Academic Positioning Revised
Enhancing Academic Affairs for the Future
May 19, 2020

The current realities of higher education, economic conditions, and the circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic have radically and rapidly shifted the work we need to do around Academic Positioning (AP). We recognize, now, that the slow and deliberative approach to AP is no longer viable. The current socio-political, economic, and educational realities and pressures within the state of Iowa and the nation necessitate that we reconfigure and accelerate the approach set forth in Academic Positioning. The accelerated approach of Academic Positioning will begin May 2020 and conclude November 2020.

Additionally, the Board of Regents has convened an Advisory Committee with the goal of increasing collaboration across the Regents’ institutions to realize greater efficiency. The Advisory Committee will develop recommendations related to academic programs and structure (among other things) for the full board to consider in early November.

Accelerating our AP process will allow us to respond proactively to the pressures that COVID-19 has created as well as to align our work with that of the BOR Advisory Committee. Through this process, we can advance our collective efforts and utilize the creative resources that we worked hard to design together. We will utilize the feedback we have already received along with new ideas that campus will offer to quickly reimagine the university, making certain we are forward thinking and collaborative in the reshaping process.

VISION
To embrace our responsibility to future generations of students, faculty, and staff by strategically enhancing academic affairs to position UNI, our graduates, and employees to thrive into the future.

GOAL
In this post-COVID world, where higher education and society will continue to change rapidly, AP will provide a process that ensures that decisions about curriculum, programs, and structures at UNI do not occur in isolation and will follow all policies and shared governance principles. The collaborative and inclusive process for AP will determine best alignments for academic affairs as well as assist in the elevation of a more current and responsive curriculum. It will allow the campus community to make necessary decisions in the present with an eye toward future strength and growth based on UNIs core identity.

PROCESS
The campus community has already submitted approximately 30 pre-proposals, which would have originally been worked into full proposals by focused working groups. Given the rapid nature of the work we need to do at this time during summer 2020, the pre-proposals will be
taken as generative ideas that the PMT will consider. In addition, we will request from the campus community further ideas that can be used in the AP process.

The project management team (PMT) from Academic Positioning will resume their work over the summer of 2020. From the pre-proposals and any newly submitted ideas, the PMT will develop multiple scenarios for new alignment, collaboration, and advancement of our programs, departments, and colleges. The work of PMT will be to reshape UNI founded on our vision and mission, the seed ideas presented in the pre-proposals, any new ideas that are generated through the outreach process, and current data and information about employment and societal needs in the Cedar Valley and the state of Iowa.

During the fall 2020 semester, the multiple scenarios that the PMT crafts over the summer will be offered to the campus community for feedback and input, before making final recommendations to the Executive Management Team (President and Provost). Along the way, the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) will also be engaged in order to build support for changes.

All changes to academic programs or structures will go through the appropriate Faculty Senate committees (College Senates, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, etc.) and through Faculty Senate as appropriate. Faculty Senate Leaders have been consulted on this accelerated AP process to provide their feedback.

ACADEMIC POSITIONING REIMAGINED

The reimagined work of Academic Positioning will be grounded in two realities: first, the critical realities of enrollment and budget that higher education and UNI in particular are facing and, second, the skill and experience needs of our graduates and their employers given both underlying and new market trends, especially in Iowa. Throughout the process, PMT will consider structural changes that institutionalize flexibility and adaptability, recognizing the constantly changing nature of curricular and structural needs.

The role of the Project Management Team will be elevated in this accelerated process. They will serve in the following capacities:

- PMT will address the bigger existing pre-proposals (e.g., teacher preparation, health, environmental science, graphic design) and create curricular and structural proposals that optimize for both budgetary and future enrollment concerns.
- PMT will engage all other proposals and newly offered ideas and consider how they might fit within the curricular and structural proposals of the reimagined university.
- PMT will be a future-oriented advisory think-tank, considering implications of major changes across campus.
- PMT will facilitate conversations at the start of the fall 2020 semester to gather feedback from campus on the multiple scenarios they craft.
• PMT will provide (a) final scenario(s) to the Executive Committee (President and Provost) for final decision-making.

The entire accelerated process will conclude by November, 2020, at the same time that the Board of Regents’ Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the full Board of Regents. These two processes will work in concert to build capacity, collaboration, effectiveness, and efficiency at UNI.