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**Academic Positioning**  
Positioning Academic Affairs for the Future  
University of Northern Iowa

**PHASED CAPACITY BUILDING**

**WHY**

By investing in student success through relevant and continuously innovative programs, we enrich lives, empower individuals, and improve our community, state, and nation.

Academic Positioning:

- Is a deliberative process, where all constituents thoughtfully engage in setting the foundation for the future
- Will surface new and innovative programs and curriculum
- Will determine the best alignments within academic affairs, including restructuring colleges, departments, offices, and other areas
- Will establish new processes for ongoing and efficient efforts to maintain a modern and responsive curriculum.
- Is a primary mechanism by which faculty can directly engage with enrollment and recruitment efforts
- Will focus on capacity building and the development of creative capital to reenvision our academic position in the state and region.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES** for moving forward with Academic Positioning

- We will retain all current, permanent faculty
  - Why: Although Academic Positioning will utilize efficiency and vitality, it is not a right-sizing exercise. It will focus on capacity building and the development of creative capital to reenvision our academic position for the future. Our faculty are the key to future success.
- We will uphold the tenets of shared governance
  - Why: Bold and comprehensive innovation can only be successful with trust and a full and shared commitments to the goals. Faculty Senate will be regularly consulted along the way; Faculty Senate retains their authority to approve curricular changes and consult on any changes that involve academic initiatives impacting more than one college.
- We will preserve holistic education as the foundation crucial to the success of students
  - Why: Recognizing the importance of diverse educational offerings for the vitality of the university, we will maintain an array of liberal arts, science, technology, pre-professional, and professional programs along with a holistic general education.
- We will maintain between 3 and 5 academic Colleges
  - Why: As a university, we will continue the multi-college structure. Reducing to fewer than three colleges would be difficult and potentially counter-productive. Increasing to more than five colleges would add significantly to the administrative costs of our current structure.

## THE FRAMEWORK: THREE PHASES OF CAPACITY BUILDING

### **Phase 1 Goal: New Programs, New Structures, New Ideas**

To build capacity by (a) proposing the development of new programs and modernize existing programs, (b) proposing new structures or reorganizing current structures resulting in cluster(s) of similar programs aligning into a new or merged departments or Schools, and (c) forwarding new innovative ideas for capacity-building that will position UNI to grow in the future and provide graduates with the best opportunities for success. New or modernized programs will be designed for intersectional knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for emerging careers. Structural innovations include new types of degrees, novel faculty appointments, and new teaching structures to support transdisciplinary programs. This goal recognizes and responds to the dynamic landscape of higher education including changing student and workforce demands, and a need to continuously modernize academic offerings.

#### Potential Strategies for Goal 1

1. Spotlight specific fields to study in higher demand around which new interdisciplinary units should be created.
2. Develop a collaborative process by which meaningful curricular and structural innovation can surface, be developed, and thrive. This will be the structure by which proposals surface, ideas are nurtured, and decisions are made.
3. Develop measures and processes to evaluate the potential impact of new and modified programs, structures, and ideas.
4. Engage in the established Faculty Senate Curricular processes to (a) develop innovative curriculum through interdisciplinary programs, repackaging majors/minors, and the creation of new program types including clusters and certificates, and (b) sunset obsolete programs where appropriate to provide capacity for growth.
5. Ensure a process to move proposals through their proper consultative and/or approval channels, such as UCC, GCCC, Senate, faculty leadership, and Administration.

### **Phase 2 Goal: Operational Capacity Building**

To build capacity and creative capital by reorganizing our academic units and faculty in the most synergetic ways to support Goal 1 and facilitate high quality learning opportunities. This goal seeks to find the best alignment for new and existing programs and departments to foster and maximize the potential for curricular, pedagogic, and scholarly innovation. During this phase, departmental and college realignment will be operationalized based on the program and structure proposals that emerged in phase 1.

#### Potential Strategies for Goal 2

1. Review the current organization of our colleges, departments, and programs, and based on proposals from Phase 1 to realize and create new and innovative opportunities for improved alignment, collaboration, and advancement
2. Develop an implementation strategy for realignment proposals including timelines, marketing strategies, and facilities.

