

## **CACUBO 2013 Best Practices Award Program Submission - 2013**

**Title: Right-Size Your Institution in 90 Days Utilizing a Transparent Engaging Prioritization Process**

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## **Abstract**

This document details the story of one institution's proactive strategy to right-size its academic and administrative structure. Faced with declining enrollment and debt covenant concerns, the University used an engaging transparent process that involved stakeholders from throughout the institution with the end result of reducing overall budgets by 15% and re-positioning the institution to support strategic priorities that would advance growth and improve customer service in the process.

Through a prioritization process designed after a model developed by Bob Dickeson, the University and involving faculty and staff, all academic programs and administrative units were examined and prioritized in terms of financial contribution, quality and future potential. The expedited process was developed, implemented and completed in three months. As a result of the process, academic and administrative programs were reduced and others were slated for re-engineering or investment.

A struggling economy and outdated academic portfolios and processes have pushed higher education to revisit the current business model used in most higher education institutions today. Traditionally, across the board cuts have been utilized by many institutions to balance budgets, but in today's environment this method will not position universities for long-term sustainability or growth. Across the board budget cuts do not allow those departments with potential for future growth and distinction the opportunity to fully achieve their potential and help the higher education institution advance. Rather, the cost-cutting often leads to the stagnation of growth areas, the supplanting of ideas and damage to employee morale as hard work and potential is not rewarded. To that end, we believe that higher education institutions must use different approaches to think about their work strategically and make tough decisions to ensure limited resources are invested in areas that will advance the institution.

From January to March 2012, National Louis University did just that. Academic and administration prioritization committees, consisting of members of both faculty and staff were formed that met in day-long meetings once/week for 9 weeks. The objectives of the prioritization committees were to review and then recommend each academic program and administrative unit as one in which the University should invest, eliminate, re-engineer or maintain as-is. An analysis of external, institutional, departmental and programmatic data informed the decisions. Throughout the process, a communications process was followed that kept the University's community well informed and engaged regarding the process and helped everyone get through the difficult time.

The result is a streamlined and more efficient portfolio of programs and administrative units that meets the needs of the student body. In addition, with a restructuring of the Colleges and departments, the University is now a more financially stable institution. Resources have now been placed in areas that are those that are deemed to be the most important for the future growth of the University and in areas that will help improve the customer service provided by the University.

## **Introduction of the Organization**

National Louis University (the University or NLU) is one of the oldest and most progressive universities in Chicago. The University is a private, non-profit institution that was founded in 1886 on the principle that a quality education can transform lives, careers and communities. With NLU's founding more than 125 years ago, education pioneer and social reformer Elizabeth Harrison opened a kindergarten training school to promote early childhood education which was considered a radical idea at the time. Harrison's groundbreaking work helped launch the National Parent-Teacher Association and the Head Start program, and the National College of Education (NCE) became the first university in Illinois to offer a four-year teaching degree. Thanks to a large donation from philanthropist Michael W. Louis, the school added two more colleges, the College of Management and Business and the College of Arts and Sciences and became National Louis University in 1990.

Today, the University offers more than 60 undergraduate and graduate degree programs through its three colleges. Courses are offered on-site at seven campus locations (Downtown Chicago, Elgin, Lisle, North Shore and Wheeling, Illinois; Tampa, Florida and Milwaukee, Wisconsin), on-line and at our global business school in Nowy Sacz, Poland. The total enrollment of the institution is about 8,500 students, with 6,500 (about 76%) of the students being graduate, and about 2,000 (24%) undergraduate. Of the students, about 78% are female and 33% are considered African-American/Hispanic/Asian-Pacific Islander/Native American as the University is one of the most diverse universities in the Midwest, helping students of all

ages and backgrounds achieve their personal and professional goals. The average age of the students is 34 for undergraduate students and 36 for graduate students as the University works to provide a supportive educational experience for students of all ages and backgrounds.

