

September 30, 2023

Pascale Manning, Ph.D.
President, Faculty Senate
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Via email: manningp@uwosh.edu

Dear Faculty Senate President Manning,

Thank you for your valuable input and opportunity to respond to the Faculty Senate's "Expectations for Collaboration" memorandum of September 20, 2023. We look forward to continued collaboration through this difficult time.

Your expectations and statements provide important Faculty Senate guidance to help the institution craft as mission-centric and humane a workforce reduction plan as possible while maintaining our focus on education as the primary mission of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

We welcome this constructive input in a spirit of shared governance. The following is our response to your memorandum.

1. The Chancellor will prioritize cuts to administrative positions and salaries over instructional/student support positions and salaries. The primary mission of the university is education. The size of the Administration has increased significantly in the last ten years at the same time that teaching positions have declined. There is also more salary savings to be accrued from administrative positions, in that they are paid much more than instructional staff and University staff. In many cases, the savings from the salary of a single administrator could save the jobs of two or three instructors and student support personnel.

As we have developed and planned to implement the Institutional Realignment Plan (IRP) for UWO, we have consistently emphasized the need to protect the core teaching and learning missions of the university as much as possible, beginning with our commitment to protect faculty from layoffs. We agree that we cannot realize the level of salary savings needed to eliminate our structural deficit without eliminating senior level staff and administrative positions.

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Over the next two weeks, we will share the summary layoff plan with shared governance leadership and, subsequently, with the wider university community. The summary will include a breakdown of the number of positions being eliminated by classification (academic staff, university staff, limited appointees) and by division (academic affairs, student affairs, finance and administration, and university affairs). As the Chancellor shared in his September 29 update, the summary will provide organizational and financial detail while honoring our obligation to shield individual colleagues' identities.

2. The Chancellor and Provost will recognize that Instructional Academic Staff are indispensably necessary to realize a research-enhanced University. Long and valuable IAS service should be recognized, and every effort made to renew the contracts of those who have made a career out of teaching here. The Chancellor will commit to the best practices outlined in the Provost's IAS Contract Task Force, including timely issuance of annual or two-year contracts. Teaching Assistant Professor status will be offered to the majority of long-term IAS.

We recognize the value that IAS contribute to our university. We support awarding Teaching Assistant Professor status to IAS appropriately, guided by existing practices and procedures at the department and college level. Over the years, we have recognized the value of IAS in multiple ways. For example, we included IAS in pay plan adjustments and voluntary retirement programs even when it was not required by policy or statute.

Decisions about IAS contract renewals are being managed at the department and college level as part of our effort to reduce instructional costs while meeting current demand for courses in specific areas. As the IRP FAQ states: "Most IAS are on fixed-term terminal contracts, which have no expectation of continued employment when the contract expires. It is possible that some IAS will not get a rehire contract or may go through non-renewal as a means to right size our instructional workforce. These decisions are being managed within each college and with oversight from the deans."

In some cases, this may result in the departure of IAS who have taught at the university for a number of years, and we recognize how difficult this will be for those individuals and their longtime colleagues. As the Provost stated in his message to the university on August 23: "It pains us all to consider the departure of dedicated and dear instructional colleagues, many of whom have been with us for years and, in some cases, decades. It is an indication of the seriousness of our financial situation that we are faced with this prospect, and it is a necessary part of our solution."

3. The Chancellor will commit to more meaningful and more widely-recognized shared governance norms. This includes, but is not limited to the Faculty Senate, the Senate of Academic Staff, the University Staff Senate and Oshkosh Student Association each having a representative position in the Chancellor's Cabinet. The President of the Faculty Senate will be invited to present the faculty's view of the state of the institution at Convocation. No

faculty or staff should now or ever face or fear retaliation for taking a position on what UWO should look like and be committed to.

The Chancellor remains strongly committed to shared governance and led off his Convocation remarks with a reaffirmation of that commitment. This summer, we shifted the regular meeting of shared governance leadership to a weekly basis to ensure regular updates on our financial situation and IRP to that group. We believe that these regular updates are the best, most appropriate way to maintain the commitment to shared governance and recognize the independence of Faculty Senate. Including shared governance in the Chancellor's Cabinet would blur these lines and erode the healthy tension necessary for proper checks and balances. Lastly, the Chancellor encourages faculty senate leadership to share their vision of the university with the UWO community but believes that should be communicated separately from the fall Convocation ceremonies.

