White Paper
Working Group—Academic Structure and Faculty

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General Charge

Examine the Curriculum to understand and evaluate the range of course offerings, general education currency, majors (including approximate enrollment in each both by year and at graduation) faculty census for each department and the support contributed to total credit hours delivered on an annual basis.

Introduction

Our Working Group, Academic Structure & Faculty, has been investigating the topics of academic structure and faculty which include, but are not limited to: improving faculty/staff welfare, to support equity, inclusion, and diversity, to support transparency and shared governance, to support the concept of "One University," and to support and increase grant opportunities for all faculty and staff so they can pursue professional development related to teaching and scholarship. The purpose of this white paper is to provide a set of initiatives that can be adopted and embraced as Arkansas Tech moves into its next phase.

As a general overview of the layout of this white paper, the white paper is organized by listing recommended initiatives and under each initiative, sub-topics have been prioritized and listed. The sub-topics are recommendations that the Academic Structure & Faculty Committee determined important. Each recommended sub-topic is deemed relevant and pertinent and

contains a description and supporting data/information of why the Academic Structure & Faculty Committee ranked it as a top priority.

Strategic Initiative 1: To Support and Enhance Faculty/Staff Welfare

From 1994 to 2014, Arkansas Tech has seen remarkable changes. We have seen program offerings more than double in size (60-128). We have seen degrees awarded nearly quadruple in size (640-2344). We have seen our student body increased by 255% (4705-12002), while during that same time period we saw faculty positions increase by just over double (181-364). This statistical discrepancy demonstrates that Tech's student population is outgrowing the faculty hired to instruct them by over 21%. In order to better serve this expanding population, Arkansas Tech needs develop a comprehensive plan to hire more faculty. In 2014, Arkansas Tech received approval from the state legislature for 35 new full-time faculty positions, 40 new adjunct (part-time) positions and 48 new graduate assistant positions. As our institutional focus is that of a teaching institution, it behooves us to make the faculty growth more equitably match that of the students. (Appendices A, B, and C).

Arkansas Tech should explore developing a five-year (5) plan that would:

- Pay ATU faculty at 100% or above of the College & University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA) median salaries.

- Raise the quality of life of staff through increased compensation, enhanced benefits packages, and greater access to ATU's resources.

- Fill all or most of the faculty and staff lines authorized by the Arkansas General Assembly.

o   Act 264 of the 2015 session, approved 247 new personnel positions (authorized for 321 faculty on Russellville campus and 74 on Ozark campus) with 1,670 total positions authorized.

Arkansas Tech has already taken a major stride toward addressing this area through salary increases that now leave most Russellville faculty paid at 95% and most Ozark faculty paid at 65% of their respective CUPA medians. The administration is also working diligently to address staff salaries, but much work remains. Also, Arkansas Tech provides a generous health and retirement benefits package. That said, these costs are rising and Arkansas Tech needs to remain vigilant. The cost of deductibles is continually rising. It is particularly commendable that Arkansas Tech empowers faculty, staff and their families to enhance their education at Arkansas Tech University through tuition waivers. ATU has even expanded this benefit to students with a new program that allows a parent to take one free course.

Attracting qualified adjunct faculty is always a challenge. Recruiting qualified adjunct faculty at $700 a credit hour is even more difficult. In discussions in open forums and within our working group, it has been related that many departments are unable to recruit, hire, and keep qualified faculty to teach as adjunct professors. We recommend that the per/credit rate of remuneration be raised to be competitive with our peer institutions. We also suggest that in order to better attract and keep qualified faculty in competitive professions, we have an adjunct pay scale that changes based on years of employment and departmental demand. Currently the "Committee for Adjunct Support" is drafting a plan to address these concerns. We also believe that at the beginning of each semester, adjunct faculty should be paid a paycheck for the month in which they start teaching. It is now current practice to wait until the end of the first full pay period to pay adjunct faculty. This in many cases results in adjunct faculty teaching for up to 6-7 weeks without remuneration.

