

**January 12, 2018**

**To: Interim Provost John Zomchick**

**From: Ad Hoc Committee (Deans Beyl, Davis, Lee, Mangum, Rider and Wilson)**

**RE: Your Charge on Faculty Line Reallocation**

**Summary Observations**

We appreciate the assignment given us. Prior to responding to the specific questions asked, we offer the following summary observation for your consideration.

Possible reallocation of vacant lines should be informed by careful consideration of the strategic direction of the university and its component units (departments and colleges). Given the multi-dimensional complexity of the university's strategic direction, there is no simple decision rule to guide re-allocation decisions. Adding to the complexity is the institution's designs on increasing its undergraduate population by as much as 15% over the next five years while also increasing its graduate student population by an unspecified amount, while also wishing to enhance rankings of its research productivity and general reputation.

Given these factors, reallocation of lines across college boundaries should be limited to truly unusual circumstances, unless there is strong reason to believe that the current allocation is in large scale need of re-balancing or it is clear that needed re-balancing cannot be accomplished, over a reasonable time frame, via the assignment of any new lines. Similarly, this logic argues for an approach that considers net benefits of re-allocation within a college, before or simultaneous to consideration of inter-college re-allocations.

In light of the complexities involved in formulating and implementing a university wide approach to tenure line re-allocation, consideration should first be given to whether any "problem" in the current allocation is widespread or more localized and involving a relatively small number of units. If the latter, it may well be that the best approach is a targeted one, working closely with the leadership of a small number of units, rather than creating an approach involving all academic units across the campus.

It is also important to note that even having to consider possible faculty line reallocation approaches likely reflects deeper root causes that should be addressed. One likely root cause is that our history-based incremental budgetary model does a poor job of altering resource flows in the face of non-transitory changes in enrollment patterns. In the absence of a more effective budgetary model where enrollment and unit budgets are strongly linked, consideration turns to the possible use of more blunt instruments such as tenure line reallocation.

Noting that we are simultaneously engaged in a conversation about possible faculty line reallocation while also engaged in a conversation about potentially adding significantly to the overall size of the university's faculty, added consideration should be given to the overall level of resources currently being allocated to the academic side of the university and whether it is at all sufficient to tackle the aspirations set forth in the university's strategic plan.

Finally, the UTK deans, as a collective group, have expressed their willingness to work for the best interest of the university as a whole even in cases where there may be ramifications for their individual colleges. We affirm our intention to assist in the development of a process for allocation of faculty lines that is fair and brings the maximal positive impact to the University of Tennessee, should the university's senior leadership decide to pursue same.

## **Responses to Specific Questions**

We turn now to the specific questions posed by the Provost. These questions are germane both to processes by which any new lines might be allocated in meeting planned enrollment growth, or to a planning scenario of limited new lines and any perceived need to re-balance the current allocation. The fundamental questions to be answered in considering possible re-allocation across units are: (1) If the line is re-allocated, what is the benefit to the unit receiving the line and to the university? and (2) Without the existing line, what are the consequence for the unit losing the line and for the university?

### **Question #1: Criteria -- What criteria should the Office of the Provost consider when reviewing requests for assignment of vacated faculty lines?**

These identified criteria are not presented in any particular order of importance in this listing:

- Centrality to Mission – centrality of the faculty line to the missions of the departments/colleges under consideration and to the overall university (e.g., services provided campus-wide such as in the case of the libraries or experience learning provided by some academic units, which involves small class sizes by design).
- Alignment with VolVision -- the line's current vs prospective impact on meeting one or more of the priorities identified in the UT strategic plan.
- Accreditation -- impact of alternative line assignment possibilities on the status of any academic unit or program accreditation.
- Enrollment Trends -- comparison of 3/5/10 year enrollment trends in the departments/colleges under consideration?

- Faculty/Student Ratio -- impact of alternative allocation possibilities on student to faculty ratios in context of college, campus and benchmark/peer institution norms/ranges.
  - comparisons on basis of TT, NTT, and overall faculty terms; consideration of feasible alternative approaches to meeting student demand via various forms on non-tenure line faculty.
  - consideration of impact on graduate as well as undergraduate degree programs. Within graduate programs, careful consideration of any differential impact on Ph.D. versus masters programs.
  
- Diversity – consideration of unit’s track record on diversifying faculty, staff, and student populations.
  
- Graduation and employment rates – comparison of graduation and employment outcomes vis a vis benchmark institutions and metrics.
  
- Critical Mass/Program Preservation – impact of any reallocation on academic unit viability; “do no harm” – do not reallocate lines if doing so will harm a unit in a fundamental way.
  
