

Dear Colleagues:

Over the last five weeks the deans and I have had long sessions discussing the difficult decisions necessary to close the budget deficit and put our academic programs on a sustainable course.

On September 18, I sent a list of draft criteria for program eliminations, faculty reductions and program reshaping to the university community and received suggestions, which we have considered. We listened to the ideas of chairs, faculty, and students and now it's time to come forward with specific proposals. We hope the university community will engage in constructive dialogue around these proposals or present alternative proposals that would yield similar or even greater savings.

We essentially have two options: eliminate many of our academic programs or reconfigure our many small departments into more interdisciplinary programs. We chose to pursue the latter course to fundamentally transform the university with the cooperation of the faculty. If we are unable to secure that cooperation, we must pursue the first path and eliminate more programs.

In some departments, discussions are already taking place to reconfigure programs along the lines recommended in this letter. In other departments, these proposals will give faculty from different programs an opportunity to come together over the next several months to create new programs that cross disciplinary lines.

For the two programs recommended for elimination, discussion must take place quickly before action is taken by the end of October. We will provide the Faculty Senate and AFUM with the proposals for program elimination today for their review by October 17 and in time for a Board of Trustees meeting later this month.

We have 100 faculty eligible for retirement who have until October 20 to take advantage of the retirement incentive offered by the University of Maine System. Some have already applied; we anticipate others will apply before that date.

We have set targets for faculty numbers in each of our current academic programs that if not obtained through retirements will be achieved through lay-offs by issuing notices to faculty before the October 31 deadline. After October 20, we will know how many faculty members have opted for retirement. These reductions get the university only part of the way toward balancing the FY 16 budget. In the next phase of the process, we will communicate about plans to reduce administration, staff, and other expenses.

Fundamental Change

For many years we have been cutting budgets without changing our academic programs or the culture of the university. Our current crisis is too deep to merely trim the sails. It will require fundamental change in academic programs, in our culture, and in expectations of faculty inside and outside of the classroom. These fundamental changes are designed to benefit current and future students. We believe the following actions must be taken to reimagine the university:

- Take advantage of our locations to move beyond the classroom to have more courses that address real-world problems by working with businesses, schools, non-profits, government and social agencies, health care organizations, and other community organizations. In short, we must gain a reputation as the “metro university” by offering a distinctly different educational experience from other public and private universities in the state.
- Accelerate off-campus learning to become an integral part of the curriculum and the scholarly agenda of faculty. We must recognize this activity in our expectations of faculty and in promotions, tenure, and reviews. In short, we must change the incentive structure.
- Create a student-centered culture where full time faculty will be on campus or working with students on projects in the community at least four days a week. We must be dedicated to great teaching, applied research, and service to the community.
- Serve a diverse student body – students just out of high school, residential students, commuter students, veterans, transfer students, and non-traditional students balancing work, family, and school. Our current program requirements including general education and our majors have become too complex for students to understand without guidance. Even faculty and staff advisors have a hard time explaining our requirements to students – many of whom transfer to USM with already complex transcripts that do not easily fit into our requirements. Students complain about the large number and limited availability of required courses. To accommodate the diversity of our student body, we must significantly reduce the complexity by offering more flexible academic programs. Students will still have to take 120 credits to graduate but we must impose fewer requirements in the core and the major.
- Make our upper division courses and our graduate programs fiscally sustainable. The silos of our academic programs have in many ways contributed to the fiscal crisis. As we move toward a more interdisciplinary approach, we have an opportunity to address this problem.
- Teach Lewiston programs university-wide and find efficient ways to bring some of our Portland and Gorham academic programs to Lewiston through an imaginative use of blended and on-line learning. The silos of our locations have contributed to our fiscal problems. We can no longer afford faculty assigned to just one campus. Faculty must be prepared to teach on all campuses.

- Train all faculty to teach on-line and in blended formats. There will be some students who will seek traditional classes and some who seek fully on-line programs, but the future of public higher education will likely be a blend of on-line and face-to-face learning.
- Create different models of teaching by offering some large, medium and small sized classes. Many universities have successfully used on-line classes to reach larger numbers of students instead of the lecture hall. We should consider offering faculty who teach large classes graduate assistants to help with discussion groups and grading.
- Find the right balance throughout the university with tenured/tenure track faculty with research agendas, full time teaching faculty, and part time clinical or practice faculty. These different types of faculty give students a rich mixture of backgrounds and take advantage of the expertise located in our communities.
- Closely align the work of the faculty with the revenue required to run the university. Accordingly, we will move to a 4/4 teaching load with the opportunity for faculty to apply for one or two course releases each year based on their scholarly agenda, activities associated with engaged learning activities, and the number of students each faculty member is teaching. There will always be some courses that must be taught with a low faculty to student ratio but the work of the faculty cannot become disconnected from the revenue required to operate academic programs.

