

Wichita State University

Academic Affairs and Research

Reshape and Rebuild: A Model for Constructive Change

July 10, 2009

I. Background

The national and state economic situation during FY09 resulted in a FY10 budget with a total retrenchment of the Academic Affairs and Research (AAR) general use (GU) funds of \$6,550,361 or about 12.1% of the AAR budget. Unfortunately, the state economy remains unstable as reflected in increasing local layoffs and declining state revenue estimates. In making the most recent budget reductions (July 2009), the Governor indicated that he believed more cuts would be necessary. Thus, President Beggs has directed all divisions to plan to begin FY11 with an additional 3% reduction in the base GU budget (approximately \$2,000,000 in AAR).

In preparing for a reduced FY10 base GU budget, the goal was to preserve core programs and personnel to the extent possible by meeting the reduction mandates using vacant faculty and staff lines and OOE. This was accomplished in large measure by “across the board” reductions. University wide this resulted in the elimination of nearly 50 tenure track lines, over 25 support positions, over 20 instructional part-time positions, more than 30 seasonal and temporary support personnel, and nearly 50 student positions. This will result in fewer course sections, larger classes, higher advising loads and a significant reduction in research output. The faculty and staff exhibited an extraordinary understanding of the seriousness of the situation by willingly increasing teaching (at the expense of research and service) and adapting to new scheduling requirements.

Currently, there are no easy ways to further reduce the AAR budget in preparation for FY11 using across the board or formulaic reductions. What will be required is extraordinary levels of creativity, courage, and determination to prepare for the future. We will have to take a careful look at all programs and processes, consider reorganizations, and examine how we deliver courses. Our future depends on our resolve to now *reshape* the institution as we make further reduction in order to prepare to *rebuild* a stronger university.¹

While the economic situation is critical and expedient action is required, we do not face financial collapse. Enrollments continue to be strong. None of the funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA; “stimulus bill”) are embedded in continuing operations. The Board of Regents supported a tuition increase that supports our goal to remain competitive with the other two research universities in the state. For these reasons, it is not anticipated that a declaration of

¹ <http://webs.wichita.edu/depttools/depttoolsmemberfiles/academicaffairs/Memos/FacultySenateBudgetMemoFeb09.pdf>

financial exigency will be appropriate or required. The process described here leverages the creativity of the university community to create new ways of working with fewer resources.

This document describes the process by which we will undertake planning for reshaping the AAR while further reducing our resources.

II. Commitment to the Ideals of Learning and Human Capital

Economic conditions require that we reshape the university toward a leaner and more efficient operation. However, it is essential that this not be done at the expense of academic quality or mission integrity. To remain fully committed to the ideals of learning and to hold ourselves accountable for excellence are the benchmarks by which we will measure success.

The university is served by an exceptional faculty and staff. We succeeded in making deep reductions in the university budget this past year without eliminating occupied positions. The preservation of our precious human capital will continue to be a primary goal. Success will require that faculty and staff bring their most creativity energy to the reshaping process including the willingness to examine the way in which their expertise is applied in the university.

III. Commitment to Shared Governance

To succeed, the process described here will require the full engagement of university and college level shared governance structures and processes. It will also require extensive informal faculty and staff participation. The President and the Provost have expressed a strong commitment to shared governance and to the importance of the advisory role of the Faculty Senate and its committees.

IV. Reshaping the University

The *Reduce, Reshape and Rebuild* paradigm is depicted schematically in Figure 1. To prepare for the future, the university must successfully negotiate an economic bottleneck characterized by declining state funding for higher education, diminishing personal wealth, and unstable markets. Those institutions that successfully negotiate this bottleneck will be those who use the economic turmoil as an opportunity to sharpen their mission, reorganize and realign their programs and prepare themselves for growth. This process is referred to here as *Reshaping*.