The University is best known as a “teacher of teachers,” conferring more graduate education degrees than any other university in Illinois. For more than 125 years, NLU has offered a progressive and professional education that builds careers and strengthens communities. We work hard to improve schools and businesses through community partnerships and applied research. And we are proud of the 65,000 living alumni who are using their NLU education to serve others. Some notable achievements of the institution are the following:

- Alumni of NLU’s National College of Education have earned 59 Golden Apple Awards—one of the most prestigious teacher honors in the State of Illinois—more than any other school of education.
- NLU is among the top 25 most diverse national universities according to the 2013 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.
- Our M.A. in Psychology is the second largest non-clinical master’s program in psychology in Illinois.
- NLU has received more than \$65 million in funding for applied research projects in urban development, childhood development, school improvement and teacher preparation.

## **Statement of the Problem/Initiative**

In January 2012, as NLU prepared for its upcoming July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013 budget process, upper management realized that declining enrollment was going to make the budget balancing process very hard for the upcoming year. Because of drops in teacher funding and declines in the demand for graduate education programs in the 2009-2011 time-frame because of school district cuts and funding issues, enrollment in the University's flagship College of Education had declined about 35% over 3 years. Further, the University had just completed a cost cutting exercise in the previous year that resulted in an 18% reduction in headcount and was looking at an equally painful process for the upcoming year in order to balance the budget.

Unlike prior years, when the University utilized more of an across the board cost cutting exercise in which departments were challenged to come up with cuts to help balance the budget, the University was seeking a more thoughtful budget process that focused on making more strategic decisions about the changes that would be recommended for each department. Instead of cutting, thought needed to be given to re-investing and growing areas that had potential for future growth.

Further, given the cost cutting that had occurred in the past, employee morale was not very high and there was perceived dissatisfaction with the processes that had been followed in prior years as a result of the loss that had occurred of many colleagues from the workforce. Many employees were fearful of losing their jobs and were concerned that the good work that they were achieving in their programs would go unnoticed and changes would be made without

regard to the better good of the academic potential of programs. The current year's process had to be one that kept employees both informed and involved. It had to be one which was transparent in which members of the entire University felt engaged and felt as they had a voice in the process.

## Design

In coming up with a process by which both academic and administrative units would be evaluated, the University first felt it was important that the process be guided by committees in various areas that were comprised of a broad cross section of the University community consisting of both faculty and staff.

The following committees and their roles in the process were formed:

- Steering Committee – Comprised of the President, Provost, VP-Human Resources and VP-Finance. This group would provide direction and interpretation to the other committees.
- Communication Committee – Comprised of the Faculty Senate President, a College Dean and three members of faculty and staff. This group would provide weekly updates to the University Community as to the progress and findings to date of each of the Prioritization Committees.
- Academic Prioritization Committee (APC) – Comprised of thirteen members of faculty (7 members) and staff (6 members). This committee was tasked with performing a data informed examination of all of the University's 60 plus academic programs including bachelors, masters, doctorates, and certificates in all three colleges was completed
- Administrative Unit Prioritization Committee (AUPC) – Comprised of thirteen members of faculty (4 members) and staff (9 members). This committee was comprised of members from throughout the University's various departments to ensure broad

diversification and representation and they were tasked with performing a data informed examination of all of the University's 18 administrative units.

The principles used by the Prioritization committees to examine both the academic programs and administrative units were very similar but contained slightly different parameters as is discussed below in the sections discussing each of the committees.

***Academic Prioritization Committee (APC):***

The following outlines the purpose, goal, process and measurement processes used by the APC.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the review by the APC was to compare the University's programs, on the basis of common measures (qualitative and quantitative) and to prioritize them in terms of five key factors.

- a. ***Mission relevance:*** relevance to NLU's mission, strategic plan and vision for 2016.
- b. ***Demand by students:*** demand by prospective students for these programs as evidenced by new student enrollment, enrollment trends over the past three years, and total enrollment.
- c. ***Demand for graduates:*** demand for graduates of the program in terms of linkages to employment and the quality of the employment opportunities as evidenced by average salary (Bureau of Labor Statistics data).

