April 30, 2018

Dear Members of the Campus Community,

On April 2, the Academic Affairs Committee was officially charged as a task force to develop a response to the Point Forward document. Over the last month, we have worked to develop a reasonably comprehensive overview of the issues involved by meeting with faculty, staff, students, and administrators across campus and by gathering as much data as possible.

Throughout this process, all members of administration – the chancellor, the vice chancellors, the provost, the associate vice chancellors, the deans, the associate deans, and the department chairs – have been open and willing to assist in this process. They dedicated many hours to discussing the complex matters involved with members of the committee. They provided all data and information that was requested. We thank them for their candor and assistance.

Attached is our official response, which is primarily a compilation of concerns and suggestions that were sent to us by people across campus. We hope that this compilation provides a restated formulation for the Point Forward document, that it provides a critical analysis of the document, and that it provides a series of recommendations that will be considered.

Given the timeline imposed upon us, we do not pretend that our response is complete. Similar to what exists across campus, there was disagreement among the members of the committee about the interpretation of data, about the practical merits of various ideas, and about the proper direction moving forward. Therefore, it will not be surprising that the response has several controversial, and even contradictory, viewpoints.

Indeed, our motion was not to endorse or assert the viability of any one set of recommendations for program eliminations. Rather, the motion was to forward our work for future consideration by the next appropriate shared governance committee or task force.

Finally, it is important to remind the community that our response is not a replacement of the Point Forward document. Even more importantly, it is not – and should not be – the only response. We encourage all interested parties to submit suggestions to administration and the next governance group.

Respectfully Submitted,
Members of the Academic Affairs Committee
CounterPoint:
A Response to Point Forward

Executive Summary: An Overview of CounterPoint

This document is a response to the Point Forward document offered by administration to address short-term and long-term budget issues on campus. This response is organized to assert that:

- Recent budget reductions were disproportionately allocated to units across Academic Affairs, many of which used differing and uncoordinated strategies for addressing them.
- Administration suggested program elimination explicitly as a method to eliminate tenured faculty using a set of ill-defined metrics.
- The document and subsequent forum offered minimal explanation of alternatives considered prior to making the suggestions for program elimination, especially in non-academic units.
- The document does not explain how existing, revised, and growth programs would be assessed for viability.
- Administration and shared governance should immediately develop a plan for establishing a new coordinated mission, organizational structure, and curricular array.
- More time and detailed analyses from all vested individuals (administrators, faculty, staff, and students) are essential for determining whether the changes outlined in Point Forward are in the best interest of growth and vitality.

Part I: A Restatement of Point Forward

This section is a restatement the budget situation and the logic behind the Point Forward document. It is based on an examination of written and verbal responses from the Provost and Deans, as well as an examination of data provided by OIRE, the Deans, and the Business Affairs Office. It is offered not as a defense of the Point Forward document, but as a reference point for our criticisms and recommendations. Data provided within Point Forward have not been independently verified or endorsed by this task force.

Coming to the Point: What is the Nature of the Budget?

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point is currently overspending annual revenue by more than $4 million. Primary causes of our financial deficits are: long-running state budget reductions, a six-year tuition freeze, a large increase in our four-year graduation rate (which is a good thing), and downward demographic pressure making recruitment of new students challenging. This year, campus will fall $3.7 million short in the tuition target, an amount likely to grow next year.

- Campus has nearly exhausted financial reserves in covering this gap in the past several years.
- With central accounts empty already, campus is able to pay the bill this year by sweeping department accounts from across campus. Next year, this strategy would empty nearly every department account, leaving the university in jeopardy of failing to pay basic expenses such as payroll.
- These figures do not even account for the structural deficits of the branch campuses that we are inheriting. This process will further complicate budget matters in the future.

Generally speaking, the actual budget reductions have been allocated in different ways across the Divisions, Colleges, etc. and over time.
• Reductions at the Division level have been proportionate to the dollar amounts originally allocated to the Divisions. Because Academic Affairs constitutes approximately 80% of the University budget, it has been targeted for 80% of the budget reduction.
• For the past few years, reductions within the Division of Academic Affairs have been disproportionate to the dollar amounts and number of positions allocated to the colleges/units.
• The way in which these reductions were handled within the colleges/units varied at the discretion of the Dean/Director.

Point Clarified: Why Does Point Forward Recommend Program Elimination?

In theory, it would be possible to address the current and future budget reductions in the same manner that was used in past years. Instead, the Point Forward document outlines a controversial curricular pruning strategy to partially adapt to the budget reality.

• During the past two decades, a period of significant budget reduction, campus has added a net of more than 40 majors or options within majors.
• In some respects, these additions represent innovation in the curriculum. At the same time, additions to the curriculum often require additional people and resources. As a result, the document argues that reducing the number of majors offered is a prudent method for making a financial adjustment.
• Importantly, this curricular pruning strategy is only one part of a larger budget reduction strategy that involves the usual reductions and searches for greater efficiency everywhere else within the division.