The reductions made to meet the mandates for FY10 budget were, for the most part, reductions of convenience (e.g., vacant lines, OOE) and not strategic moves. The effect of the reduction was essentially haphazard with respect to the university mission, depicted in Figure 1 as a change from a square to a smaller, non-definitive shape. The *reshaping* initiative will simultaneously further reduce the university while reforming its programs and approaches for future growth.

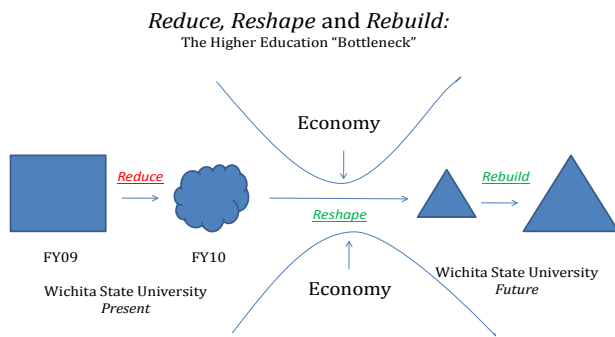


Figure 1. Depiction of the "bottleneck" challenge of Higher Education

Reshaping involves strategic reduction and reallocation based on university mission and priorities. An important outcome of the process is the development of a roadmap for how inequities resulting from the timing of the cuts will be redressed, for determining the importance of undersubscribed academic programs and, most importantly, for how to direct new or reallocated resources for growth once the economy improves.

Reshaping represents a unique and very exciting opportunity to re-imagine the university for the future. To be successful, the process must identify new and more constructive avenues of interaction on campus and strengthen the shared governance system. The activity should – and will – anchor itself in direct, open and civil discourse around the most difficult of considerations of priority and approach. Engaged together in this way, the reshaped university will reaffirm our commitment to accountability and reflect more profoundly the ideals of learning that drive excellence.

Reshaping Imperative.—The dynamics of the economy both supply a level of urgency to the reshaping schedule and require that the process be driven primarily by fiscal imperatives. We do not enjoy the luxury of relying exclusively on highly deliberative processes as the principal precursor of action. Rather, in this reshaping process, administrators and faculty will work together to consider and implement constructive ideas.

Reshaping and Strategic Planning – Reshaping the university is not the same as strategic planning. Strategic plans integrate university values and mission into a set of goals to guide the university broadly in the future. Such plans are primarily projections of desirable outcomes based on starting assumptions and with the expectation of future growth. The Reshaping process, while clearly strategic, is initiated as a reaction to severe stress (reduction) and focuses on re-imagining the university within a novel set of current conditions and considerable uncertainty about the future. Its products are sets of administrative actions intended to reduce, recalibrate and redirect the institution within its current strategic mission not a set of plans for future activity. To be successful, the reshaping process depends fundamentally on a high degree of self-confidence about the university mission and an equally high degree of openness about how to accomplish that mission.

V. The Reshaping Paradigm

Reshaping is a paradigm of change that redirects the energy of an immediate chaotic environment toward the creative process of re-imagining the institution on a large scale. The Reshaping process consists of two main parts (Figure 2): (1) Preparing for change, and (2) meeting the reshaping challenges by identifying and vetting candidate ideas for innovation, comparing those ideas to the university mission and, then, when appropriate, taking action through reorganization, reallocation, removal or realignment (R⁴ for action).

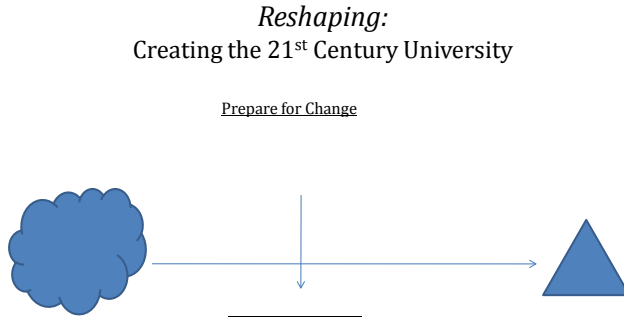


Figure 2. The Reshaping Paradigm

Preparing for Change

Preparing for change involves two main processes. Recognizing the elements of a change environment already in existence within the strategic mission of the university and preparing faculty and staff leaders to leverage those elements of change to make recommendations to reshape for the future.

