

## **APRCA Committee Report to Faculty Senate – May 2022**

### **Committee charge and Membership**

Please see the [APRCA committee's Faculty Senate website](#) for the committee charge and membership.

### **Committee report**

#### ***Following up on the 2020 Systems Science Grievance Settlement***

This month, the APRCA committee, in conversation with the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, crafted a letter to send to the Provost, the Dean of CLAS, and Deans of several other colleges regarding the situation in the Systems Science program. The two faculty members who lead the Systems Science program plan to retire in the near future, and the program needs either to hire new faculty to lead the program or to craft a teach-out plan for their current degree and certificate students. The letter spurred follow-up conversations between APRCA and the Provost and between the Systems Science faculty and Dean of CLAS.

The situation in Systems Science has implications for budget-related cuts to academic programs across the University. In particular, a grievance settlement from October, 2020 between Systems Science and PSU relates to how and when Article 22 in the PSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement will be used. The Article 22 process provides an opportunity for the entire faculty to hear from the President regarding the budget situation of the university, to understand the financial status that requires the elimination of a program, and to provide feedback on the President's preliminary plan for reductions. These steps form crucial elements of shared governance and transparency.

The grievance settlement notes that Systems Science will not be eliminated as a program through the attrition of faculty members. It sets the precedent that, if budget reductions necessitate the elimination of the program due to not having funds to rehire positions when faculty retire, the elimination of the program will go through an Article 22 process.

The settlement sets a principle that program elimination due to budget cuts does not take place as part of the historical practice of adjusting the size of departments by not renewing appointments. There is a long-standing past practice of adjusting the size of departments by attrition or making changes to the curriculum due to the changing needs of the university and its mission. This practice still stands, as Article 22, Section 1 of the PSU-AAUP CBA lays out clearly. Article 22 applies when, according to Section 2, b, changes are initiated due to budget woes, including reduced budgets, and result in a 'serious distortion' of a program. (Eliminating a program would count, in the opinion of those who signed the Systems Science grievance settlement, as a 'serious distortion'.)

In the past few years, the University has argued that we need to reduce our expenditures because our revenue is declining due to declines in enrollment. The knowledge that budget reductions would affect the academic curriculum prompted the formation of the APRCA committee in 2020. The Program Review and Reduction

Process is designed to shrink elements in OAA so that the staffing fits the revenue. The PRRP discussion has centered around the driver metrics: which programs are generating enough base net revenue and bringing in enough SCH to justify their existence under a reduced budget. It is clear that the PRRP process is budget-driven.

At the bottom of p. 6 of the Provost's Nov 10 "[Closing the gap](#)" memo to the campus community, the Provost states that she will ensure that when reductions get made, Senate and union guidelines and processes will be followed. In practice, any major adjustments to University structures (eliminating or folding together departments, merging colleges, laying people off, and re-doing degree programs to make up for missing faculty) will all need to go through Article 22. The University is understandably reluctant to declare financial 'exigency' for marketing and Public Relations reasons, but it is clear that budget reductions are the main driver of current processes.

In late April, the 18 scrutinized departments expect to hear from the Provost and Deans regarding the results of the review of the unit narratives. In addition, the long-awaited Huron Support Services review should soon be available. Both of these processes will lead to the restructuring the University. The APRCA committee has had conversations with both the AAUP and with OAA regarding how the restructuring will affect faculty. The Committee stands ready to partake in the planning of how OAA, AAUP, and Faculty Senate will 'do Article 22' for Phase III of PRRP.

#### ***Update from Provost Jeffords on PRRP***

Provost Jeffords joined the APRCA committee meeting on April 19 to update the committee on the PRRP process. The process has apparently morphed so that it is now not about reductions but about "making sure we are meeting student needs."

Provost Jeffords listed steps that OAA has taken to reduce the gap between revenue and expenditures. The Retirement Transition program will be extended this coming year and will include not only tenure-related faculty (who were eligible for this program last year) but also NTT and AP faculty. Retirements help close the budget gap because either the position stays empty or the people who are hired to replace the retiree are less expensive to employ because they come in at a lower salary and in a less expensive PERS tier. The IPEB process is underway, with reductions being built into next year's budget. In addition, strategic investments are being made to increase enrollment and bring in new students. In tandem, the University is undertaking efforts to retain the students we have; enrollments were lower than projected this spring, which is causing difficulties. The PRRP process is also part of the strategy to close the gap.

The APRCA committee has pressed the University on a number of occasions to estimate the number of layoffs that may be necessary but has received no satisfactory answer. Because the situation is complex and involves not just reducing costs but also increasing revenue, the figure is, apparently, "a moving target." If OAA and FADM have a range finder for that target, they are not sharing its results with the Faculty Senate Budget Committee or APRCA committee. It should be noted that getting answers to budget questions may be complicated due to the start of the Collective Bargaining Agreement reopener with PSU-AAUP.

According to the timeline on the [Program Review/ Reduction Process website](#), April 21 was date for Provost to begin conversations with scrutinized units. As of this writing (April 23), neither the units in question nor the APRCA committee is yet aware of the specific outcomes. The delay has caused considerable anxiety and has prolonged the uncertainty of the faculty in the 18 scrutinized units. Once the units have received the OAA communication, they have 2 to reply to the communication from the Provost and Deans. Outcomes will range from, on the positive side, providing investments for units to grow, to, on the negative side, Article 22 processes next year. Most departments will fall in the middle range, with instructions to engage in redesign and reorganization or instructions to “make it work” despite vacant lines and/or a lower number of faculty.

The APRCA committee enjoyed a robust discussion with the Provost regarding how best to ensure transparency around the review process. Some of the 18 units do not wish to share their narratives, arguing that all units have ‘laundry’ but as the PRRP process is unfolding, only the 18 who have written reports are asked to air theirs publicly. The committee looks forward to continuing this conversation with the Provost in the future.