

Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA)
Minutes of Meeting
October 8, 2014

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation met at 9:00 am on October 8, 2014 in Room 362 of the Kolligian Library, Chair Anne Kelley presiding.

The entirety of the meeting was allotted to a question and answer period with Provost/EVC Peterson and members of Division Council. Prior to this meeting, CAPRA submitted a memo to the Provost/EVC with a list of questions that included a request for clarification on the deliverables for the campus strategic academic focusing initiative and the expectations for the role of CAPRA and other Senate committees.

In response to CAPRA's inquiry about the deliverable for strategic academic focusing, Provost/EVC Peterson first provided a summary of the process. In the last academic year, he sought feedback from faculty on the strategic academic focusing process and worked with a specially-convened strategic academic focusing committee to review the proposal submissions. The committee attempted to look for possible collaborations across disciplines and schools. This summer, Provost/EVC Peterson reviewed the proposals a second time and identified external reviewers.

As the Provost/EVC mentioned in the all-faculty forum on September 24, he identified five, broad, thematic research areas which are intended to form UCM's future identify. However, these areas are still fluid and the Provost/EVC is open to receiving faculty's suggestions on more narrowly defining the areas. He plans to hold facilitated conversations with faculty to accomplish this. However, the Provost/EVC pointed out that in the interest of time, he will not drastically change the thematic areas as they are interdisciplinary and intended to encompass all the research currently done on campus. The slide presentation he conducted at the forum will be widely disseminated once it is formatted.

The Provost/EVC reiterated that while the strategic academic focusing process is concentrated on the five thematic areas, investments will still be made in the foundational, traditional research areas.

In response to an inquiry about the FTE allocation process next year, the Provost/EVC stated that there will be a “portfolio” of faculty hires that will include FTE lines for both the broad, thematic areas and the foundational, traditional areas. The Provost/EVC stated that he is open to input from CAPRA, especially with regard to making recommendations on prioritization of FTE lines. After the broad, thematic areas are better defined, the Provost/EVC will then formulate a template with a percentage to guide how many FTE lines to allocate to broad, thematic areas and the foundational areas. He will then consult with CAPRA for advice on recommendations. While this template is intended to serve as a guidepost for the next few years, the Provost/EVC emphasized that he wants the process to evolve as needed with input from the faculty. The goal is to move away from the year-by-year process of FTE allocations.

In response to a comment about the broad, thematic areas spanning several bylaw 55 units and more than one school, the Provost/EVC acknowledged that the thematic areas must still be refined but the goal is to keep them interdisciplinary and fluid. Faculty can join new thematic areas; no research area will be cast out and left unfunded.

A CAPRA member inquired when and by whom the broad thematic hires will be narrowed down, and, how bylaw 55 units should request FTE lines after this strategic academic focusing process is complete. Provost/EVC Peterson responded by pointing out that facilitated conversations with the faculty are intended to narrow down the thematic areas. He requests input from the faculty and CAPRA on the FTE request process but stated that faculty need to be willing to help him prioritize which areas will receive FTE lines. He is open to Senate input but the Senate must be prepared to help with making these hard decisions by providing concrete recommendations on FTE prioritization. This level of prioritization was lacking in previous years’ FTE allocation processes. The Provost/EVC emphasized, though, that this specific level of planning can come later; right now, the emphasis is on receiving faculty input on narrowing down the broad, thematic research areas.

When asked about space planning, the Provost/EVC stated that he did some initial data analysis over the summer while re-reviewing the proposals. While comparing the first and second round of proposals, he was encouraged to learn that the faculty’s space and equipment requests remained largely the same. However, there is fluidity surrounding the equipment requests.

A Division Council member inquired about space planning for the foundational, traditional areas. The Provost/EVC reiterated his plan to construct a template that will guide him on the allocating of FTE lines to thematic and foundational areas which will in turn drive the space needs. The Provost/EVC predicted that most of the FTE requests he will receive will be for foundational hires; while it is understandable that faculty want FTE lines to be allocated to their traditional research areas, he also has to allocate FTE lines to the broad, thematic hires as that is the underlying goal of this strategic academic focusing process. There will be a balance of FTE lines between the broad, thematic areas and foundational, traditional research areas but the percentage can change every year depending on need. When asked by a Division Council member how schools can plan five years in advance when FTE allocation percentages will change each year, the Provost/EVC responded that the overall plan will be flexible.

Questions were raised that the strategic academic focusing committee does not include CAPRA members and how the two committees' functions will proceed in the future. As the campus moves towards an identity in the broad, thematic research areas, CAPRA would like to determine how it can assist the Provost/EVC. The Provost/EVC responded that he is open to faculty engagement. One suggestion is for CAPRA to conduct ad hoc reviews.

In response to a question about timeline (an FTE allocation process needs to be initiated this year if we are going to resume hiring faculty for next academic year), the Provost/EVC pointed out that his immediate goal was to narrow down the broad, thematic areas with as much faculty input as he could garner. If we want SAF to work, we have to start investing in those areas so the campus can have a research identity.

When asked about faculty hires that span schools and how lines will be allocated, the Provost/EVC suggested the use of multi-disciplinary search committees and competition.

The Provost/EVC mentioned the reason for his spending time on narrowing down the broad, thematic areas is that the second round produced more proposals than he anticipated. A few of these proposals were heavily focused on building bylaw 55 units. This is why the Provost/EVC is open to assistance from CAPRA on sharpening the focus of the broad, thematic research areas. After the thematic areas are better defined, he can

focus on drafting the template with percentages of FTE allocations to thematic areas and foundational areas.

In response to a question about external reviewers, the Provost/EVC stated that while it is our campus's responsibility to prioritize, he wants the external reviewers to compare what is being done on other campuses, provide input on how we measure up to other institutions, and suggest how we can build on our existing strengths.

A CAPRA member pointed out that this could potentially be a three-step process: 1) external review of proposals, 2) Senate-level review, and 3) allocation.

The Provost/EVC pointed out the realities the campus faces, namely the lack of adequate graduate student support, a high dependence on lecturers, and the small number of enrolled PhD students. He stated that UC Merced is a comprehensive research university and as such, we must show broad participation in the education of undergraduate students, graduate students, and post docs. Faculty must convey in their proposals that they are involved in and committed to the teaching mission of the university.

When asked about space planning, the Provost/EVC responded that the various components of the campus have to grow in sync as much as possible, in particular, our undergraduate and graduate enrollment. We have a new MOU with UCOP which we are committed to maintaining. The campus has been overenrolled according to original enrollment plans. We had a lull this year but we should be on track with enrollment the year after next. The Provost/EVC indicated that there are still many unknowns about space including the types of space we need and when or if we will acquire more space after the next building, CAOB 2, is finished.

The Provost/EVC stated that he is gravely concerned about graduate student space and recognizes that this requires immediate attention. He intends to ask the real estate team to consult with graduate students and their faculty advisors on space needs. He is also working with the school deans to ascertain how much office and lab space they have in their buildings. When reminded that there is a significant amount of space in certain buildings that is not being used efficiently, the Provost/EVC invited feedback from all faculty on ways to maximize current space.

In response to a question about the status of the public/private partnership, the Provost/EVC stated that that he remains optimistic. Forty companies all over the world responded with interest. This is an experiment, but if it succeeds, it could serve as a model for other campuses. Another factor in our campus's success is funding support in the form of a state bond.

The Provost/EVC reiterated his prior statements that he is open to receiving feedback from all faculty and welcomes assistance from CAPRA and the Senate on narrowing the focus of the broad, thematic research areas and on prioritization of FTE allocation.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

Attest:

Anne Kelley, Chair

Minutes prepared by:

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