Shape of the University

These fundamental changes listed above will move USM toward a more student-centered, interdisciplinary, fiscally sustainable, metropolitan university. The plan outlined below organizes academic programs into larger units--the arts, the humanities, the social sciences and the sciences--to encourage interdisciplinary activity and reduce academic administration.

The plan reduces faculty positions by 50, which we hope will be achieved largely through eliminating vacant positions from retired faculty. The notification of retirements must be received by October 20 and notices of retrenchments will take place by October 31, 2014. The elimination of retrenched positions would take place at the completion of the fall semester.

This plan is not merely a way to deal with a budget crisis, but an opportunity for a cosmopolitan university to connect the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences with each other and the professional programs in Business, Technology, Health, and the Environment.

These recommendations on program realignment listed below seek faculty cooperation in the respective areas to come forward with a proposed plan no later than December 1, 2014 to achieve these interdisciplinary arrangements. It is designed for the university to offer the same number of credit hours with fewer faculty members.

The Visual and Performing Arts

Music, Art, and Theatre ought to come together to create a center for the arts. USM has the potential to become the center for the arts in the University of Maine System. The visual and performing arts are signature programs at USM and essential to the mission of the metropolitan university. We recognize that these programs require more subsidy than other programs. We hope to offset some of that cost with better coordination among the arts programs. We will reduce Theatre by one faculty member to improve its 8 to 1 student to faculty ratio (derived from data from FY 12, 13 and 14.) Music will be reduced by two faculty positions. As in all areas of reductions in faculty numbers, these can be achieved through retirements or retrenchments. One faculty member has already given notice of retirement.

The Humanities

English, Philosophy, and History ought to come together as one department with three distinct 36 credit degrees and close coordination in course offerings and faculty scheduling. The Philosophy and History departments have demonstrated a strong interest in interdisciplinary collaboration and the English department has recently proposed moving in this direction.

The Humanities ought to become participants in our key professional programs with faculty in Business, Technology, the Environment, and the Health professions. The Humanities should also be responsible for a 15 credit minor in Professional Writing and should consider other minors that would be attractive to students in the professions. It also should be responsible for a major in Liberal Studies that can be offered fully on-line as well as on campus.

We will eliminate 4.5 positions in English to bring the full time faculty to 11.5 full time positions. Philosophy will be reduced by one faculty position to 5 full time faculty and History will be reduced by 1 faculty position to 6 full time positions. These will all be achieved by the end of October.

Last year, English, History, and Philosophy had average class sizes of 16, 22, and 24. Even with fewer faculty and assuming the same number of credit hours taught last year, the average class size would increase to only 23 students per class in these programs. We expect writing intensive classes to remain small but we ought to have a mix of large, medium, and small classes depending on subject matter. We expect a recommendation on this consolidation no later than December 1, 2014. However, given contract requirements, we will need to reduce faculty numbers in these departments, through retirements or notice of retrenchments, by October 31.

Communication, Media Studies, and Political Science

Communication and Media Studies cross lines between the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Political Science also crosses lines between the humanities and social sciences. Discussion ought to take place about where these programs see likely opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Communication ought to consider minors in Public Relations and Social Media to align it more clearly with the community and career opportunities for students. It ought to reach out to the professions to find linkages in areas of health, the environment, marketing, politics,

and public policy. One faculty position obtained from a retirement in Communication will be eliminated to bring the faculty to 6.75. One faculty position in Political Science obtained from a retirement will be eliminated bringing the faculty to 4.

Business and Economics

Business has signature programs in Accounting, Risk Management and Insurance, and Sport Management. Its Marketing program serves to connect students to the business world with project oriented classes fully consistent with the vision of the metropolitan university. It ought to reduce its core to 24 credits to free up faculty time to create minors that serve non-business students. A smaller core would allow it to not only serve more majors and minors, it would also allow its students to take minors outside of the School of Business. The School of Business program would be strengthened by greater interdisciplinary ties with programs in health, environment, technology, and tourism as well as the social sciences and humanities.

Economics is largely a service department to business with 75 percent of its student enrollment at the 100 level. To a much lesser extent, Economics also serves the Environmental Science and Policy program and the core. Economics is highly productive at the 100 level but significantly less so in its upper division courses.