- d. **Quality:** the APC examined the University's resource commitment to each program in terms of full-time faculty; it also looked at the credentials of faculty. Further, it invited deans and department chairs/program directors to provide qualitative feedback on factors such as demand for the programs.
- e. **Financial contribution:** the final factor considered by the APC was contribution to the financial strength of the institution. This was determined by reviewing the gross tuition revenue generated by students in a program, the instructional costs (full-time faculty, adjunct faculty) of delivering the program, the net instructional revenues that resulted, and the "margin" (net revenues/gross tuition revenues) generated by the program. Historical data was derived that detailed all of this information.

**Goal:** The goal of the APC was to identify a set of programs that would position the institution to achieve its strategic objectives – namely, to provide academic excellence, an unparalleled student experience, and financial sustainability – by focusing its resources on a smaller number of programs that had demonstrated ability to attract students now and in the future.

**Process:** The APC's review was intentionally data informed; it relied upon quantitative and well as qualitative data provided by the Office of Institutional Research, Financial Services, deans, and department chairs/program directors. Information was summarized by members of the APC on a Program Profile sheet performed for each Program that outlined the demand by

students, demand for graduates, quality, prospects for growth, and financial contribution of each program.

Each of the Program Profile sheets were reviewed and discussed one-by-one by the APC during their meetings. Where there were questions that came up as a result of the deliberations of the APC, the respective department chairs or resource providers of the data were contacted to clarify the information.

After reviewing each of the programs and the various Program Profile sheets, the APC compared the programs against one another and debated the importance of each relative to the long term goals of the University. The decisions reached by the APC with respect to each program were either to a.) Eliminate the program, b.) Re-engineer the program or c.) Maintain the program.

The rationale or reasoning utilized by the APC in reaching each of these outcomes are described below:

a. Eliminate the Program –

1. There are few or no students currently enrolled in the program
2. Student enrollments in the program have been declining over time
3. Programs with few students have remained that way for a number of years with no growth

4. Market analysis shows no growth or a decline in the subject area
5. The program is not in sync with the University mission and vision
6. The University does not have the resources to invest in the program to gain an appropriate and sustainable market share.

b. Re-engineer the Program –

1. The program could benefit by creating curricular efficiencies
2. The program could benefit by creating scheduling efficiencies
3. The program had very small class sizes
4. The program had a poor revenue to expenditure ratio
5. The program had an unsustainable faculty to student ratio

c. Maintain the Program -

1. The program was generating a sustainable revenue to cost ratio
2. The program enrollment was steady or growing
3. The student/faculty ratio was sustainable and met student needs
4. The market analysis predicted steady or increased program growth opportunity

**Administrative Unit Prioritization Committee (AUPC):**

The process followed by the AUPC was somewhat similar to that which was followed by the

APC. The process included the following key aspects:

- Focus on re-engineering departments in an effort to position them for the new NLU reality of less revenues and a vastly changed higher education landscape
- Consolidations and departmental shifts were to be proposed that would improve or maintain services at current levels and improve bench strength
- Opportunities for reinvestment were to be identified
- Potential for insourcing and outsourcing were to be reviewed in an effort to improve services and reduce costs
- As a by-product of the process, cost savings totaling \$6.5 million were to be identified

First, all of the administrative units within the University were divided into 20 different units to be reviewed as follows:

President's Office

Provost's Office

College Administrations and Dean's Office – National College of Education

College Administration and Dean's Office – College of Arts and Sciences

College Administration and Dean's Office – College of Management and Business

Finance

Student Finance

Operations

Human Resources

Information Technology

Library and Learning Support

Advising

Registrar

Advancement Office

Career Services

Enrollment

Institutional Effectiveness

Business Intelligence

Marketing

Student Affairs

For each of these units, unit heads were asked to prepare a written summary of their department (5 page maximum) that addressed a set of pre-set guidelines that responded to the following areas:

- Strategic Importance
  - What is the purpose and importance of the department (i.e. key functions)?
  - What are the key responsibilities of each of the personnel in the department?
  - How many personnel are in the department, broken down between exempt vs. non-exempt personnel? How many positions are open and how critical is it that these positions are filled?
  - In what campus location is each of the personnel located and at which locations are services provided by these personnel?

