

Comments for the week of 2/28 -- 3/7

Faculty downsizing, Marketing plan, and Digital Data

Comment: I would like further explanation of three things the Provost has publicly said about the budgeting process. 1. He said that the UND faculty is not being downsized that this was a rumor. Does this mean that all early retirees will be replaced? 2. He said that there are many studies that marketing leads to huge profits for universities. Where can that info can be found? 3. He said that the Digital measures and other data that were collected are still very essential and will “of course” become a key part of the MIRA budget process. How will this work given the way MIRA is supposed to work?

Response: 1) The Provost cannot answer at this time whether positions made vacant by the voluntary separations program will be replaced. To the extent that a tuition increase is allowed, lowering the student/faculty ratio will be a top priority. 2) The Provost devoted the March 8 Budget Forum to the marketing plan including supporting data. He will make this presentation two other times. 3) Digital measures data are being analyzed, but are not yet ready for robust institutional analyses. For example, there is a need to build in discipline-specific measures. This is a work in progress. It is the intent to use such data to drive incentive-based budget decisions.

SMHS cuts

Comment: Drain the swamp at the Med School by closing down the Master of Public Health Program. The cost of maintaining such a program is staggering and the benefits to North Dakotans are practically non-existent. The Center for Rural Health at the school works on a variety of public health issues involving faculty and staff with a wide range of expertise. No matter how far you go on the wrong road turn back! -Clinical departments are over staffed and often with unqualified personnel. Secretarial support requires at the minimum expertise in Microsoft Office as well as professional communication with everyone. -Layoffs should start with couples working in the same institution. In most cases one spouse can easily support the other until the state economy improves.

Response: The hard decisions about budget reductions in the SMHS will be made by the Vice President of Health Affairs in consultation with his administration and department heads. Any reductions will be consistent with the School’s primary purpose which is to educate physicians and other health professionals and to enhance the quality of life in North Dakota

Undergraduate enrollment in graduate courses

Comment: One thought on increasing student enrollment in graduate courses is to ease access to them by sufficiently prepared and motivated undergraduate students. Right now the criteria for an undergraduate to take a graduate course at UND are rather onerous compared to other institutions. Being able to take graduate courses would both help prepare for graduate school and make our undergraduates more competitive for graduate school programs. Obviously a certain minimum standard would be necessary (e.g. minimum GPA junior/senior standing and instructor consent).

Response: The Provost considers this problem a barrier that should be addressed to the extent that programs want undergraduates to take graduate courses. Discussion of this problem at the last SBRR meeting indicated that some departments already do this by cross-listing courses. In some

cases the additional students helps protect low enrollment graduate courses. The scope of this barrier is something that can be analyzed by the Registrar.

Honors Program

Comment: Save the programs that produce results as well as staff and faculty in those areas. It was a disgrace to see Music Therapy go. The Honors Program does not provide any value to any degree and should be eliminated. It is pure "fluff".

Response: This sentiment is similar to the SMHS cuts comment above. What is one constituency's fluff is another's crown jewel. No program is immune to budget reduction, but decisions like this one must be consistent with the core values of the institution. Since the Honors Program reports to the Provost, he will make that call.

Administration

Comment: Cut the VP's and their office budget relocate their staff. This is example of too many Chiefs and not enough Indians.

Response: The commenter is referred to the 2/15-2/25 feedback response on this topic.

Mandatory retirement

Comment: Good morning, regarding budget cuts a recent article in the GF Herald highlighted two faculty members who were very unhappy with recent budget decisions and how cuts are affecting them personally. One faculty member was 84 years old the other 73. I admit I am not very informed on faculty tenure and I do not agree with the concept of tenure. Age discrimination is a slippery slope but has there been any discussion regarding evaluation and retention of faculty members beyond a certain point? My opinion is these faculty members could be stifling new ideas/teaching methods and I would say they are hindering upward mobility of other professors. I'm sorry they feel wronged however I think it was time to go 10-15 years ago.

Response: The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, which applies to state and local governments, makes it generally unlawful to discriminate based on age. Tenure is at the core of academic freedom. It protects faculty from administrative pressures that could suppress original and creative thought – necessary ingredients for a liberal education and groundbreaking discovery. Opinion is no substitute for evidence when judging the teaching effectiveness or research productivity of someone based solely on age.

Tenure

Comment: (identifying information redacted) The President, VPAA, and other upper admin SAY they are committed to tenure and faculty. However this seems rather disingenuous because last week a faculty member [REDACTED] was told that their tenure packet was being held up because of "low enrollment" by the Provost! Tenure is NOT tied to enrollment it is tied to performance. This faculty member has met or exceeded ALL expectations in all categories and teaches multiple classes that are always full. Additionally, they have received all positive votes by every level up to the Provost's office. So for him to hold that tenure packet up for the stated reason seems rather contradictory. Upper admin is living in an

alternative universe governed by "alternative facts". We need to wake up and hold them accountable for the things they say which are often times at best half-truth.

Response: Thank you for bringing this issue to us. It sounds like a very difficult and troubling situation at multiple levels. The SBRRRC cannot and should not involve itself in individual tenure decisions. But, it can and should weigh in on the larger issue of whether/how budgetary consideration might affect the tenure process.

Flights to Bismarck

Comment: Two things... Cut the use of airplanes for the deans to get back and forth from Grand Forks to Bismarck. It seems it would be less expensive to drive like the rest of the staff.

Response: The Provost is not aware of any upper-level administrators using air transportation to go to Bismarck. If one takes into account the number of passengers and savings on lodging, there are circumstances in which chartering a plane can be cost-effective.

Follow-up on previous comments

Book Study

Comment (From 2/22-2/28 feedback): There has been mention of North Dakota being one of the last states affected by massive cuts. Has our administration identified lessons learned from the struggles of other states? This was a campus book study over a year ago with the conclusion that ND was going to face this in the near future. Are there insights from this exercise that has influenced our direction?

Follow-up response: The Director of Instructional Development suggests that "the person was referring to the Shared Governance Interest Group (a collaboration between OID/VPAA and the University Senate). It took place over 2013-15 and we read *Locus of Authority* by Bowin and Tobin and *Enhancing Campus Capacity for Leadership: An Examination of Grassroots Leaders in Higher Education* by Kezar and Lester."

The SBRRRC has forwarded this information to the University Senate leadership with encouragement to consider sponsoring more of this type of book study and discussion in the future.