### **Phase 3 Goal: institutionalize the process to ensure continuous innovation into the future**

**Goal:** Institutionalize the processes developed during Phases 1 & 2 to establish innovation and capacity building as an ongoing process embedded in the culture of campus. This goal will help sustain capacity by creating conditions and structures through which academic excellence and innovation can adapt and thrive into the future.

#### Potential Strategies for Goal 3

1. Modify the curriculum process to be more flexible and responsive
2. Adapt the processes established in Phase 1 to allow for ongoing capacity building rather than thinking of innovation as an occasional event
3. Develop practices for ongoing evaluation of program strengths, contextualized in the changing higher education landscape, and mechanisms to aid departments in sun-setting old programs and starting new ones.

## **PROPOSED WORKING STRUCTURE FOR ACADEMIC POSITIONING**

The process will be focused on collaboration, shared responsibility, and transparency. The following proposed committee structure reflects the ideas surfaced in the leadership retreats with administrative leaders, faculty leaders, department heads, and key constituents outside Academic Affairs.

To fully realize the innovative possibility, conversations will need to happen among different campus units. During Phase 1, the different campus units that may benefit from a particular curricular and structural innovation will be invited to the conversation. It will be the choice of the unit to participate in the working group, knowing that the unit may still be impacted in the Phase 2, operational capacity building, regardless of their earlier participation.

All proposals will move forward to the Project Management Team which will help build synergy and support the proposal development. The Project Management Team will also work with Executive Management, Deans' Council, and the Executive Advisory Committee to determine viability and needed resources for the capacity-building.

### ***Focused-Topic Working Groups (Task Groups)***

Working groups comprised of relatively small teams (3-10) of interested individuals focused on developing proposals on targeted topics. The topics might be new curriculum, majors, academic structures, scholarship initiatives, non-academic office, or university processes. A member of the Project Management Team could co-chair or be an ex officio member of each Working Group to help ensure timely progress and be a liaison to the PMT. Alternatively, regular debriefing meetings could be used to ensure consistent communication between Working Groups and the PMT.

Topics for the Working Groups would surface in a combination of two ways

1. Topics may be brought forward by any groups within Academic Affairs such as individuals or groups of faculty, departments, Senate, Graduate Council, Deans' Council, or supporting offices. These ideas will first come to the Project Management Team as a short "pre-

- proposal". If viable, the PMT will then assist in developing the full Working Group. If an idea is similar to another existing project, the PMT will help bring the groups together.
2. Topics may be identified by the Project Management Team, Executive Management, the Executive Advisory Committee, or any other entity. If viable, the PMT would then work with appropriate groups to staff a Working Group to pursue the topic and develop a proposal.

### ***Project Management Team***

The Project Management Team (PMT) will be a mid-sized group (12-15 members) that coordinates the overall project and the Focused Working Groups. PMT will help staff Working Groups when needed, support Working Groups with data, watch for duplicative efforts, review pre-proposals and receive final proposals. The Project Management Team should be composed of individuals with diversified experiences and talents who are broadly representative of Academic Affairs interests and not focused on current structures. Members would apply and be selected by the Provost.

### ***Executive Advisory Committee***

Representation from groups such as Board of Regents, UMPR, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, community, administration, faculty, and staff. Consults on both potential Working topics and refined proposals, in consideration for advancement to the Executive Management. Serves as primary communication team for external audiences. Members will be selected by Executive Management in consultation with relevant campus groups.

### ***Deans' Council***

All major proposals will be vetted through Deans' Council for viability and resource availability. Deans may further consult with their leadership teams and any other members of the college necessary to make final recommendations to the Executive Management.

### ***Faculty Senate***

Faculty Senate is the official designated body that oversees curriculum. Any changes to curriculum will go through the established curricular process for approval. Senate will also be consulted regularly on Academic Positioning progress.

### ***Executive Management***

President and Executive Vice President and Provost receive all finished proposals. They are responsible for making the final decision on which proposals to recommend to the Board of Regents.

## Graphical Representation of Proposed Committee Structure

