

From: [Summers, Greg](#)
Subject: Academic Affairs Update, 02-12-21
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Colleagues,

As a follow-up to the strategic planning message we received this week from Chancellor Gibson, Academic Affairs will embark on a process of creating an academic plan to guide strategy for our division. Crafting a divisional plan will help realize the goals expressed in the university's Purpose Made Possible strategic action plan. The work of Academic Affairs will be crucial to enhancing student experiences, serving lifelong learners, and building meaningful campus and community partnerships as we strive to realize our vision for UW-Stevens Point in 2025.

I realize this is a significant undertaking during the continued pandemic. Fortunately, we already have many pieces in place, including recruitment and retention efforts that have demonstrated success, a revised curriculum development and review process, and a new divisional plan for equity, diversity, and inclusivity. Consequently, much of the work of crafting an academic plan will consist of documenting these efforts and reviewing and sharpening our aspirations. Doing so will help to identify missing pieces and articulate measurable goals to better hold ourselves accountable for making progress. I am bringing a small team together to start this document, and many opportunities for input will follow. Completing this work now is especially important as we emerge from the fog of the current health crisis, which has clearly changed higher education in ways that require careful consideration.

As outlined in Purpose Made Possible, our aspirations must be shaped within a realistic financial framework, a goal that has been complicated by the mounting costs of the pandemic. On Tuesday, you received a university budget update from Vice Chancellor Gandhi. Academic Affairs is planning a roughly \$2.6M budget reduction for the next fiscal year between our main campus and branches, with a further \$1.6M reduction to follow. How quickly we need to implement the second part of this adjustment will depend on several variables, including enrollment, the upcoming state biennial budget, and the evolving pandemic. The unprecedented financial impacts caused by the pandemic have struck higher education hard, causing a 13% reduction in employees across the sector in the United States since last February. UW-Stevens Point has not escaped these impacts.

As we navigate our remaining challenges, I want to be clear about our goals: we will use every strategy available to avoid layoffs or unwanted impacts on our curriculum. One such strategy will be to again offer a voluntary separation incentive to tenured faculty members in curricular areas where the deans believe that enrollment allows a reduction in FTE. Given a stable state budget and the federal dollars we received for pandemic-related expenses, I'm hopeful we can navigate our remaining spending reductions while avoiding their worst potential impacts.

In solidifying an academic plan—one that is both aspirational and fiscally sound—we will leverage our new schools to collaboratively evaluate curriculum as we work with Chancellor Gibson to enhance academic excellence, expand diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence, and increase enrollment. I'll be collaborating with leadership in both the division and Common Council regarding next steps and process. We will share drafts along the way, and there will be many opportunities for input. I look forward to hearing your thoughts in the weeks ahead.

Greg

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