

## College of Education Plan for Prioritizing Faculty Position Requests

As with any decision within an education institution, hiring decisions result in opportunity costs and benefits that impact a variety of stakeholders within and outside the organization. In an effort to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of future hiring decisions in the College of Education, a “Five-year Strategic Hiring Work group” was convened by the COE Dean in Fall 2014. Service on the *ad hoc* work group was voluntary. The group consisted of the COE Dean who served as an *ex-officio* member; the COE associate dean of student affairs who represented staff interests; and three faculty from each of the three academic departments in COE, two of whom served as committee co-chairs. The charge to the group was:

“Draft a five-year strategic hiring plan (2015-2020) for the College of Education that prioritizes both faculty and staff needs. The draft plan should be finalized by December 1, 2014, after engaging in college-wide discussion during the fall faculty meeting on October 3, 2014, at the White River Conference Center. The plan should focus on current and projected needs to support, grow, and develop programs.”

The work of this group focused on developing a plan for prioritizing current and future faculty and staff position requests from within MSU’s College of Education. This work is justified on three levels. First, it responds to the needs of COE students for the best preparation MSU faculty and staff can provide in their effort to prepare teacher candidates to be successful in meeting the increasing demands of the Missouri and national education landscape. Student success is a theme that runs throughout this document.

Additionally, the work of this group responds to faculty and program needs for reasonable workload expectations within budget restrictions; and it responds to COE’s need for a well-articulated rationale and subsequent procedure for prioritizing faculty and staff position requests for the foreseeable future.

The College of Education Plan for Prioritizing Position Requests document includes four sections and Appendices. Section 1 is an introduction to this work. Sections two and three provide a rationale and procedures respectively for prioritizing faculty and staff position requests. Section four describes an accountability and reporting system for position request decisions. Appendix A includes a rubric based on criteria for prioritizing position requests generated by COE faculty and staff in fall 2015. Appendix B is designed as a format for organizing recommendations for priority position requests based on the application of the rubric in Appendix A.

### **RATIONALE for Developing Prioritization Criteria**

Prioritizing position requests in the College of Education should always be made within the context of broader University goals, especially including the Public Affairs mission of the University, which includes the need for ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement. The University plans to increase “access to success,” and new academic

programs based on student demand and state need are important to this success. So, too, are opportunities to expand online summer school enrollment options and new models for effectively offering MSU programs at off-campus sites. The mission of the College of Education must likewise be considered. Position requests that allow us to prepare professional educators of the highest quality and provide MSU students with career-long opportunities to exercise their talents as citizen teachers would be a priority.

Position request priorities are always subject to particular and changing conditions. Certain conditions may act as “givens” when considering which positions should be filled first (that is, “Given the presence of this or that condition, we need to fill this position instead of that one”). The following are among the “givens” that may need to be considered: the declining, increasing, or stable enrollment of students in given programs; market demands for graduates from specific programs; the number of tenure track positions in a given program, especially as this is compared to the number of per-course instructors in the same program; the kind and amount of student support needing to be supplied by faculty or staff positions; and the presence or absence of diverse faculty in particular programs. Of course, availability of funding for faculty and staff positions is always a consideration along with shifting university and cultural environments and new and unpredictable strategic opportunities. The Dean of the College of Education is to be the ultimate arbiter of these shifting “givens” and is the final hiring agent.

### **PROCEDURES for Developing Prioritization Criteria**

The Strategic Hiring Committee values the input of faculty across the College of Education for developing the prioritization system for possible position funding. At the October 3, 2014 all-college meeting an affinity process (Brassard, 1996), led by Cindy MacGregor (CLSE Professor), invited and organized the perspectives of all faculty members present. This process involved two phases, followed by a “Parking Lot.”

During phase one, each table brainstormed answers to the question: “What factors should be considered in prioritizing hiring decisions in the college of education?” These answers were put on Post-It notes. Phase one concluded with the tables choosing 4-6 factors to bring forward into a whole group phase. These selections were to be considered important by the majority of the persons at the table.