As faculty/staff numbers increase, and health care/insurance costs increase, it is imperative that the university explore a plan to help mitigate these rising rates. One way to help reduce rates and increase overall faculty health and well-being is the implementation of a faculty/staff wellness plan. Activation of a plan with incentives for all stakeholders would require a significant growth in infrastructure as well as a commitment by the faculty. At the current time there is limited access to work out facilities and recreational facilities for faculty. In open forums faculty expressed interest in more access to:

- basketball courts

    -establishment of a noon, faculty basketball league

- racquetball courts

- tennis courts

Development of a new student/faculty/staff recreational center may be a way to help fill this need.

As Arkansas Tech's faculty continues to grow in size and mature in age, developing a plan to help faculty retire gracefully will not only be beneficial to the faculty, but also help to decrease the financial burden senior faculty may place on the institution. In meetings and open forums it has been suggested that Arkansas Tech explore adoption of a plan similar to that adopted by The University of Central Arkansas in 1999.

This "step down" or "phased retirement plan" allows faculty, once they have worked 10 years and are at least 55 years of age, to enter into an agreement with the University to establish a time frame to reduce their teaching load and gradually enter into retirement. This plan has set parameters for reduction of load, reductions of pay, and the timeframe over which this can be accomplished. A copy of the UCA plan is located at the back of this document (Appendix D) or

can be found at http://uca.edu/board/files/2010/11/528.pdf . An establishment of a committee to research and develop a plan tailored to Arkansas Tech's needs is recommended.

Arkansas Tech must explore and establish a definition for the role of faculty. This pertains to teaching, advising, research, etc. A percentage of needs to be established for each area that allows for those who desire to primarily teach as well as those who primarily want to conduct research. As a starting point for exploration, an existing plan is provided. (Appendix E)

Arkansas Tech University should explore the creation of a Center for Research and Grant Writing. A professional grant writer should be hired who can assist faculty in locating and applying for grants. As the University recognizes the importance of research, grant funding sources are crucial. In addition, appointing one faculty member from each department to be a liaison between the departments and the Center.

Arkansas Tech University must explore the creation of an Honor Code. This working group would like to echo the sentiments heard in both Strategic Planning Committee meetings and open forums that highlight the importance of establishing a campus-wide honor code. The working groups, University as a Public Institution and Student Success support this concept and this working group supports this initiative.

Strategic Initiative 2: To support Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

Arkansas Tech University is in a unique position to reach a larger population by actively pursuing diversity. Diversity encompasses students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Supporting equality, inclusion, and diversity provides an avenue to create new models of institutional change. Arkansas Tech must explore new methods to transform all campuses into an environment that supports and actively pursues diversity. This process should begin with a statement declaring institutional diversity that will represent the University.

Arkansas Tech's mission statement must be modified so that it supports and encompasses diversity among students, staff, and faculty. Arkansas Tech must embrace and explore possibilities to attract and serve those who qualify as being underserved. Arkansas Tech must create and sustain a healthy campus environment dedicated to this endeavor because diversity is much more than one's ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status.

Arkansas Tech must explore the creation of a Vice President for Institutional Diversity. This individual should hold the status of faculty as well and report to the President. This position will also serve on the Executive Council. The VP of Diversity will spear-head the Diversity and Inclusion office that will be tasked with supporting and embracing equity, inclusion, and diversity. We firmly believe that in establishing this position, Arkansas Tech will be making a statement that reflects the importance of these concepts. In addition, regular educational opportunities need to be made available campus-wide so that this is a dynamic process.

Including all areas of campus, Arkansas Tech must explore new and varied ways to attract a diverse student body as well as a diverse faculty. Arkansas Tech has made great strides in attracting and hiring a significant number of diverse staff. Issues that are pertinent to each group must be explored as well so that these populations immediately understand and realize that Arkansas Tech is committed to improving the quality of campus life. Avenues for exploration include:

- Intentional Admission and Recruitment for Students
    - Admission and recruitment information must be available in various languages other than English.
    - The University should explore the creation of scholarships for underserved populations.

- Website

  - The website should be in multiple languages and visually friendly.