- In what ways does the work of this department tie into the strategic plan?
- Internal Demand:
  - Who are the key users of the department?
  - How is demand measured?
  - What departments work most closely with this department?
  - Are there other departments providing the same or similar services?
- External Demand:
  - In what ways does the department serve needs outside of the institution?
  - Are there current or proposed mandates that affect external demand for this department such as regulatory needs?
- Quality:
  - What benchmarks are used to measure department quality?
  - If benchmarks are available, please include the comparative benchmark data?
  - What are the most significant accomplishments during the last two years?
- Cost-effectiveness:
  - What benchmarks are used to measure cost effectiveness?
  - If benchmarks are available, please include the comparative benchmark data?
- Opportunity Analysis:
  - What would the department accomplish if additional resources were made available?
  - How much additional resources would be required for a specific level of accomplishment?

- Recommendations:
  - What recommendations do you have for achieving efficiencies and cost reductions in this department and/or reconfiguring this department both from a personnel/labor standpoint and from a non-labor standpoint?

Unit heads provided this information to the AUPC for their review. After the AUPC had a chance to review each of the submissions, 30-minute meetings were scheduled and then held with each of the individual department unit heads and the AUPC. During these meetings, each unit head was asked to describe in more detail their responses to the indicated department overviews and to indicate any additional information they wanted to add that wasn't already covered in the submissions. No special power point presentations or handouts were allowed as part of these presentations so as not to provide an unfair advantage to departments that were more technically oriented than others. Each unit head was allowed 20 minutes for this part of the presentation and the final 10 minutes of each unit head meeting was devoted to questions and answers.

After these meetings, discussions were held as to the responses and information received with respect to each of the major subject areas. Based on the information heard, evaluations were performed by the AUPC on each administrative unit. The evaluations were designed to help guide the main outcomes that were to be reached for each department (which were the same used by the APC), as follows: eliminate, maintain or re-engineer.

Since it is difficult to eliminate administrative units (i.e. most all of the administrative units that were reviewed needed to be maintained in some form), a ratings scale was used to measure the importance of each department in each of these areas. These measurements provided guidance to the AUPC as they thought about the purposes of each department, its organizational structure and what changes could be made to provide better customer service while also trying to reduce cost. Deliberations regarding each administrative unit were held for several weeks.

The outcomes of these deliberations and discussions led to the following areas of recommendations:

- Open Positions – All open non-filled positions in the current budget were reviewed in detail to determine their need and the possibility of reallocation to other areas and departments where expansion is warranted. Many positions were either eliminated or job responsibilities or functions were combined or revised.
- Proposed changes to student service functions at certain Illinois locations. Due to traffic fluctuations brought on by the enrollment declines, changes in the hours of operations at the University's various campuses were proposed as well as changes in operating hours for each of the departments at these campuses. Where departmental coverage at a campus was scaled back, assurance was provided that the same coverage would be provided at a different campus such that the service to students was only a phone call or a Skype conversation from occurring.

