

Summary of Prioritization Outcomes

Introduction

Two years ago, as part of our ongoing commitment to operate in a fashion that reflects fiscal integrity, those in leadership at PLNU did financial scenario planning. The results were sobering. It became clear that with aging facilities and increasing costs, expenses would significantly exceed revenues in the years to come.

Fortunately, PLNU is a healthy organization that operates with fiscal excellence. While the scenarios are speculative, they provide insight into what can happen if all things remain equal. In PLNU's case, the financial scenario planning identified a significant financial shortfall if all things remained the same.

As a result, the university leadership engaged the campus community in a proactive review and self-assessment process. The comprehensive self-study at PLNU was a deliberate, data-driven process that involved the faculty and the staff. *Best practices* would suggest that these types of review and assessment activities (i.e., examining both the strengths and the areas that can be strengthened) be part of the culture and ethos of an academic community's ongoing work.

PLNU's Prioritization Process included:

1. An in-depth, two-year self-study completed by each department, program, or unit of the university that addressed issues of operation, contribution to university mission, effectiveness, capacity for efficiencies and savings, and possible ways to accomplish objectives through different strategies.
2. Participation in the Delaware Study to provide comparative data on academic programs, as well as use of Dickeson study strategies that took into account national benchmarking data.
3. Extensive review and analysis of more than 100 self-study reports by two committees: Administration and Support Prioritization Committee and Academic Affairs Prioritization Committee.
4. Submission of confidential recommendations by the prioritization committees to the Cabinet.
5. Cabinet review and analysis of recommendations.

Guiding Principles

Throughout this process, we have operated with three guiding principles:

1. To care for the people within our university community
2. To create a sustainable, high-functioning organization
3. To be mission-centered, providing a high-quality student learning experience

Outcomes

The prioritization process identified a total of \$3,288,000 in savings, \$1,223,400 coming from administrative and support units and \$2,064,600 coming from all areas of academic affairs. This total was approximately \$500,000 higher than the initial target of \$2.7 million, primarily accounting for the addition of faculty early retirements.

These increased savings will be needed in light of the following factors:

- A reallocation of resources will be required to address some of PLNU's high-priority unmet needs (e.g., additional support for recruitment and marketing for new and existing programs – it is not enough to start and build new programs, we also have to provide resources to let our key stakeholders know that they are available while highlighting the current outstanding department offerings).
- It will be a few years before the revenue from any of PLNU's new programs is realized.

What follows is a description of the actions that will be taken by PLNU as the result of the prioritization process.

Academic Affairs

In the area of academic affairs, we have been able to leverage a number of strategies (phased retirements, faculty attrition, and alternative teaching modalities) to develop the following key outcomes:

1. Every current student will be given four years to complete the program of their choice, even if that program will be phased out. Incoming students for fall 2014 will be provided four years to complete the program of their initial choice.
2. While the prioritization recommendations include savings generated by reducing the number of classes taught, we have made it possible for there to be no reduction in force in full-time faculty.

Phase Out of a Limited Number of Academic Programs

The prioritization process has identified several academic programs that will be phased out over the next four years. These programs were determined to be unsustainable due to low enrollment and/or high cost. The university is committed to ensuring that every student in one of these majors, both current and incoming in fall 2014, will be able to complete their degree path. Faculty advisors from impacted programs will work with each student to design a specific plan to complete their degree.

These programs will be phased out no later than the summer of 2018. The programs are:

- Theatre: The major will be phased out, but the minor will be retained. Because theatre is a co-curricular activity of interest to students, it is anticipated that two plays per year will be produced.
- Family and Consumer Sciences

- Fashion and Interiors: Both the concentration in fashion merchandising and the concentration in interior design will be phased out.
- Romance Languages. PLNU currently offers separate majors in Spanish, French, and Romance Languages (which combines courses in French and Spanish). The individual language majors will continue.
- Philosophy-Theology: Only the philosophy/theology combined major will be phased out. The existing philosophy major will continue. PLNU does not have a current stand-alone theology major, but theology courses will continue to be offered.