Wichita State as an Environment of Constructive Change - In many ways the university has been in the process of preparing for change for the past several years. The Higher Learning Commission university accreditation process in 2006 affirmed the mission of the university and reset the understanding of weaknesses and strengths among university programs. New leadership in the Provost's office beginning in 2006 has generated an expectation of self-evaluation and strategic analysis. This new climate has emphasized a broad strategic transition toward an urban serving research university of national and international prominence. The new climate is built on an underlying culture of accountability that is the hallmark of President Beggs' administration. An important commensurate development has been an effort to revitalize the shared governance system to incorporate a wider variety of faculty and staff views in academic and research planning.

Substantial change has occurred since 2006 including the reorganization of the research program, a realignment of the graduate school, and the emergence of new thinking regarding globalization,

distance education, honors education and diversity. A number of individual colleges have undergone substantial transformation under new leadership. New programs have been added, a new more integrative KBOR performance agreement is in development and the Division of Academic Affairs and Research has moved with great energy to develop a shared vision of admissions in collaboration with the Division of Campus Life and University Relations. Other important activities having the potential to dramatically transform the university are underway. The Foundations of Excellence initiative concluded this year has generated a number of excellent recommendations aimed at improving the campus climate for student success. For the first time this fall an entire academic program will operate at a satellite campus when the Department of Physical Therapy moves to the downtown location. The extension of academic programming into the heart of the city is an important expression of our commitment to the urban environment. The university has responded aggressively to the growing number of layoffs in the community by articulating over fifty academic programs as part of federally supported workforce relief efforts. And, even as the economy has worsened over the year, the university research programs have continued to grow to meet critical local and national research needs (e.g., CIBOR). All of these activities demonstrate the presence of substantial capacity for constructive change.

The Urban-Serving Research Mission – The urban serving research mission is now well established.² Alumni and community supporters recognize the focus. The Kansas Board of Regents is fully aware of the unique relationship of the university to the Wichita community and understands the university mission as unique in the Regents system. New efforts to brand the university and to develop public relations material embrace the urban serving research mission. The research philosophy of the university embraces a community partnership model representative of urban research universities. While continual dialog about the mission is essential to nurture the vitality of the university, a broad-based program of consensus building regarding the mission is not necessary as part of the reshaping initiative.

Meeting the Challenge

To successfully reshape the university for the future, we must be willing to examine every program and process—even long-standing ones—and, when appropriate, change our approach. Change may be uncomfortable and sometimes threatening. It nearly always rearranges relationships, duties, and priorities. Change never pleases everyone. Because of this, it is essential that we commit to the highest degree of civility, professionalism and tolerance for varying opinions.

Ideas for change must be mined from all constituent groups, vetted for efficacy, and examined from a system-wide perspective to ensure concordance with mission and, to the extent possible, identify both direct and indirect effects of the change.

Identifying and Vetting Ideas for Change – Ideas for reshaping will be generated from all major university constituent groups (Figure 3). The level of participation among the groups will differ depending on

²Provost Miller has written about the history and significance of the urban orientation of Wichita State University. <http://webs.wichita.edu/depttools/depttoolsmemberfiles/academicaffairs/Essays/Faculty%20Senate%20-%20Reshaping%20and%20Rebuilding%20WSU2.pdf>.

the scale and target of the changes being anticipated. The established shared governance process will serve as the foundation for consultation between administration and faculty and staff but other assemblies of faculty will be established to gain the broadest possible input.