- Research/External Funding Needs – impact of alternative allocations on existing or possible large scale external funding possibilities; impact on research profiles of units vis a vis their ranking/reputation.
  
- Visibility – consideration of any likely impact alternative allocations may have on key rankings or other indicators of national/international recognition.
  
- Engagement – impact of possible reallocation on unit’s ability to serve key constituents in the community/state/region.

- Entrepreneurial endeavor – extent to which the units are engaged in entrepreneurial activities that further institutional goals; reallocation should not penalize units taking calculated risks consistent with university interests.
- Overall Faculty Workload -- comparison of faculty average teaching loads vis a vis college and benchmark institution norms.
- Financials – given that different faculty lines come with different underlying resource packages and given that filling a line requires very different resource levels in different units, absent some incremental resource or “top off” capability at the central level, units will need to indicate how such differences will be financed. Otherwise, reallocation of a line may not yield an incremental line in the receiving unit as the resources could be absorbed elsewhere, such as to the support of existing lines. In cases where a line can be replaced in the unit of its current allocation at a lower resource level than in the line exited (e.g., a senior retirement and a “rookie” hire), central administration may wish to consider reallocation of dollars (e.g. reallocation of “parts of lines”).
- Effectiveness with respect to use of existing faculty resources – comparisons based on output metrics (such as research expenditures, grants funded, credit hour production, graduates, majors, publications, etc.) per faculty FTE.

**Question #2: Weighting – Should the criteria be weighted in any way? For example, should undergraduate enrollment pressures trump graduate programmatic needs? Should research strength trump enrollment pressures? Is it even possible to establish a weighted system?**

Weighting criteria might appear to be the best approach to dealing with the multi-dimension complexity of the university’s strategic direction. The optimization will vary dramatically on the basis of the weights given to the various criteria. For example, the “answer” will be very different to the extent that undergraduate

program outcomes (e.g., retention, graduation, class size, extent of exposure to tenure line faculty, undergraduate research) are weighted more heavily than outcomes associated with research and external engagement. This complexity is further exacerbated by the fact that not all criteria are relevant to all academic units, such as undergraduate enrollment not having relevance to the College of Law.

It is certainly possible to establish a weighted system and a first reaction is generally in favor of a system of explicit weights. Whether one would be satisfied with the outcomes of such a system is a separate question. There are large differences between units on factors such as expected grant activity, publication rate, pedagogical driven class sizes, appropriateness of NTT faculty, size of graduate and undergraduate programs, importance and applicability of undergraduate research, nature and importance of outreach, and all of this is set in the context of institutional and disciplinary norms important to external rankings.

Consideration is also needed as to the stability of the weights once assigned. The greater the likelihood that the weights might change from one time period to the next, the weaker may be the case for establishing weights. This said, need for flexibility in weighting criteria from year to year is likely as institutional needs will change over time. Any change in weights would best be communicated as early as possible to assist units in planning. The Office of the Provost will need the flexibility to exercise judgment, so it would be important to be clear upfront that the criteria and the corresponding weights will not, by themselves, always drive final decisions.

This said, whether stated explicitly or left implicit, any such decision will, by its very nature, involve the weighting of criteria. In sum, the benefit of establishing an explicit weighting is that all parties will know the rules of the “game.” The disadvantage is a loss of flexibility on many fronts (e.g., flexibility over time, special circumstances, emergent needs). Due to the complexity of the decision process here, an explicit weighting system likely will not work well.

NOTE: Upon sharing our draft report (in late November), you asks the ad hoc committee to look at the assembled criteria and to engage in the exercise of attempting to determine which criteria were seen as most important by the group. The results of that exercise were returned to you on December 19, 2017 and are included here as an attachment, for your convenience (see Attachment #1).

**Question #3: Documentation – what documentation should colleges be expected to produce when requesting assignment of lines? Is it desirable to produce a template for such requests? If yes, what should the template contain?**

Deans, including the dean of the college in which the vacated line currently exists, should be asked to address each criterion identified as germane to the decision-making process. To the extent that documentation pertaining to specific criteria/factors is collected campus-wide and stored centrally, these data should be provided to all deans for use in their proposals as they deem appropriate. Most critical to documentation will be an explanation of how the position aligns with and contributes to the university's strategic plan and how it contributes to the overall achievement, effectiveness and efficiency of the unit.

A template would be very appropriate. Finding a common formulation that can work across the many disciplines and units of the campus may be challenging, but use of a single template would greatly facilitate proposal preparation and decision-making.