Point Forward outlines a plan to cut 13 majors and replace them with new and revised programs. The suggestions were based on a variety of metrics (e.g., number of students enrolled in the majors, number of students declaring the major upon entry to the university, etc.).

• The majors/options suggested for discontinuation affect approximately 6% of current students’ majors.
• The suggested refocused majors may continue to serve some of these students by providing opportunities for studying the liberal arts, albeit in a different and possibly less expensive form.
• Some of the budget savings could be redirected to invest in other programs with greater potential to stabilize the institution’s overall enrollment.

Point Analyzed: How Does Point Forward Purport to Realize Cost Savings?

Point Forward argues that cost savings can be achieved by eliminating programs. The clear implication is that eliminating programs means cutting faculty and staff associated with those programs, hence producing cost savings.

• Specifically, a roughly 20% reduction in curriculum and staff in the identified areas would produce a total savings of approximately $1.4 million.
• Though the math is relatively direct, it can only be estimated because it is too early to understand the curricular and staffing needs that will replace the discontinued programs.

Program elimination has implications for staff, tenure-track faculty, and tenured faculty.

• Academic staff and non-tenured faculty can be non-retained and non-renewed without program discontinuation. RPD 20-24 does not apply in this case.
• Tenured faculty cannot be laid off without the university discontinuing programs (or declaring financial emergency). RPD 20-24 (and our local associated policy) is invoked if tenured faculty are involved. 
• Discontinuation of a program does not automatically invoke RPD 20-24. If a program is slated for discontinuation but no tenured faculty are affected, RPD 20-24 is not invoked.

Part II: A Critical Analysis of Point Forward and Alternatives

This section describes primary critiques of the Point Forward document and alternative suggestions for addressing the budget reductions. It is based on numerous comments and concerns provided to the task force by faculty and staff across campus. They are listed as a compilation of issues, but not as an agreed upon set of recommendations.

Points of Contention: What are the Primary Objections to Point Forward?

First and foremost, the document identifies nearly all programs in Art, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences for elimination. These programs constitute the core of the traditional liberal arts curriculum of the university.

• This produced a resoundingly negative response, including student protests and a letter, a community forum, letters from alumni, national press coverage, and a local community response.
• The document itself (and the subsequent forum) described the level of subjectivity in this decision. This created a sense of targeting and inconsistent application of standards across programs. Some programs on the list (or options within the programs) seem to meet the stated enrollment and student interest criteria yet still appear on the list of programs to be eliminated.
• The document contradicts itself with the elimination of teaching majors while maintaining teaching certifications per DPI requirements.
• This raises important philosophical issues about the goals of education and institutional identity. However, this change in identity or goals has not been discussed or embraced by all faculty.
• Discontinuation of these programs could limit opportunities for commuter and local students, limit the number of students from diverse backgrounds, decrease enrollment at the university, degrade the reputation of the university, and dissolve many long-standing community partnerships.

Discussion of metrics used to determine program elimination was not fully and transparently discussed across campus.

• The Strategic Planning Committee recommended the Integrated Planning Advisory Council begin addressing the appropriateness of various metrics and the collection of data on these metrics in the summer of 2017. However, the IPAC did not openly engage in this process.
• Other campuses proposing similar eliminations were informed by formal review processes and faculty committees. These methods were not used openly at UWSP in making the current recommendations.
• Point Forward was publicly released without prior discussion with all of the stakeholders (e.g., faculty, Department Chairs, etc.) impacted negatively by the recommendations.

Point Forward suggests that many programs could be retained in a revised version but the standards for those revisions are unclear.

• The document gave primacy to the program eliminations and buried the suggestions about possible revisions further in the document.
• Administrative suggestions for revised programs are given despite the fact that faculty govern the curriculum. It is unclear the extent to which faculty and departments were consulted in making these recommendations.
• No clear standards or criteria are outlined for what would constitute an “acceptable” revision, suggesting an additional level of subjectivity in the document.

Growth programs are suggested in Point Forward, yet no clear documentation, explanation, or associated metrics are provided.

• No cost projections are provided for “growth” programs. As a result, there is little clarity about whether the suggested eliminations are either too drastic or not enough to meet this agenda.
• Similarly, some of the proposed programs are likely to be more expensive, and perhaps substantially more, than the programs suggested for elimination.
• No concrete evidence is given for the potential popularity of these programs. Therefore, it is premature to invoke these as alternative investments.

Point Forward focuses on Art, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences with no discussion of concrete alternatives that were considered.

• Admittedly some limited possibilities were hinted at in the Provost’s subsequent open forum, but few details were given as to why they were ultimately refuted and rejected.
• While the choice of metrics used to make these decisions may have some subjectivity to it, clear and open presentation of data and details is essential to shared governance.
• There is a need to consider the different types of proposals that could be advanced to solve the issues at hand. Point Forward is just one permutation among many.

The analysis underlying Point Forward largely relies on data at the department level yet describes the importance of eliminating programs/majors. This has produced a perhaps unintentional but still problematic conflation of issues.

