be tenured) submitted by the Faculty Assembly. Further, the president shall appoint to the Committee the school deans, the dean of the Rio Grande College, and three department chairs (at least two of whom must be tenured). This group of thirteen should include representatives of all of the schools and be a fair representation of faculty protected by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In addition, the vice president for Business Affairs, the executive vice president and provost, and the chairperson of the Faculty Assembly (Alpine) and the Faculty Senate (RGC) shall be ex-officio members.

2. Determining Departments or Programs to be Cut Back

In its deliberations, the Committee will review the state educational mandates and the mission of the university in the light of the financial crisis in order to determine the departments or programs where budgets and faculties should be reduced or eliminated.

The Committee will evaluate each department and program in terms of the educational mission of the university, the department's enrollment statistics, and departmental analyses submitted by the department chairs and the deans of the schools. The mission is the most important consideration.

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The Committee will then identify those departments where faculty reductions may be necessary, and it will submit its recommendations with documentation to the president.

3. Determining Which Faculty Members Are to Be Dismissed

If the board of regents has declared a state of financial exigency and the president, acting upon the recommendations of the Committee, has identified a department or program as one in which tenured faculty will need to be dismissed because of financial exigency or if a department or program is to be discontinued for educational reasons, the executive vice president and provost will notify that department in writing, specifying the amount by which the faculty salary budget must be cut and the deadline by which the cut must be accomplished.

Upon receipt of the executive vice president's memorandum, the department chair of each affected department will promptly convene the tenured and tenure-track faculty who, after consultation with all departmental faculty, will thoroughly explore the implications of the financial crisis or proposed dissolution for educational reasons and prepare a report adhering to the following guidelines:

- a) Whenever possible, faculty reduction will be accomplished through attrition.
- b) Within a designated program, the termination of the employment of a faculty member with tenure may not be recommended in favor of retaining a faculty member without tenure, unless the removal of a non-tenured faculty member would eliminate an essential part of a program or render a program dysfunctional. Once the factors listed in items a and b above have been properly discussed and weighed, the probable order of dismissal shall be based on the principle of seniority, so the departmental faculty will be listed sequentially starting with the least senior; thus, non-tenured faculty will be listed before tenured faculty in the following order: part-time, temporary, and probationary. The order of dismissal within a departmental tenured faculty will be determined by educational background, rank, and longevity. Persons without the terminal degree in their discipline will be dismissed before anyone with the terminal degree. Rank will be considered next. An

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instructor would be dismissed before an assistant professor, who in turn would be dismissed before an associate professor, who in turn would be dismissed before a professor. Within each rank, longevity will determine the order of dismissal following the principle of last in, first out; if the date of acquiring current rank is the same, the date of acquisition of the previous rank will be used.

c) Possible alternatives.

The department should also explore all possible alternatives to the dismissal of tenured faculty.

The department report, identifying faculty for dismissal or proposing alternatives, will be forwarded, with documentation, to the Committee via the appropriate school dean, who will write comments that either support or disagree with the departmental recommendations. In the event that the department is unable or unwilling to provide the materials described above, the school of the appropriate dean will perform the departmental functions and forward the findings and recommendations to the Committee. The departmental chair and the school dean will immediately provide affected faculty with written notice of their recommendations.

When the Committee has received the departmental and dean's recommendations from all affected departments, it will consider all previous information, recommend to the president the particular faculty member or members to be dismissed, and notify all affected faculty in writing.

Upon receipt of the Committee's recommendations the president shall make a timely decision regarding dismissals, forward a copy of that decision to the board of regents, and notify all affected faculty. That decision is final, subject, of course, to the appeal procedures detailed below and approval by the board of regents.