Figure 3. Key Participants in the Reshaping Process

The reshaping program is driven primarily by the need to respond to economic conditions. Therefore, candidates for implementation must demonstrate increased efficiency, cost savings, or increased revenue capacity. Beyond that, new approaches that enhance academic quality, research productivity, student success and community engagement will be favored.

VI. The Reshaping Program

The reshaping program will proceed in the following steps (Figure 4): (1) Prepare to reshape through a series of committee/group workshops and town hall meetings; (2) generate and evaluate ideas for reshaping; (3) develop recommendations for change; (4) take action where appropriate.

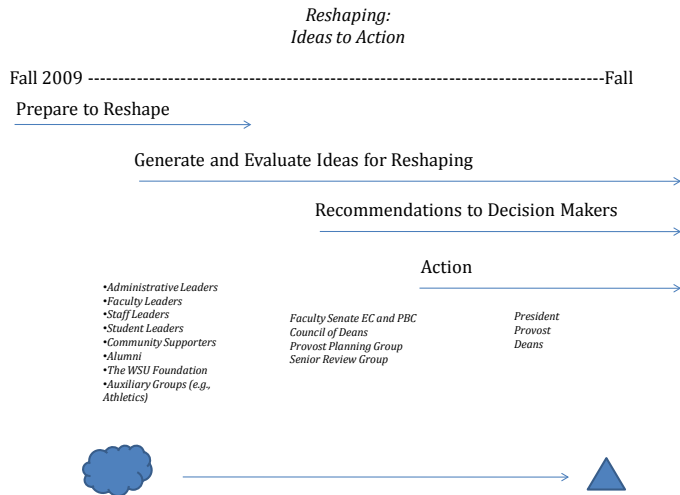


Figure 4. Reshaping: Ideas to Action

The Provost and his staff and faculty leaders will conduct the preparatory meetings and workshops in early September. The following groups will constitute the formal idea generating structure:

- Faculty Senate Executive Committee
- Faculty Senate Planning and Budget Committee
- Council of Deans
- Provost’s Planning Group
- Senior Review Group

For the purposes of this process, student representatives will be invited to participate in the work of these groups. *Ideas involving a single college are under the purview of the Dean of that college and are not subject to the reshaping program.*

The Senior Review Group (SRG) will consist of the Provost, the President of the Faculty Senate, a member of the Council of Deans and three members of the faculty appointed jointly by the Provost and the President of the Faculty Senate. Others may be consulted. The role of the Senior Review Group is to evaluate recommendations for mission and program integrity and fiscal impact prior to being forwarded to the Provost for action. All recommendations will be reviewed by the Council of Deans prior to forwarding to the Provost. Figure 5 depicts the life cycle of a single reshaping idea.

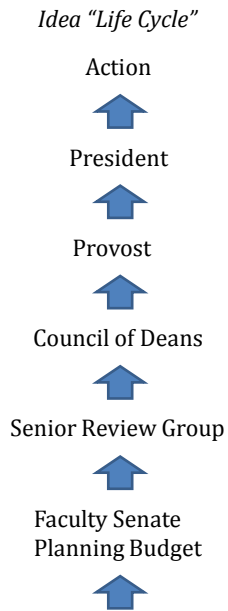


Figure 5. Path of consideration of ideas for reshaping

Ideas for reshaping may be generated informally from individuals, departments, college faculty, standing committees and councils (e.g., Graduate Council, the various committees of the faculty senate, college committees, college executive committees, etc.). Ideas generated from these informal groups will move directly to the Senior Review Group for consideration.

Final authority for all university action rests with the President. The reshaping process is designed to generate and vet ideas for final action by the President or his designate.

The initial Reshaping activity will be a one-year activity beginning in the late summer 2009 (Figure 4). Initial meetings will be held with formal groups (see Figure 3) in late August and early September. The generation and analysis of ideas and the development of recommendations will proceed through the fall semester and into the early spring semester. Implementation of specific initiatives will proceed as appropriate.