During phase two, the whole group phase, a representative from each table brought their table’s factors and placed them onto one of several flip-charts. Then the table representatives were to silently rearrange these factors into groupings. Those not involved in the whole group phase could watch silently or take a break. After the groupings were complete the table representatives were to decide on headings for the groupings.

Utilizing a pragmatic sequential mixed methods approach (Mertens, 2015), the headings for used in a series of Likert based items. Everyone in attendance had a clicker and could “vote” on the importance of each of these factors. The 5-point Likert choices ranged from Very Important to Not at all important. The middle of the range was the Neutral choice. The factors are presented below in Figure 1.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Number of Post-Its *(PL)</b>	<b>Not at all Important</b>	<b>Not Very Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>
<b>Student need and program growth</b>	15(3)	0%	0%	3%	0%	97%
<b>Faculty Workload</b>	8(6)	0%	0%	11%	25%	64%
<b>Trends for the future</b>	4(1)	0%	0%	9%	43%	48%
<b>Faculty/Student Ratio</b>	6(1)	0%	2%	12%	51%	34%
<b>Potential for Student Employment</b>	4	0%	3%	15%	49%	33%
<b>Budget Considerations</b>	3	3%	10%	26%	31%	31%
<b>Increase Diversity</b>	2	2%	12%	24%	26%	36%

Figure 1. Results of sequential mixed methods process used October 3, 3014. \*PL = Parking Lot; these are additional comments from the parking lot.

Integrated Findings

From the qualitative and quantitative data gathered, an integration of findings reveals the important factors (as perceived by COE faculty) for prioritizing authorization of positions. These factors are presented below in the order in which faculty indicated importance (through number of qualitative responses AND Likert responses):

- Student need and program growth
- Faculty workload
- Trends for the future
- Faculty/student ratio
- Potential for student employment
- Budget considerations

After vigorous debate, the committee determined that the last two items are factors that would influence HIRING more than they would influence POSITION AUTHORIZATION. In the rare instance where a special set of circumstances related to budget and/or diversity might influence position authorization the committee recommended an assessment of “special circumstances” be considered as part of the review of position proposals. Also, the strength of certain factors, as reflected in the number of qualitative responses and higher values from quantitative responses, warrants a weighting of value given to certain factors.

- Student need and program growth (3X weighting)
- Improves workload (2X weighting) (previous “faculty workload”)
- Trends for the future (1.5X weighting)
- Faculty/student ratio (1X weighting)
- Potential for student employment (1X weighting)

- Special circumstances, e.g., Budget considerations and/or Increase diversity

A rubric (Appendix A) was developed from data collected through an affinity process (Brassard, 1996) and the sequential mixed methods approach described in the previous section (Mertens, 2015). In the Prioritization Rubric, weightings were assigned based on the data collected from the faculty.

The committee noticed that the data gathered from the faculty indicated that the need for positions that support students and faculty is weighing heavily on the minds of faculty in the college of education. Also noted, but less obvious in the data, is awareness and desire to move beyond filling gaps in existing personnel resources, moving into innovation and distinction. An example of this trend is the four parking lot comments that support “community connection,” a theme worth exploring in future data collection efforts, especially after pressing personnel shortages are addressed.

### Proposal Prioritization Procedures

#### **Step One:**

Each August the Leadership Council will submit any new proposals for positions to the Dean’s Office. Department heads are encouraged to consult with their faculty as they identify current needs as well as future needs related to their strategic plans.

#### **Step Two:**

Each member of the COE Dean’s Faculty Advisory Council will individually review the proposals and evaluate using the rubric.

#### **Step Three:**

Proposal evaluations are compiled and the compilation considered by the entire Council. A ranking and rationale of positions is developed, and then submitted to the Dean of the College of Education. A template (such as Appendix B) is used at this step. Realign new rankings with previous unfilled position requests based on college needs.