- Campus Environment

  - To support equity, inclusion, and diversity for students, faculty, and staff, a review of the campus environment should be conducted to ascertain that all ethnic groups and those with other special needs immediately feel that sense of 'family' for which Arkansas Tech is well known.

- Recruitment/Hiring Practices

  - Hiring practices must be explored so that they support diversity.

  - Documentation (applications, forms, etc.) must be made available in a number of languages.

  - Advertisements for faculty and staff must be placed strategically in locations that are known to represent diverse populations. This must be a dynamic process.

  - The institution should be responsible for budgeting a reasonable amount to cover costs of advertising in intentional and strategic locations. (Appendices F and G).

Strategic Initiative 3: Transparency and Shared Governance

To support transparency and shared governance, the chair of the Faculty Senate (or a delegate) should attend every ATU Board of Trustees meeting to provide a report from the faculty in order to promote and enhance communication between the faculty and the Board.   The faculty member would attend as a non-voting member whose purpose is to provide a channel of communication between the board and the faculty.

Data suggests that several universities have faculty members on the board of trustees. The 2012 Cornell Higher Education Research Institute Survey of Faculty Trustees (Ehrenberg, Patterson, & Key, 2012) surveyed 242 colleges and universities with faculty members serving on the board of trustees either as voting or non-voting members and received 123 responses, 108 met the criteria of a tenured, or tenure track, faculty board of trustee member.   This study found 85% of the faculty trustees to be voting members.

As stated in the report of survey (Ehrenberg, Patterson, & Key 2012), faculty participation on the board engendered an improved relationship between the board and the faculty. Faculty participation on the board is not without controversy. A concern expressed by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges was one of conflict of interest. Yet the number of boards of trustees with faculty members is increasing based on an Association of Governing Boards study. This study found the following percentages of surveyed institutions with faculty members as voting or non-voting members. Assuming that very few if any institutions have both voting and non-voting faculty trustees, approximately 25% of all public and 29% of all private institutions have faculty members serving as either voting or non-voting members. The recommended faculty member participation on the ATU Board of Trustees would be as a non-voting member and therefore the potential for conflict of interest would be minimal. Supporting data can be found in the Appendix.

Strategic Initiative 4: The concept of One University

Arkansas Tech offers a unique variety of options for students with degrees available from three campuses, ranging from Certificates of Proficiency to a new doctoral level degree. Thus, it is imperative the three campuses demonstrate excellent communication and explore the concept of One University instead of three silo campuses. In an effort to improve relations between

campuses and to further the development of programs across all three campuses, the working group recommends some restructuring of the current academic structure.

The first recommendation is to explore the creation of a School of Nursing and Health Sciences within the College of Natural and Health Sciences that incorporates programs at all levels. By encompassing all three campuses, the possibility would exist for sharing of faculty resources between campuses. Furthermore, policy and procedure could be aligned between all three campuses, particularly in respect to nursing. Operation under the same policies and procedures would present a united front to students and prevent redundancies in some areas. Having a doctoral level administrator and the ability to share faculty resources may also assist with accreditation of some Ozark and ATCC health sciences programs and provide opportunities to develop a truly stackable nursing degree. Finally, placing all health programs together in this school could lead to synergistic opportunities for new programs and concentrations, including the possibility of a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. Creation of a DNP degree would allow Arkansas Tech to offer degrees across the continuum of nursing, starting at the certificate level and potentially stacking all the way to the doctoral level. This would be unique to Arkansas Tech and create a second doctoral program. Potential programs for consideration in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences would include:

- Russellville Campus:
    - B.S. Nursing
    - RN to BSN
    - M.S. Nursing
    - DNP Nursing
    - Health Information Management (B.S.)
    - Health Informatics (M.S.)

- o Rehabilitation Science (B.A.)

- o Therapeutic Recreation (B.S.)

