

“Creating a Legacy of Learning”
Missouri State University, Springfield, MO

College of Education Plan for Prioritizing Staff 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 staff across the College of Education for developing the prioritization system for possible position funding. At the 2015 staff fall meetings on November 17th and 18th, an affinity process (Brassard, 1996), led by Cindy MacGregor, Dr. Aram & Dr. Swearingen invited and organized the perspectives of the 27 staff members present.

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

During phase two, the whole group phase, a representative from each small group brought their group’s factors and placed them onto the large dry-erase board in the meeting room. Then a representative from each small group silently rearranged these factors into groupings. Those not involved in the whole group phase could watch silently or take a break. After the groupings were complete, representatives decided on headings for the groupings.

Utilizing a pragmatic sequential mixed methods approach (Mertens, 2015), the headings for each group of factors was placed in a ballot that asked participants to use a Likert scale to rate the importance of each one. The 6-point Likert choices ranged from Most Important (6) to Of Least Importance (1). The middle of the range included Unimportant (2), Somewhat less Important (3), Somewhat Important (4) and Important (5).

Integrated Findings

From the qualitative and quantitative data gathered, an integration of findings reveals the important factors (as perceived by COE staff) for prioritizing authorization of positions. These factors are presented below in the order in which staff indicated importance based on the average score each factor received.

- Workload (Group #1) 5.7
- Meets needs of COE 5.6
- Student and programs support 5.6
- Regulation and accreditation compliances 5.5
- Workload (Group #2) 5.2
- Employee Expertise 4.7
- Appropriate restructuring 4.7
- Confidentiality 4.6

After discussion, the committee determined that the eight factors could be condensed into three main factors: Workload, Expertise and Student & Program Support. The committee also determined that Workload is a strong factor because it was the only factor identified by all staff in the first round of factor identification. The varying strength of each factor, as reflected in the number of qualitative responses and higher values from quantitative responses, warrants a weighting of value given to each one.

- Workload (2X weighting)
- Expertise (1.5X weighting)
- Student and Program Support (1X)

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 staff.

Proposal Prioritization Procedures

Step One:

Proposals for positions are submitted to Dean's Office by supervisor

Step Two:

Members of the COE Dean's Staff Advisory Council individually review the proposals and evaluate using the rubric.

Step Three:

All evaluations are compiled and considered by the entire Staff Advisory Council. A ranking of positions and rationale for each is developed and submitted to the Dean of the College of Education. A template (such as Appendix B) is used at this step.

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. 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 Staff 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 convene the Hiring Plan Committee to (1) review and update the procedures described therein in order to stay aligned with University goals, and (2) revisit/revise the recommendations for priority faculty and staff position requests based on college needs. Additionally, the Dean will annually report to COE faculty and staff through 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 Staff Advisory Council as it applies the procedures and rubric in this Strategic Plan.

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 Staff Positions

Criteria	No Evidence	Little Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Substantial Evidence	Points Awarded
Workload <i>-Position improves the ratio of staff to faculty/students served</i> <i>-Position provides office coverage – 40 hours per week.</i> <i>-Position reduces stress, boosts morale, and decreases errors.</i> <i>-Position provides for adequate access to privileged information and online systems.</i> <i>-Position resolves potential of staff performing work outside of job classification</i>	(0 points)	(2 points)	(4 points)	(6 points)	
Comments from Rater:					
Expertise <i>-Position provides for unmet skill set.</i> <i>-Position meets required regulations/accreditation needs.</i>	(0 points)	(1.5 points)	(3 points)	(4.5 points)	
Comments from Rater:					
Student and Program Support <i>-Increasing enrollment trends</i> <i>-Deadlines for students.</i> <i>-Monitoring student program benchmarks</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>