- Change in reporting structure recommendations to save on administrative costs while also providing personnel with better knowledge. The goal in changing reporting structures was to improve services by taking advantage of synergies where possible and/or providing more of a one-stop shop for students rather than asking students to see multiple departments for information that they can obtain from personnel in one department. The following recommendations were made in this area:
  - Consolidate the dean administration in the College of Arts & Sciences and College of Management & Business while still maintaining the separate college identities. This would allow for the consolidation of scheduling and faculty contract administration.
  - Merge the Student Finance and Registrar functions
  - Move certain functions of the Prior Learning Assessment departments to the Library, Advising and Institutional effectiveness
  - Consolidate Career Services with Advising. By integrating the personnel in these two departments, the personnel will be well positioned and better able to retain, graduate and place students.
- Creation of an expanded Outreach Department to better identify and recruit potential students from markets not currently being tapped
- Creation of an expanded Business Intelligence Department to provide better data and metrics to help the University to make better data informed decisions.
- Absorption of Library coverage through a pooling of Finance/HR and other administrative resources

- Absorption of daytime ITA functions by Sungard
- Movement of NCE IT related positions into OIT
- Reposition student accommodations process into Library
- Increase use of credit card to pay vendors instead of checks. The volume of incremental credit card purchases was estimated at \$4,000,000 and the anticipated rebates are \$50,000.
- Library:
  - Provide a broader focus on learner support
  - Extended operating hours at the busiest campus and utilize centralized teaching and tutoring services there to guarantee support to all other NLU locations.
  - Redesign and build a powerful web presence for learning support
  - Strategically rebalance and manage all collections, online resources, and circulation / interlibrary loan operations – using effective metrics and serving as liaison to College faculty members
- Re-engineer Human Resources such that it can take on more functions and projects to assist other areas of the University that relate to hiring and personnel areas. One such function is relative to the centralization and streamlining of the adjunct hiring process. The previous (adjunct hiring) process was highly de-centralized and fragmented and did not take advantage of any economies of scale. Further, there was no defined process relative to identifying selection criteria or sourcing methods. Adjuncts are a key component in our future success and centralizing and

systemizing the sourcing, selection and hiring process will result in a top notch, highly qualified group of adjuncts better prepared to serve students.

In addition to these specific department areas, the AUPC also reviewed the expenditures and policies surrounding some expenses that were more University-wide in nature. As a result of the discussion and deliberations regarding these areas, the following recommendations were made:

- Travel – Budget heads and leadership should encourage conferencing, Centra, Skype and travel by train where possible to reduce cost of travel and meetings.
- Catering – No reimbursement for meals (unless outside clients or visitors are present), coffee or soda.
- Conference Fees – Reduce the number of individuals in one department attending same conference.
- Memberships – The University’s leadership team was tasked the job of reviewing all memberships of the University to make sure all are necessary.
- Personal Printers – No new in-office personal printers provided to personnel. Rather, personnel are asked to use the University’s network printers for their printing requirements.
- Printing – Expand utilization of in-house print shop
- TIAA-CREF – Reduction of match provided in this area.
- Lapsed Salaries – Built into budget at a conservative level as they always occur
- Lab Printing – Student sign-in required in labs before printing can occur.

- Tuition Waivers – Increase the cost to employees/dependents for tuition waivers
- Sub-Leasing Space – Aggressively pursue sub-leasing opportunities and fully utilize the position whose partial responsibility involves this function
- Lab Utilization – Utilize PC's in excess labs for employee replacements where possible.
- Home Office – Eliminate home office stipends provided to personnel having home offices as there is plenty of space in the University's various campuses
- PC Additions and Replacements – Delay scheduled replacements by one year and increase replacement cycle from 3 years to 4 years.

#### **Steering Committee and Communications Committees:**

In addition to the APC and AUPC, two other committees were utilized in this process: a steering committee and a communications committee.

The Steering Committee was comprised of the President, Provost, VP-Human Resources and VP-Finance. This group met during weekly to discuss the progress of each of the Prioritization Committees as well as the process itself. In addition to their individual meeting, they also met weekly with the chairs of the APC, AUPC and the Communications Committee. During these meetings, they were provided an update on the status of each committee as well as the issues and successes that have been encountered along the way. It was the role of the Steering Committee to respond to these issues and successes and to provide guidance to the Prioritization Committees during their deliberations.