We recommend commencing a dialogue between Business and Economics faculty about having Economics rejoin the School of Business. In particular, Economics and Finance ought to find ways to join together to create overlapping courses that make upper division courses more robust in both programs.

Two faculty positions in Economics will be eliminated through retirements or notice of retrenchments by October 31. Last year, Economics taught 39 sections with an average class size of 31.2 students with the same number of faculty that we recommend (two faculty members were on sabbatical for the full year.) We believe cooperation with the Finance major will keep the student ratio at the same or even lower than last year. We expect a recommendation on this consolidation no later than December 1, 2014.

Social Sciences

The social sciences offer rich possibilities to create interdisciplinary programs. The Social and Behavioral Science and the Leadership and Organizational Studies programs on the Lewiston campus have common interests with the Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology programs. We recommend the faculty from these programs become a single administrative unit and work together to identify overlapping courses in the different programs.

Specifically, we recommend the Social and Behavioral Science major and the Sociology major combine into a single 36 credits major. Sociology has seen a precipitous decline in its major over the last five years from 105 majors in 2009 to just 60 majors last year. By October 31, two positions in Sociology will be eliminated and one position in Social and Behavioral Science.

We recommend the Criminology major become a 36 credit Criminology and Criminal Justice major with an articulation agreement with the local community colleges. It also ought to become interdisciplinary with overlapping courses in Social Work, Psychology, Leadership, and the combined Sociology/ Social and Behavioral Science programs. Women and Gender Studies also ought to fully participate in these discussions to become an integral part of this interdisciplinary social science program. By October 31, two faculty positions in Criminology will be eliminated.

Leadership with a major of 57 credits ought to significantly reduce its credit requirements, and offer a 15 credit minor. By October 31, one faculty position in Leadership will be eliminated through retirement or notice of retrenchment. We recommend that Psychology reduce its credit requirements to 36 credits, which will assist it to absorb the elimination of two faculty positions by retirement or notice of retrenchment by October 31. Psychology ought to take advantage of the availability of graduate assistants in the doctoral program in Education Psychology, which would allow it to offer a variety of class formats including some larger classes.

In moving toward an interdisciplinary approach, we have looked upon the social sciences as a whole. The Psychology, Sociology, Social and Behavioral Science, Criminology, and Women and Gender Studies programs offered 245 sections last year with an average class size of 20.4 students. With 8 faculty reductions achieved through these position eliminations the average class size would rise to 25 students per class assuming the same number of students in the last academic year and without taking into account the recommended reduction in credits.

We expect the faculty in these programs to provide recommendations about these program realignments no later than December 1, 2014.

Languages

We will eliminate the French major – recognizing that some language courses may still be offered depending on student interest. The program has graduated an average of 4.8 students over the last five years, making this program too expensive to justify a major. A detailed analysis of this recommendation will be provided in a program elimination proposal. We plan to end the Modern and Classical Literature and Languages program that is currently in a self-designed major. Three faculty positions in the languages will be eliminated.

Education

The School of Education and Human Development offers many relatively small graduate programs that will have to find more common courses for the program to operate successfully with fewer faculty. The school will be reduced to 24 full time faculty positions, eliminating 2.5 faculty positions through retirement or retrenchment notices by October 31. We expect the faculty in these programs to provide recommendations about these realignments no later than December 1, 2014.

Muskie

Discussions have been underway in Muskie since last year about focusing on the environment and health--two signature areas for the USM metropolitan university. Senator Muskie's great contribution to Maine and the nation was his legislation to protect the environment.

The Muskie program in public health (MPH) has been gaining students and has been tied closely to the funded research in the Cutler Institute. It needs to connect with undergraduate programs in Public Health (currently at Lewiston) and the Health Sciences program. It shows promise and can be strengthened with faculty teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs in public and community health. It also offers rich possibilities for interdisciplinary cooperation with the humanities, social sciences, business, computer science, and programs in the environment.

The Public Policy and Management (PPM) masters and the Community Planning and Development (CPD) masters have both seen a drop in enrollment in recent years. These programs are not sustainable in their current configuration with a graduate-only faculty teaching two courses a semester to a relatively small number of students.

The Muskie School ought to be reimagined with the undergraduate program in Environmental Science and Policy (ESP) playing a pivotal role. It ought to slim down its BA degree to attract a wider audience with a 36 credit program and continue its BS in Environmental Science. The Geography and Anthropology (GYA) faculty have been in discussion about reconfiguring that major under a different name to align with the vision of the metropolitan university. It ought to become part of a larger Environmental Science and Policy program by adding a concentration to the current Environmental Science and Policy major or offering a separate but complementary degree focused on the human and built environment. Its expertise in GIS ought to be taught across the curriculum.