- ● Ozark Campus:

  - o RN

  - o LPN

  - o Medical Assistant

  - o Health Information Technology

  - o Occupational Therapy Assistant

  - o Physical Therapy Assistant

  - o Paramedic/EMT

  - o Cardiovascular Technology

- ● Career Center

  - o Health Science Tech

  - o CNA

The second recommendation is to explore the creation of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Renewable Resources. Creating such a college would provide the opportunity for numerous interdisciplinary programs in areas like Rural Sociology, Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Agricultural and Biological Engineering, etc. Society is faced with the need to address huge issues related to sustainability, and feeding, clothing, and fueling a rapidly growing population. These issues have led to an industry starving for new talent. Given the location of Arkansas Tech, our history as an institution, the strength of the Arkansas, American, and global agriculture, and food and natural resources system, Arkansas Tech is uniquely positioned to address the pressing issues we face as a region, state and nation. Specifically, this new college would lend itself to working toward reducing our carbon footprint. Additionally, it would be a

natural link between many of the technical programs at our Ozark Campus and perhaps lead to the formation of new, 2 year technical programs. Finally, ample opportunities for research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels would exist leading to countless avenues to partner with industries in the river valley and the state at large making us the central hub for innovation in Arkansas. Potential programs for consideration in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Renewable Resources would include:

- Agriculture
    - o Business
    - o Education
    - o Animal Science
    - o Horticulture
    - o Feed Mill Management
    - o Public Relations
- Hospitality Administration
- Parks and Recreation
- Forestry (new offerings)
    - o Hydrology
    - o Urban Forestry
    - o Natural Resource Management
- Food Processing and Safety (new offerings)
- Landscape Design and Turf Grass Management (new offerings)
- Agricultural Systems Technology (new offerings)
    - o Precision Agriculture
    - o GPS/GIS

- ○ UAV's

● Viticulture and Enology (Ozark Campus)

● Culinary Arts (ATCC)

The third recommendation involves improved advising for Ozark students wishing to obtain a bachelor's degree after graduation. Degrees on the Ozark campus are terminal degrees, thus a true 2+2 option is not available for all degrees tracks. Additionally, students, for various reasons, may need the option of "jumping off" points. These students need the ability to obtain a 2-year degree, work for a while, and come back onto the education continuum to pursue a bachelor's degree. Some students have experienced difficulty in "jumping back on" on the Russellville campus as not all of their previous coursework is applicable to the bachelor's degree they wish to attempt. One way to alleviate issues regarding somewhat duplicate coursework or significant loss of hours is to guide students attending Ozark toward courses that will be required for the bachelor's degree where appropriate. For example, students in the LPN program are required to take Human Anatomical Structure I and II. For those that intend to complete the LPN-RN program and the RN-BSN program, advisors should encourage them to take Human Anatomy & Physiology I and II instead. The higher level courses will be accepted by the LPN program and will reduce the number of pre-requisite courses required prior to entering the LPN-RN program.

The working group's fourth recommendation explores the creations of committees that encompass multiple Tech campuses. Decisions regarding curriculum on the Russellville campus potentially affect Ozark programs, specifically those programs that correlate (i.e., nursing, law enforcement, computer sciences, etc.). There are also areas of the faculty handbook that overlap on both campuses. When the Russellville handbook is updated, the Ozark handbook must be as well to reflect those changes. Information disseminated in Dean's Council is often relevant for the Ozark campus; however, this information is not always communicated to the Chief Academic

Officer effectively. Thus, it would be beneficial to have representation from the Ozark campus on the Russellville campus Curriculum Committee (note that a representative from Ozark does currently serve of the General Education Curriculum Committee) and the Russellville Faculty Senate in some capacity. Additionally, the Chief Academic Officer should represent the Ozark campus on the Dean's Council.

Continuing work toward stackable degrees encompasses the fifth recommendation. Again, degrees from the Ozark campus are terminal degrees, thus a true 2+2 option is not available for all degrees tracks. Furthermore, the Ozark campus does not offer enough general education hours to encompass all general education requirements for a bachelor's degree. Currently, some Russellville programs are unable to accept courses from Ozark programs due to the credentialing of the faculty member teaching the course on the Ozark campus. Additionally, the technical status of Ozark courses may prevent some of the hours earned at Ozark from applying toward Russellville degrees. The Bachelors of Professional Studies and Bachelors of Applied Sciences may assist with the ability of Ozark campus students in technical areas to obtain a stackable degree and should continue to be explored. In congruence with stackable degrees, the potential exists to offer minors at the Ozark campus, and thus the opportunity to create minors should be explored as well.

