

April 3, 2009

To: Deans and Department Chairs

From: Provost Roy Austensen

Re: Academic Policies to Promote Efficiency, Accountability, and Fairness

As you are aware, the Leadership Retreat (January 13-15), whose participants included faculty members, deans, and vice presidents, focused on the continuing visioning process, and then made an initial attempt to align vision with finances.

The group also set forth certain criteria for making decisions that have subsequently been shared at a faculty meeting and administrator's forum, and are provided below. These criteria have guided the formulation of policies discussed in this memo:

- Will the decision contribute to the development of a business model that is sustainable in the future?
- Will the decision focus resources on current "great" programs or those with the highest potential for greatness?
- Will the decision focus resources on programs that bring new, more diverse clientele to the University?
- Will the decision better align resources with the vision/mission of the University?
- Will the decision impact negatively the student experience at Valpo?

Valparaiso University remains dedicated to an ambitious vision whose elements have been communicated to the University community. It is clear that charting a path to increased eminence in a variety of areas will demand effort, unity in working to a common purpose, as well as resources for investment.

In an attempt to make the best of current and future resources, the members of the retreat examined many academic and non-academic areas where greater efficiencies are possible. In the academic area, class size, under-enrolled classes, ways to most productively use faculty time, and parity of practices among colleges were frequently raised as important concerns.

At the end of the retreat, President Mark Heckler charged the Provost and the deans to clarify and, when necessary, formulate policies regarding the areas outlined below.

The Council of Deans discussed and approved these policies in their meeting of January 28, 2009.

Preamble: The Provost is responsible for ensuring that the University's academic policies are followed consistently and fairly across the campus.

A. Capping of classes and class size

The deans of colleges will make decisions regarding class size limit. This will achieve consistency across colleges.

In cases with courses listed with both undergraduate and graduate credit, the dean of the college involved will make these decisions in consultation with the dean of the graduate division. In graduate only courses, the dean of the graduate division will make such a decision.

B. Released time for scholarship and undergraduate research

Off loads given for research need to be standardized across colleges. Currently, there is considerable variance and this has raised issues of equity and fairness. Such off loads must be clearly linked to enhanced work in scholarship and/or undergraduate research. The results of each released time should be tracked by departments and reported to the dean. If faculty members have received released time previously, department chairs and deans will take past accomplishments achieved through such released time into account when making decisions. All off loads need to be reviewed by the dean before class schedules have been set.

C. Accrual of faculty positions

When faculty vacancies occur for any reasons, the positions accrue to the Provost's Office and do not remain with the department or the college. This is consistent with "best practices" across academia. It allows the Provost to direct the positions according to institutional need.

D. Under-enrolled classes

Enrollment management is an important part of a dean's responsibilities.

Classes enrolling below 10 students are deemed under enrolled, and will be cancelled or consolidated.

Only the dean has the authority to allow an under-enrolled class to be offered. In cases with courses listed with both undergraduate and graduate credit, the dean of the college involved will make these decisions in consultation with the dean of the graduate division. In graduate only courses, the dean of the graduate division will make such a decision.

In most cases, classes below 15 students will invite scrutiny, and efforts should be made to avoid as many of these as possible.

The dean may choose to allow a few under-enrolled classes for programs that lack sufficient base of majors, if justifications can be made to continue these programs in terms of their importance or centrality. However, such programs must be continually scrutinized and all efforts made to reduce the number of under-enrolled classes.

Some of the strategies for enrollment management to reduce under-enrolled classes include the following:

- Revising the curriculum for greater flexibility.
- Allowing course substitutions wherever possible.
- Combining of classes so that the new class covers a larger subject area than is the current practice, and then using the schoolhouse model, where the instructor works with two levels of students, to deliver the course.
- Allowing departments to offset some smaller class offerings by increased enrollments in some other courses, thus maintaining optimum credit hour generation for the department.
- Or departments may be allowed to offset some small course enrollments by offering increased evening or online offerings that bring more flexibility to the delivery and can help in drawing different clienteles than traditional students.

Also, for efficiency and fairness to other colleagues who continue to teach full loads, all efforts should be made to avoid cancelling of courses at the last moment when it is difficult to use an individual faculty's time efficiently if a course has been cancelled. Except in rare cases, and with the permission of the dean, under-enrolled courses should be cancelled early so that students have the opportunity to move towards other choices and the faculty member has the ability to do something else.

Course cancellations should not be routinely used as unaccounted released time for faculty. If a course is cancelled, the faculty member will be asked to consider some of the following strategies. All such decisions must be approved by the dean.

- Use the cancelled course as released time for research, but only if a project proposal is submitted and then tracked to ensure that released time brings forth concrete results that can be assessed in a reasonable fashion.
- Take on additional duties where possible, e.g., undergraduate research, internships, recruitment, or any special project authorized by the dean. In each instance, the activity should be geared to measurable results.
- In lieu of the cancelled course, the faculty member teaches an extra course next semester. In some cases, this may be offset by the faculty member teaching large sections.

Finally, the deans are to work with department chairs and their faculty to ensure that courses typically enrolling less than 20 students include a major writing assignment by the students.

E. Overload pay

No overload stipend/salary will be paid to a faculty member unless this overload has been cleared by the dean prior to offering the overload class.