The primary job of the Communications Committee was to keep the rest of the University Community informed as to the progress of the Prioritization Committees as well as the overall budget process itself. They kept informed as to the progress through the weekly meetings with the Steering Committee and the chairs of the APC and AUPC in which they learned of the progress of the various Prioritization Committees as well as the issues and successes that were being reached. The Communications Committee kept the rest of the University Community informed of the progress that had been achieved through weekly written communications that were made to the entire University Community. These communications were meant to be transparent and were designed to keep everyone informed as to the progress of each of the committees.

The communication itself was fairly detailed, although the decisions that were reached as to the names of departments and individuals that might be affected by some of the decisions reached were not immediately disclosed. In addition to written communications, film clips of interviews with various personnel (President, Provost, VP-Finance, Chairs of each of the APC and AUPC) were also made to help keep everyone informed of the process and to answer any questions that personnel might have. This latter communications tool proved to be very effective in making sure understanding awareness and understanding was present amongst the University.

In addition to the weekly written updates, town hall meetings were held by the University's president and provost. In these meetings, the President and Provost went to each of the

University's campuses to meet with any personnel that might be interested to update them on the process and to answer any questions they might have. These meetings also proved instructive as they pointed out any breakdowns in communications that might be occurring.

### **Finalization of Budget**

After the decisions of the APC and AUPC were reached, the results of this process were communicated down to budget heads by the chairs of the APC and AUPC as part of a half day update meeting. During this meeting, the rationale and decision making process were explained in detail and questions were answered that budget heads might have.

After this meeting, the budget heads were then asked to take the broad guidelines that they received as to programs, departments and general expenses and prepare and submit a detailed budget by account for their area that took into account the guidance was provided. They were allowed three weeks to provide this information.

This information was provided to the Finance Department who put together summaries of the data received. Such summaries contained the following information for each department head in a concise and consistent format:

1. Labor and Non-Labor Expense Detail for the proposed budget for next year as well as the same information for the current year budget and the current year actual/projected spending.

2. Headcount information by personnel and level of personnel for the current year and as proposed for the upcoming year as well as a summary of all changes.
3. The current and proposed organizational chart
4. A summary of the major components of the changes in expenditures between years by department.
5. Detailed spending for each account

With such information, the final task in the budget preparation process was budget hearings that were held with the Steering Committee and each unit head. During these meetings, the data summarized above was reviewed in detail by the Steering Committee with each budget head during individual budget hearings. Based on these reviews, verification was made that the criteria and recommendations of the APC and AUPC were complied with. Additionally, these review meetings detailed other areas of synergies, re-investment and cost reductions that could be achieved to help in the advancement of the institution.

After these meetings, which all occurred during a one-week period, there was an additional week to make the necessary changes that came out of the meeting prior to the submission of the summarized final budget to the Board of Trustees for their approval. This latter process was managed by the Finance Department who also prepared the materials summarizing the budget for the Board of Trustees.

## Implementation

Ninety days to implement this process was short. In some ways the short timeframe was beneficial in that it kept the work moving, but it also impacted some of the decision making. For example, data on “quality” metrics (i.e. placement rates, student satisfaction, and retention rates) for academic programs was not easily available so less precise measures were utilized. Recommendations for those replicating the process would be to review available data while finalizing metric selection, utilize well designed group processes and a tight project management approach to move the process along.

While communication throughout the process was critical, it continued after the recommendations were made by the committees. Programs recommended for closure needed to be approved by the Faculty Senate and by the Board of Trustees. This process moved quickly and program closures were announced shortly after the end of the 90 day process. It was critical that Faculty and Administrative Policies were followed closely. Once closures were announced and faculty impacted by the associated reduction in force were identified morale plummeted. Faculty were required to finish their teaching assignments throughout the end of the quarter. This was difficult for all involved. Listening and supporting faculty and staff through the transition were very important.

The summer following the “right-sizing” activity, was a time of healing and a time where movement forward needed to be a priority. Action teams were created to execute on top priorities advancing growth. Now that time has passed, the atmosphere is very different and people have hope and are committed to building the future of NLU.