Significant Changes in Academic Programs

Each of the following departments is being asked to incorporate the decisions made as the result of the prioritization process into their program review and curricular changes. The goal of these recommendations is to help these programs become more financially sustainable. Because of the timing of the program review, all of these changes will be phased in over a two- to three-year period and will not impact current students.

- Art: Reduce program costs by making changes in curriculum rotation and faculty loading for studio classes.
- Communications and Theatre: Redesign the broadcast journalism and media communications majors to significantly reduce equipment and staffing costs. Redesign the portfolio, practicum, and internship system to create classes with a single faculty of record.
- Family and Consumer Sciences: As indicated above the family and consumer sciences and fashion and programs will be phased out. After the 2015-16 academic year, the dietetics and nutrition and foods students and faculty will join a new academic home that is connected with their discipline (under consideration are the Department of Kinesiology and the School of Nursing). The child and adolescent development students and faculty will join the School of Education. In the next two years, there will need to be curricular adjustments made to facilitate the integration of these disciplines into their new home departments.
- History and Political Science: Redesign curriculum to reduce the number of elective units in history.
- Literature, Journalism and Modern Languages: Adjustments in curriculum to reduce the number of units in Spanish, linguistics, writing, journalism, and literature (further details about literature can be seen in the GE changes listed below).
- School of Business: Redesign the MBA to have a larger core and fewer elective courses.

- School of Theology and Christian Ministry: Redesign curriculum to reduce the number of electives and focus course work on student interests and practical ministry.
- Sociology and Social Work: Redesign curriculum for both sociology and social work to reduce elective units.

Adjustments for Efficiency in Academic Programs

Several departments are being asked to make small changes in their curriculum, course rotations, and faculty release time to reduce expenses. These include the Departments of: Biology; Chemistry; Communications and Theatre; Kinesiology; Mathematical, Information and Computer Sciences; Physics and Engineering; and Psychology.

There are a number of known departures and known retirements. Several of these openings will not be refilled with full-time faculty and staff. Departments with coming retirements or departures include: Chemistry; Family and Consumer Sciences; Kinesiology; Literature, Journalism and Modern Languages; Music; School of Education; Sociology and Social Work; and the Point Loma Press.

General Education Changes

The university is in the beginning stages of evaluating general education and considering curricular changes. The following changes have been identified through the prioritization process:

- Chemistry: The prioritization process eliminated all five unit classes. This will necessitate the redesign of CHE103.
- Kinesiology: Increase the number of units for Fitness Through Movement from one to two. This aligns student credit with faculty load and is consistent with the number of units for the other options in the same category of general education requirement.
- Literature, Journalism and Modern Languages: The prioritization process eliminated all five unit classes. This requires changing the core writing requirement (WRI110) from a five unit to a four unit class. As proposed by the department, the literature general education requirement will be redesigned to include one lower division general education class and one upper division general education class (this also helps to reduce the number of electives in the literature major).
- Mathematical, Information and Computer Sciences: As proposed by the department, the mathematics general education requirement will be redesigned to more closely align with programs being taught elsewhere. This involves developing a larger menu of classes for mathematics general education and raising the prerequisite skill level for these general education classes.

The specific details of these changes will go through the standard university processes for adjusting general education curriculum.

University Centers

The university currently has several units designated as centers or institutes. We will be developing a consistent set of definitions, policies, and evaluation parameters to most effectively leverage the outstanding work of these units for the good of the university.

We are committed to doing a thorough review of these units in order to identify strategies that will improve efficiencies and increase external funding in order to reduce the support that is required from the university operating budget. A projected savings target has been included in the prioritization totals. Plans based on these strategies will be developed in the next 12 months with implementation occurring over the next four years.