The faculty in ESP, PPM, CPD and GYA have been in discussion to combine the PPM and CPD programs into one interdisciplinary graduate degree focused on policy, planning, and management. The reconfigured program ought to align with the undergraduate degree programs in ESP and GYA because those faculty will be called upon to teach in the graduate program.

The new graduate degree also ought to draw additional faculty from different programs in the university in the humanities, social sciences, and business as well as practice faculty from the Cutler Institute.

We will eliminate one of the Muskie graduate degrees in January at the end of this process. The graduate faculty in Muskie will be reduced through retirements, retrenchments, or attrition to 1 or at most 2 faculty members and they would join the Environmental Science and Policy program in a combined department with the GYA faculty to offer undergraduate and graduate programs in the Muskie School. Three faculty positions will be eliminated in PPM and three will be eliminated in CPD by retirement or notices of retrenchment by October 31. One additional position may be eliminated when the two degrees are combined.

We expect recommendations about the realignment of these academic programs no later than November 1, 2014 because much of the work has already been completed.

Applied Medical Sciences

Applied Medical Sciences offers a graduate degree that has graduated only an average of 4.6 majors per year over the last five years. It has a robust funded research but direct costs far exceed revenue from tuition and the indirect from funded research. We recommend eliminating this program and all 5 faculty positions (some of these faculty members may sustain themselves on contract and grant funds, however). A detailed analysis of this recommendation will be provided in a program elimination proposal.

Chemistry, Physics, and Math

The STEM disciplines play an important role in preparing professionals for the Maine economy. The faculty members in these three programs teach largely service courses to health, engineering, and technology majors as well as required courses in the core.

We recommend moving these three programs into a single department. While these programs are fiscally sustainable for the 100 and 200 level courses, they are not fiscally viable in the upper division courses. The three programs combined had only 22 graduates on average over the last three years – insufficient to operate as separate majors.

We are asking faculty members to recommend alternatives to these majors – perhaps a single combined math, physics, and chemistry major rather than three separate majors. We are also asking the faculty in the LAC Natural and Applied Science program to join in discussions about this combined program.

Over the last three years, Physics graduated only 6 students on average and Natural and Applied Science graduated only 9.7 students. We will eliminate 1 faculty position in Physics and 1 faculty position in the Natural and Applied Science program by retirement or notices of retrenchment by October 31.

We will seek faculty recommendations on the realignment of these departments and majors no later than December 1, 2014

Engineering, Technology, and Computer Science

We recommend these three programs combine into a single administrative unit with multiple degrees. The three programs could achieve administrative and academic efficiency by operating as a combined faculty responsible for multiple degree programs. Two faculty positions in Computer Science and one faculty position in Technology will be eliminated by eliminating vacancies from retirement or retrenchment notices October 31. The reduction in faculty in this area would move Computer Science to an average of 23 students per section assuming the same number of students as last year and Technology to 27 students per section. The greater coordination of these academic programs offers the possibility of reducing these averages.

We will seek a recommendation on the combination of these programs no later than December 1, 2014.

Programs Eliminated by the UMS Board of Trustees

On September 22, the University of Maine, Board of Trustees voted to eliminate three USM programs – Geoscience, Arts and Humanities, and American and New England Studies. We will eliminate faculty positions in all these programs – 4 in Geoscience, 1 in Art and Humanities and 2 in American and New England Studies by retirement or retrenchment notices by October 31.

Conclusion

The transformation of the university presents the entire university community with serious challenges but also exciting opportunities. It will require hard work and enormous energy but we will be rewarded by making this university a vital institution in the state, region, and the communities where we are located. We look forward to bringing together the faculty, staff, students, and community members to create a student-centered, interdisciplinary, metropolitan university.

Sincerely,

Joseph W. McDonnell
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Faculty lines scheduled for elimination

American and New England Studies 2
Applied Medical Sciences 5
Arts and Humanities 1
Communication and Media Studies 1
Community Planning and Development 3
Computer Science 2
Criminology 2
Economics 2
Education 2.5
English 4.5
Geoscience 4
History 1
Languages 3
Leadership and Organizational Studies 1
Music 2
Natural and Applied Science 1
Philosophy 1
Physics 1
Psychology 2
Political Science 1

Public Policy and Management 3

Social and Behavioral Science 1

Sociology 2

Technology 1

Theatre 1

Total 50