

May 25, 2023

Susan Jeffords
Office of Provost

CC: Faculty Senate

Provost Jeffords,

Part of EPC's purview is to review proposals for and existing program moratoriums. EPC has developed and implemented a consistent and intentional practice of reviewing and tracking program moratorium proposals, including documenting the mitigating factors driving and sustaining the moratoriums.

Through the implementation of the current hiring freeze, otherwise thriving departments are at risk of a program moratorium through faculty attrition rather than strategic focus. A lack of student interest or enrollment is the primary reason why a program should engage in a moratorium as it allows a struggling program to re-assess its offerings to improve student interest and engagement. On the contrary, a program with satisfactory student demand should be appropriately sized to adequately serve their students, not withered on the vine through retirements, reassignments, and other departures. Successful programs, in terms of student demand, are losing too many faculty lines to offer sufficient coursework to their major students. Even in Departments that have streamlined major requirements, it is difficult for students to complete their degrees on time, motivating them to switch to a general (Liberal Arts, Social Sciences) path instead, diminishing the coherence of their pedagogical experience and in too many cases damaging their overall experience at Portland State to the extent that they leave the University all together.

Programs are being pushed toward moratorium not for lack of students but because there aren't enough faculty to teach the courses. The student demand and need is present but the resource and infrastructure to support programs is being eroded to the point of collapse. This gap in full-time faculty can no longer be adequately filled by adjuncts as fewer people are interested in the high demand, low payout of adjunct teaching. This is not due to a lack of effort from programs to recruit and retain adjunct faculty but more of a culture shift that is happening across industries in relation to people prioritizing their health, work life balance and workplace environment.

EPC implores your office and that of the incoming President to recognize these impacts of the hiring freeze and strategically change it to allow otherwise thriving programs to meet student course demand by filling the much needed positions that are pivotal to our survival.

Respectfully submitted,
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