**Question #4: Process – what would constitute a fair and transparent process of assigning lines?**

Forming this ad hoc committee to provide input was a good first step. Thoughtful consideration of the perspectives and recommendations of this task force will be another positive. To then provide opportunity for reaction/input from the COD, and open discussion by that body...and perhaps other groups...would be beneficial. Frequent communication throughout this process of review, and beyond, is important. Timely decision-making, with rationale for the decisions made, is critical.

If a decision is made to pursue reallocation, opportunity to adapt practices in order to be more responsive to the criteria, prior to the implementation of any policy, would be seen positively by many. Clarity, in advance, as to the rules, who makes the decision, and how they are made, with appropriate recognition and evidence of shared governance is needed. This might take the form of some type of multi-college committee to review proposals and provide advice (CAS example). The possibility of re-allocating faculty lines across colleges is a complex political process requiring excellent political and communication skills on the part of the

Provost and Chancellor. While this process may be informed by the work of an institution-wide faculty committee, such a committee will seldom, if ever, be able to make decisions on such matters. Decision rights should not, in this case, be delegated to such an entity.

**Question #5: Exceptions -- Should there be any exceptions to the general policy that all vacated faculty lines are subject to reassignment?**

Very careful consideration must be given to whether promotion process generated vacancies should be included in reallocation consideration. Inclusion of such vacancies could create perverse incentives in which a unit is motivated to retain/promote whereas it would otherwise not do so, for concern of otherwise losing the position. A similar dynamic may occur in the case of a poorly performing senior faculty member, and the unit leader's motivation for encouraging retirement/turnover should continuation of the position in the unit be at risk.

## **Attachment #1**

### **Input to Possible Weighting of Identified Factors December 19, 2017**

John, in response to your request for a preliminary sense of the perceived relative importance of the identified factors, committee members were asked to rate each identified factor in terms of its level of importance in any process of allocation/reallocation of faculty lines (1=highly important, 2=important, 3=less important).

For us as a committee, this exercise reinforced one of our earlier “findings” -- that there is no straightforward way to create an algorithm able to effectively rank proposals coming from different disciplines/departments across colleges. While factors such as those listed below may help partially inform decisions, it will be next to impossible to fully specify a consistent appropriate set of decision rules.

With this as background and caveat, two measures of relative importance ranking are provided here. Please note that we, as a committee, have not debriefed on these results.

1. Based on a count of the number of #1 (highly important) ratings given each factor by members of the committee, the most highly important factors are:

Centrality to college mission

Accreditation requirements

Impact on PhD programs

Centrality to University strategic direction

Centrality to department mission

UG Enrollment trends

Student to TT faculty ratio

Unit’s effectiveness in using existing faculty resources

2. Based on the mean response of the committee members (lowest mean equates to higher importance), the rank-ordering would be as follows:

Centrality to college mission

Accreditation requirements

Impact on PhD programs

Undergraduate enrollment trends

Unit effectiveness in using existing faculty resources

Centrality to University strategic direction

Centrality to department mission

Student to TT faculty ratio

Special Circumstances

Factor	#1 Ranks	Mean Score				
Centrality to univ. strategic direction	3	1.5				
Centrality to the college mission	5	1.2				
Centrality to the department mission	3	1.5				
Accreditation Requirements	4	1.2				
Undergraduate Enrollment trend	3	1.4				
Graduate Enrollment trend	2	1.8				
PhD production and placement record	0	2				
Student to TT faculty ratio	3	1.5				
Student to NTT teaching faculty ratio	0	2.4				
Impact on MS programs	2	1.8				
Impact on PhD programs	4	1.3				
Unit track record on diversity	1	2.2				
UG Student to GTA ratio	0	2.2				
Employment rates of graduates	0	2.0				
Critical mass/program preservation	1	2.0				
Unit/Program ranking	1	2.2				
Other indicators of national/international reputation	1	2.2				
Engagement/service to key constituents in the state and region	0	2.6				
Comparison of faculty workload to college/university/benchmark peer norms	0	2.2				
Unit's effectiveness in using existing faculty resources	3	1.4				
Research expenditures/FTE	0	2.0				

Grants funded/FTE	0	2.2				
Credit hour prod'n/FTE	0	2.2				
Graduates/FTE	0	2.2				
Majors/FTE	0	2.0				
Publications/FTE	1	2.2				
Extent of experiential learning (labs, studios, etc.) in unit	1	2.2				
Unit's service level to other campus units	0	2.6				
Emergent Needs	0	2.2				
Extent of Entrepreneurial endeavors	0	3.0				
Addressing of societal needs	1	2.2				
Special circumstances	3	1.5				