The following units will be reviewed:

- Center for International Development
- Center for Justice and Reconciliation
- Center for Pastoral Leadership
- Center for Teaching and Learning
- Early Childhood Learning Center
- Fermanian Business and Economic Institute
- Institute for Public Policy and Service
- Wesleyan Center
- Women's Studies Center

Administration and Support

Efficiencies and cost savings have been identified in many of the units that make up the administration and support area of the university.

Reduction of Administrative Department Expenditures

After an analysis, overtime is being reduced in the following areas: Custodial Services, Maintenance, Media Services, Information Technology Services, and University Advancement. In addition, beginning with the 2014-15 budget, all departments will be required to include overtime in their discretionary cost center budgets, and monthly reports will be generated to enable supervisors to better manage overtime expenses.

The budgets of a number of units have been reduced. These include: Catalog Printing, Institutional Effectiveness, Information Technology, International Ministries, Student Development Administration, Student Ministries, Nicholson Commons, Extended Studies, the Center for Pastoral Leadership, Church Relations, Board of Trustees, and External Relations.

PLNU has been allowing families to pay tuition using a credit card. The processing fees associated with this method of payment are significant, and under California law we are prohibited from charging users a convenience fee to offset the cost. Because of this, and after researching what other institutions are doing, PLNU has decided to no longer accept payment of student charges by credit card.

Information Technology Services will seek to reduce costs by slightly extending the replacement cycle for computers. The evaluation to determine the appropriate cycle length is currently underway.

Reductions in Staffing Outside of Academic Units

There are slight reductions in the use of student workers in: Information Technology Services, Nicholson Commons, Athletics, Residential Life, Public Safety, Maintenance, Conference Services, and Media Services.

Some open positions in various units will not be filled.

Reorganizations that are currently underway will lead to the reduction of a few additional positions over the course of the next 24 months. To the extent possible, these reductions will be made through natural attrition and retirements.

Structural Reorganization

Complete reorganization of units was outside the scope of the prioritization process; however, structural change has the potential to yield significant institutional savings.

- Academic Affairs: Over the next few years, the leadership structure of Academic Affairs will be changed. It is anticipated that the leadership structure will be “flattened” and the 17 academic units will be consolidated into 8-10 units.
- Administrative and Support Units: Over the next several months, some units in administration and support will be evaluated for possible reorganization.

Closing Observations

Guiding Principles Going Forward

The prioritization process has been a significant amount of work for all involved. The goal of the process has been to ensure a sustainable future for PLNU. Many of the key principles used in this process will continue to be important in our decision making going forward. These include:

1. Development of detailed, data-informed plans before PLNU undertakes new initiatives.
2. Ongoing evaluation of all units for efficiency and effectiveness to allow for timely changes.
3. Comprehensive evaluations of open staff positions, position attrition, and retirements as part of the ongoing process for achieving sustainable staffing levels.
4. Generation of new revenue to reduce dependence upon funding from PLNU operating budgets will be expected of selected programs or units.
5. Evaluation of faculty retirements and departures as part of our transitioning to sustainable full-time to adjunct faculty ratios within academic programs.
6. Regular evaluation of academic offerings in order to ensure quality, student-relevant programs consistent with PLNU’s mission and size.

7. Evaluation of high cost and/or low enrollment programs for possible change, redesign or discontinuation.

The Cabinet appreciates the many hours that faculty and staff have given to the prioritization work. This has not been an easy process, and everyone involved has spent hours wrestling with the recommendations and decisions that needed to be made.

Organizations tend to expand and fall out of touch with their stakeholders and environment if there is not careful attention given to controlling costs and ensuring relevancy. The steps that we are taking together create a sustainable future for PLNU and ensure that we fulfill our mission with our students and their families. Yes, there will always be much work yet to do, but we are actively engaging and designing the future of PLNU.

We are blessed to have a vibrant campus community with diversity of thought and perspectives. Let us pray as one that our faith continues to sustain and draw us together while our ongoing work continues to inspire the lives of countless students in the years to come.