Finally, the working group recommends the exploration of a transportation feasibility study for a bussing system between the Russellville and Ozark campuses. Such a system could facilitate the transportation of students living along I-40, as well as mail delivery and more timely completion of Ozark paperwork.

Strategic Initiative 5: Increase grant opportunities for all faculty and staff to pursue professional development related to teaching and scholarship

After gathering data and information from all stakeholders during this strategic planning process, several themes emerged related to this initiative. Among faculty, in particular there is a growing sense of unease as to the expectations of faculty when it comes to a transition from a teaching institution, which has been the historic mission of this university, to a more research-oriented mission. The general concern of faculty in making this transition centers around three primary areas; money, time, and space.

1. *Money*: Research requires funds. At the present time, the university does not provide adequate funding across the board in all academic areas. In some disciplines, high-end research involving animals and highly technical equipment are very expensive and seems to be out of reach in the present budget. While grants could provide some of the funds required, some disciplines have limited opportunities for grants.

2. *Time*: In Research I institutions, part of faculty load is assigned to research, particularly at the graduate level. As much as a quarter of the load is assigned to research, with the remainder assigned to teaching in a 3-3 configuration. If ATU wishes to expand both graduate and undergraduate research, this time factor has to be included in the planning. At the present time, most of our colleges have a faculty shortage and as a result, faculty are teaching full loads and in many cases overloads, just to meet their program course needs. To increase the research emphasis, more faculty will have to be hired to alleviate this time constraint.

3. *Space*: It has been a consistent message from faculty during the open fora that classroom and laboratory space on campus is at a premium. Therefore, to expand research commitments will require a plan for providing adequate space for these endeavors.

Suggestions to Meet this Initiative:

1. Review and restructure Professional Development Grants – At the present time, professional development grants are underfunded and do not provide faculty with enough opportunities to improve their teaching and scholarship. The structure of the grants are multi-tiered at the college and university levels and appear to lack coordination and communication. For instance, faculty can apply to their college for PD funds but are often denied funding and advised to apply for a university grant. In either case, the funds are minimal and only cover a partial cost of traveling to conferences, etc. With this is mind, the following suggestions for improving the PD opportunities for faculty and staff should be implemented.

   a. Eligibility for faculty and staff: At the present time, only tenure-track or tenured faculty are eligible for Professional Development Grants. In addition, the funds are limited to research activities that lead to publications and conference presentations. It is suggested that adjunct faculty and non-tenure track faculty be permitted to apply for funds that would benefit the teaching and scholarship mission of the university. In addition, staff should have access to PD funds that would benefit and improve their expertise and job performance.

   b. Increase the amount possible for grants: At the present time, PD grants are limited and in most cases will not cover the cost of attending workshops and conferences that might increase the effectiveness of faculty and staff. With the high cost of conference fees and travel expenses, these funds should be increased. If the university if going to require more research and scholarship from faculty, conference presentations and publications are the product of that emphasis. Faculty should not have to personally pay for expenses that are

required as part of their duties, particularly when the university has not reached 100% in terms of salary compared to the CUPA median.

c. One issue that has emerged from faculty feedback during this process is that a rather large number of full time faculty do not have a terminal degree in their field. In terms of recognition and accreditation standards, it would benefit the university to have faculty with terminal degrees. However, it is very difficult for faculty to complete a terminal degree while teaching full or overloads. It is also very expensive and many do not have the financial flexibility to complete that degree. In this regard, it is recommended that the Professional Development Grant be offered to faculty to assist in the completion of a terminal degree.

References

Ehrenberg, R. G., Patterson, R. W., & Key, A. V. Faculty members on boards of trustees. *Academe*, vol. 99, no. 3, Jun. 2013.

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