4. Increasing teaching loads should be recognized by the Chancellor and Provost as a harm to academic quality, and contrary to UW Oshkosh policy. The Faculty Workload Policy, signed by the Chancellor in 2022, requires that "each academic unit . . . shall have policies and procedures in place to reassign up to six (6) of the standard 24 SCH load each academic year to support such scholarly activities." Increased teaching loads should be used as a temporary expedient only, not as a new norm, and only in departments where doing so will save money. Creative scheduling, compensation, and workload practices (such as banking classes, schedule adjustments, and overload payments) can be employed to balance workloads. No faculty member should be required to teach in an area outside of their expertise.

We agree that increased teaching loads should be used as a temporary measure to address our financial situation. The Provost described the increase in teaching load for most faculty in precisely this manner in his Convocation address as well as in his open forum and workshops. In his message to the university on August 23, he stated:

"In most cases, this means that most faculty should anticipate at least a 21-credit load this academic year and should plan for a 24-credit load for 2024-25. It is my expectation that we will have our academic structure and workload fully reset and realigned no later than the end of the spring 2025 semester, at which point we would be positioned to revisit and begin a wider reinstating of course releases for research active faculty befitting the research enhanced university we are and will continue to be."

In that same message, the Provost wrote that "Deans will be working with their leadership teams to develop and implement appropriate workload assignments in areas where we do not have sufficient demand to offer additional sections. Other exceptions to a minimum 21-credit hour load for AY23-24 and a 24-credit hour load for AY24-25 will require approval by chairs, deans, and myself."

We continue to believe that this approach provides the most consistent, equitable way to implement course increases in targeted areas while also reducing instructional costs as part of the effort to eliminate our structural deficit. We remain committed to the reinstatement of course releases for research active faculty no later than the fall 2025 semester, with a renewed commitment to consistent, transparent, and equitable approaches to such releases.

5. Clarity will be provided by the Chancellor and Provost about workload and working conditions for faculty who remain, to build trust and to inform people about their careers. Will 6 credits of reassigned time for scholarly and creative activity be the norm or be the exception for faculty after 2024-25? Work with the faculty to clearly define what it means to be a “research-enhanced university” and the implications for workload and research release that this entails.

In addition to the answer to number 4, above, the Provost has made a point of addressing this directly as part of the recent Academic Planning Workshops. Based on the outputs of those workshops, the Academic Planning Working Group, which will include at least 28 faculty from across the university, will define “research- enhanced” and how to implement it at UWO.

6. A viable part-time option should be available for faculty who wish to go to lower than full-time status to continue voluntary reductions of payroll.

We strongly support this approach and are working with Human Resources to clarify what options are already in place to accommodate this. While HR has been understandably busy with the IRP process, we will communicate back to Faculty Senate what is currently in place to support this and are open to exploring additional options based on those results.

7. Probationary and furloughed faculty will have the opportunity to request adjustments to tenure and renewal review periods. Increased workloads will limit opportunities to meet existing expectations for scholarship and creative activity.

The Provost and Deans have committed to preserving course releases for probationary faculty in their first-four years. This means that probationary faculty hired in Fall 2021 and beyond will not be affected by the change to faculty workloads for AYs 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Most probationary faculty hired in AY 2018-2019 will see an increase in workload in the final semester of their probationary period, but tenure and promotion papers are due prior to the start of the Spring 2024 semester.

The Chancellor and the Provost support adjusting the tenure and renewal review periods for probationary faculty at the faculty member’s request. Any probationary faculty member requesting that the tenure clock be stopped will have to undergo an additional pre-tenure review and renewal to ensure that the required notice periods are met – see FAC 4.B.3(c).

Faculty who wish to stop their tenure clock may follow FAC 3.2.B. Stopping or Suspending the Tenure Clock.

8. The Administration will pledge to provide full and clear budgetary information to faculty and staff leaders from now on, so that warnings can be sounded and steps taken well before we face another fiscal disaster.

The Chancellor and Provost strongly support this request and agree to continue providing regular updates on the budget to shared governance leadership. We look forward to continued partnership with you so that we all can contribute to a sustainable future for UWO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Martini". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Edwin Martini, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Leavitt". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "A" and a distinct "L".

Andrew J. Leavitt, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh