

# Senate Resolution 08/09-09A: Realignment Process

**Whereas** -- UAH does not have a detailed policy regarding the combination, division, or termination [hereafter "realignment"] of academic units ["units" referring to, for example, departments, colleges and centers];

**Whereas** -- the realignment of academic units must consider the educational benefits rather than mere cost-saving;

**Whereas** -- the faculty have the disciplinary expertise within their own fields and have extensive knowledge of our students' needs;

**Whereas** -- the realignment of academic units has long-term effects and cannot be undertaken for immediate financial reasons;

**Whereas** -- the UAH Faculty Handbook already provides for a flexible response to immediate needs without a realignment of academic units:

"In an effort to encourage interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, research, and public service, UAH has interdisciplinary groupings of scholars that are more flexible and transitory than academic departments. These groupings bring together faculty from two or more departments and experts from outside the university to address new ideas. They may then disband without altering departmental structures or, if needed on a long-term basis, become a permanent part of the university's structure" [FH 4.2]. (At UAH, these programs are often called "cognates."); and

**Whereas** -- UAH already emphasizes the importance of faculty involvement in determining academic realignment:

"Major functions of the dean include providing leadership to department and program chairs, faculty, and staff in the development, operation, and improvement of academic and research programs; developing and

recommending to the provost of budgets for departments, programs, and academic support areas .... " [FH 4.3];

"The performance and relevance of a department normally are reviewed at least every five years or in conjunction with a department's professional accreditation review cycle. Findings and recommendations of review committees are submitted to the provost. After consultation and agreement with the president, the provost may recommend that a department be continued, or a proposal to dissolve or reorganize the department may be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for review and approval" [FH 4.4];

"The chair is expected to provide academic leadership for the department. ... The chair has administrative responsibility for insuring the quality and effectiveness of the department's instructional, research, and service programs. Department chairs have the responsibility to provide leadership in formulating and in implementing departmental goals and long-range plans; to represent the department internally within administrative and governance structures of the university. . . ." [FH 4.5];

"Faculty review of administrative performance and program effectiveness is accomplished by conducting formal program reviews at least at five-year intervals, with the faculty also participating in the regular, ongoing evaluation of administrative leadership, program direction, and program quality." [FH 6.1];

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Faculty Senate adopt the following and include it in the UAH Faculty Handbook.

### **Section 1: Scope and Purpose of Realignment**

1.1 -- Proposals for the deletions or modifications of undergraduate or graduate courses and/or academic programs that do not alter the structure of the academic units are covered in [FH 8.3] and hence are not covered by the academic realignment process described in Section 2.

1.2 -- The realignment of academic units in established colleges is the province of the collegiate faculty and University administration.

1.3 -- Proposals for academic realignment may originate from any interested faculty members and/or administrators. However, each proposal must clearly identify the purpose, goals, and objectives of realignment.

1.4 No matter where or why they originate, proposals for realignment should be presented to the affected academic units and then be considered via the sequential process outlined in Section 2 .

1.5 As and when academic realignment is appropriate and/or deemed necessary by the faculty or administration, a phased approach should be deployed to develop and implement academic realignment plans. In the first phase, each dean, working with his/her college chairs and faculty, should be asked to develop and present to the Provost an academic realignment plan for his/her college in a timely fashion.

1.6 -- Academic realignment plans that could result in the elimination or merger of two or more colleges should only be explored after the affected colleges have examined all their options.

1.7-- If a proposed realignment involves academic units from multiple colleges, affected faculty in each academic unit from all affected colleges must be involved in the preparation and approval of the realignment proposal.

1.8 -- Financial crises are not in themselves adequate reasons for ignoring any step of the academic realignment process described in Section 2 or forcing a schedule that prevents adequate discussion.

1.9 -- No academic realignments should be made if the cost savings or other benefits are inconsequential.

1.10 -- The realignment process described in Section 2 may stop at any time if there is evidence of inconsequential benefits or harmful consequences to the educational mission of the academic unit.

## **Section 2: Sequential Steps for Academic Realignment**

2.1 -- If the academic unit where the academic realignment proposal originates determines that sufficient reasons exist for realigning academic units, then it shall develop a formal realignment proposal in consultation with faculty, staff, students, administrators, and wherever needed, community stakeholders and professional leaders.

2.2 -- The affected academic unit shall obtain evidence of support or rejection of the proposed realignment through methods that allow adequate discussion. Evidence shall include, but is not limited to letters, votes, and survey results. The affected academic unit shall provide sufficient time and means for affected academic units to discuss and approve the proposed realignment. An absolute majority of the anonymous ballots (administered by the Governance and Operations Committee of the Faculty Senate) of faculty (tenured and tenure-earning campus-wide plus clinical in Nursing and lecturers in the Library) of each affected academic unit must be in favor of realignment to constitute support.

2.3 -- If the proposed realignment is deemed appropriate by the affected parties, a written statement defining the proposed realignment and rationales for change shall be prepared that includes the items listed below. This written statement and its accompanying evidence of support or rejection shall then be presented to the dean of the college containing the affected academic unit.

2.3.1 An evaluation of current and proposed program requirements;

2.3.2 A transition plan for currently enrolled students;

2.3.3 A review of both curriculum and resource coordination with other academic units;

2.3.4 An assessment of both the tangible and intangible costs and benefits of proposed academic realignment;

2.3.5 A clear discussion about how the mission of the academic unit will be enhanced by the proposed realignment;

2.3.6 Evidence of support and rejection of the proposed realignment; and

2.3.7 A plan to implement the proposed academic realignment.

2.4 The dean shall, in turn, prepare a written statement concerning the realignment which addresses the same criteria identified in 2.3 above, especially the extent to which education and research at UAH will be enhanced. The dean shall forward the recommendation to the Provost along with the evidence of support or rejection from appropriate parties including the following:

2.4.1 the College's Council of Chairs,

2.4.2 the College's Curriculum Committee;

2.4.3 the College's staff; and

2.4.4 community stakeholders and professional leaders, where appropriate.

2.5 The Provost, in turn, shall prepare a written statement concerning the realignment, to be accompanied by all materials discussed above. After presenting all the materials to and after consulting with appropriate parties such as the Council of Deans, University Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Council, and the President, the Provost may forward the written proposal along with all the previous statements and evidence described in paragraphs 2.1 through 2.4 to the Board of Trustees for review and approval.