#### **Alternate Step Two and Three (if there are too many requests)**

The COE Dean’s Faculty Advisory Council could determine that a more efficient method is for a sub-committee to review the proposals using the provided rubric, and then to rank the positions (with a rationale for the ranking). The sub-committee’s recommendations are submitted to the Faculty Advisory Committee for approval and then submitted to the Dean of the College of Education.

#### **Step Four:**

The Dean presents the position rankings with rationale to the COE Budget Committee and COE Leadership Council for approval.

**Step Five:** The Dean will authorize positions according to budget constraints and other relevant circumstances not considered during the proposal review process.

This procedure can be initiated any time a department head or other division leader recognizes the need for a position. These proposals will be reviewed by the full Faculty Advisory Council.

Position rankings are subject to review and revision when a new position proposal is submitted. When a position has been approved and a search initiated, that position is removed from the position ranking plan.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING SYSTEM for position request decisions**

The College of Education Plan for Prioritizing Position Requests is a living document requiring flexibility in its content and application. The procedures and rubric as well as the recommendations within this document may be adjusted to address predictable and unforeseen changes within and outside of the College of Education. The authors of this plan recognize that it may be necessary to change the procedures as they are piloted and implemented over time; the list of prioritized position requests may need to be adjusted to allow decision makers to take advantage of unanticipated staffing opportunities as they arise. Finally, it is understood that the COE Dean is the final decision-maker on all COE hiring decisions.

Given the “living” nature of this document, the Dean of COE will annually have the Faculty Advisory Council review and update the procedures described therein in order to stay aligned with University goals. Additionally, the Dean will annually report to COE faculty and staff via The Hough Post, the justification for hiring decisions made during the past academic year; and forecast priority position requests for the next academic year based on the recommendations of the COE Dean’s Faculty Advisory Council as it applies the procedures and rubric in this Strategic Plan.

Approved 1/23/15, Revised 4/4/2016 and approved by FAC 4/6/16

### **WORKS CITED**

Brassard, M. (1996). *The memory jogger plus+: Featuring the seven management and planning tools*. Methuen, MA: GOAL/QPC.

Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

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Name of Position \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX A**

***Evaluation Rubric for Prioritizing Authorization of Faculty/Staff Positions***

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>No Evidence</b>	<b>Little Evidence</b>	<b>Moderate Evidence</b>	<b>Substantial Evidence</b>	<b>Points Awarded</b>
<b>Student Need/Program Growth</b> <i>Enrollment numbers or projected growth trends for existing programs support need for position.</i>	(0 points)	(3 points)	(6 points)	(9 points)	
Comments from Rater:					
<b>Improves Workload</b> <i>Position improves tenure/non-tenure track faculty ratio or better use of faculty/staff resources.</i>	(0 points)	(2 points)	(4 points)	(6 points)	
Comments from Rater:					
<b>Trends for the Future</b> <i>Position supports growth of needed or distinctive program and/or service courses.</i>	(0 points)	(1.5 points)	(3 points)	(4.5 points)	
Comments from Rater:					
<b>Faculty/Student Ratio</b> <i>Position improves faculty/student ratio and/or class size (as related to accreditation, graduate numbers, etc.).</i>	(0 points)	(1 point)	(2 points)	(3 points)	
Comments from Raters:					
<b>Potential for Student Employment</b> <i>Position supports programs for graduates in higher needs areas.</i>	(0 points)	(1 point)	(2 points)	(3 points)	
Comments from Rater:					

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Circumstances that warrant priority of position (e.g., diversity hiring opportunity, external funding available, high impact on COE, etc.):

**APPENDIX B**  
***Prioritized Position Requests for Program Support, Growth and Development***  
***Semester, Year***

<i>Position Needed</i>	<i>Dept./Unit</i>	<i>Rationale</i>	<i>Rank</i>