## Benefits

The main benefit of this process was that it led to a right-sized institution in which the budget was balanced and resources were re-prioritized into areas where growth opportunities existed. The University was at a point in its existence when it was facing a critical time. After enduring a 35% enrollment decline over 3 years, it was important that the University balance its budget in order to restore confidence both from its internal constituents (employees, Board members, etc.) and external constituents (creditors).

Other benefits that were achieved included the following:

- The process led to an increased awareness within the University's community (faculty and staff) of the University's financial condition. There now is an understanding by personnel of the importance of and the types of debt covenants that exist as well as the detail of the University's financial statements. This better understanding has led to an increased engagement to action by the University community during the current year as everyone within the University seems to be pitching in to help find new solutions to problems and help create new ideas for growth and savings.
- Through the process, the University built a culture of transparency in areas such as leadership, processes and policies. There was open communication throughout the budget process of the progress that was being made and the decisions that were being reached. This was achieved through weekly communications, town hall meetings at the various campuses, and video communications to the University community. This transparency has now continued going forward in the current year as there are ongoing

communications on a weekly and monthly basis of events and financial results to the University community.

- This process was quick and had to be quick in order to achieve the necessary results. As soon as it became evident that the winter and spring new enrollments would be dramatically down therefore leading to declines in the future continuing students, there was only a limited amount of time to accomplish the budget balancing process. The process was begun in January and completed in May with budget papers prepared for presentation to the June board meeting.

## Retrospect

In retrospect, there are some areas that we learned more about during the process that we could perhaps address differently in the future. These include the following:

1. Reaching out to everyone
2. Utilization of data
3. Fear of cost cutting
4. Systems in Place in Advance
5. Willingness to Make Changes as You Go

Throughout the process, the University management felt like they did a good job of creating a culture of transparency. Still there were some in the University community that felt like they were not properly informed of the process. Some of this was because such folks chose not to listen to the messages that were being delivered. In retrospect, however, perhaps more could have done to reach out to those individuals by inviting them to special meetings.

In the decision making and evaluation processes used in connection with the prioritization that occurred, the prioritization committees used the data that was made available to them.

Unfortunately, it was hard to provide data to the committee in some judgmental areas such as quality of programs, quality of departments, etc.. The other area in which we didn't have data

was in the placement of graduating students. The University is now in the process of gathering this data.

Despite the efforts of the prioritization committee to identify areas where reinvestments were warranted and despite the University's efforts to follow through in our efforts to fulfill those reinvestment commitments, there now is a fear of future cutting and the perception that any budget process is just about cutting. As we are beginning the current budget process, we are looking to set up prioritization committees again to re-evaluate the changes and reinvestments that were made. The purpose of these committees is not to cut further; rather, to determine if re-allocations of available dollars might be prudent and necessary. Still, there are some in the University community that feel that what will be occurring in the current year is simply a budget cutting process despite our best efforts to inform them that it is not. To help make sure that the committees and their purposes are better understood, we are trying to improve our communications in this area this year.

Throughout the prioritization process, we utilized a consistent open communication strategy. This process was built at the start of the process and it would have been more helpful if the strategies and processes used in this regard would have been ongoing and consistent before the process began so that there was no chance of misunderstanding or doubt while the process has occurred. Now that the process has been completed, the University has tried to maintain a constant and consistent method of communication to the various employee groups of the communication in an effort to reduce any misunderstandings or lacks of communication. In

addition, the University has tried to develop a better sense of community throughout the University through connection and engagement events which has helped to improve the level of trust, respect and communication present in the University community.

Finally, despite our best efforts to plan the process properly, it is often difficult to get everything right at the start of the process. As a result, we realized we had to be ready to make adjustments throughout the process to care for instances that occurred throughout the year that needed adjustment. We maintained steering committee meetings that occurred between the co-chairs of all of the committees on a weekly basis to hear about any issues that had come up and tried to make adjustments where they were necessary during the process.