• Early responses from the general public and campus members, for example, talked about how campus would be eliminating departments and not majors.
• Reliance on department level data obscures the possibility of a well-enrolled or favored program that exists within a department of otherwise low-enrolled options.

At the same time, the analysis overly relies on the declared or intended major identified by incoming students as a primary metric for determining the viability of programs.

• Given that many students change college majors – some estimates suggest that up to half of all students change their majors by the second year of college – it is problematic to put too much stock in this metric.
• Of course, well-defined majors can be a major recruitment tool, but reasonable weight should also be given to majors that students may not be aware of when they first approach the university.
• As such, the availability of a wide variety of majors across the spectrum of possibilities can be an important recruitment and retention strategy, especially for undeclared students.

Point Forward downplays the importance of second and double majors as metrics of the viability of programs even though these programs can be critically important for students.
• At a time when General Education requirements are diminished, students will seek meaningful ways to augment and complement their primary major.
• For other students, such double majors may constitute the only logical way to achieve a career goal. Here, broad and flexible majors are a necessity.
• Again, the availability of a wide variety of majors may constitute one very important retention strategy.

Point Forward argues that well-defined majors are the clear and obvious choice for future investment, but the perceived uniqueness of a major can be a double-edged sword.

• Some level of specificity can indeed help to identify career pathways, but too much specificity runs the risk of disenfranchising students whose interests are broader.
• Furthermore, majors that are too narrowly defined can produce circumstances very similar to our current situation – too many programs that are modestly successful.

The Provost argues that the suggested changes are about fostering a new identity and that this identity has already been established through previous committees and documents.

• However, Point Forward may be the only public document that targeted multiple individual programs for pruning or elimination.
• Though past documents may have outlined values for the university, campus-wide discussions about disciplinary strengths or emphases have not occurred.
• The net effect of Point Forward was to put specific departments in the public spotlight where they felt threatened, not innovative. This does not constitute an effective strategy for forging a new identity.

Point Forward weakens the very thing it argues needs strengthening – General Education.

• Strong General Education depends on Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (among other disciplines). Elimination of majors in these areas makes it more difficult to recruit faculty and therefore field the requisite courses.
• This weakening is particularly true in the areas of gender and diversity studies. The programs suggested for elimination provide the majority to diversity-related courses on campus.
• A similar problem exists in the GEP categories. For example, an elimination of too many Art courses would have very detrimental effects on the GEP Arts category.

Alternate Points: What Other Methods Have Been Suggested for Addressing the Budget?

Most obviously, one possibility is to use non-renewal and non-retention of non-tenured faculty and staff instead of program elimination.

• It is not clear how deep these cuts would need to be in order to make this a viable strategy. Further analysis by units would be necessary.
• Though not particularly strategic, this option could be selectively used as a one-time strategy for addressing budgetary issues.
• A phased reinvestment strategy would need to be clearly outlined in order to reinforce “mission-critical” programs in the future.
Given that the number of faculty has effectively reached a 20-year low but the number of non-instructional staff and also administrators is at a 20-year high, a re-analysis of all non-faculty positions and salaries could also provide cost savings.

- Re-titling of positions and consolidation of units into University College has altered the categorization of positions within “administration.” Nonetheless, a critical examination of minimal needs and associated costs could be undertaken.
- Increased need for student support services (combined with reduced State support) has contributed to some increase in positions. But it is not clear if the staffing of these positions have taken recent enrollment declines into account.
- Importantly, not all positions within these categories are funded through GPR and would not need to be considered to meet a structural deficit.

Point Forward itself states that restructuring of units could lead to cost savings. This could be extended by considering the elimination (complete or partial) of non-academic units.

- The document alludes to the elimination of one Dean (but does not indicate which) and claims that the cost savings would be relatively minor in comparison to the size of the deficit.
- Another possibility includes the elimination or reduction of units within University College. However, this unit provides some needed support services across campus.
- At the same time, some staff and units outside of academic programs have already faced significant cuts in recent years.

The use of the same subjective metrics could be used to identify alternative program eliminations that could realize a cost savings similar to that suggested in Point Forward.

- For example, some STEM fields and professional programs have lower student enrollment, lower student interest upon entering the university, and higher cost than some Humanities and Social Sciences.
- However, eliminating these or other programs would run counter to the explicit recommendations of Point Forward, would be subject to the same criticisms provided above, and impact some programs with upward trending enrollments.

Departments and units could consider alternative staffing opportunities to reduce the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty staffing courses and programs.

**Part III: Recommendations for Countering Point Forward**

This section contains a set of general recommendations for proceeding. It is based on the discussions of the task force and general recommendations provided by faculty and staff across campus. These are offered as a way for administration and shared governance to jointly address the important task of strategic planning.

**Point Reexamined: How Should Campus Proceed?**

UWSP’s select mission statement explicitly states that the university should offer a core of liberal studies as well as specialized professional degrees.
• This directly suggests that existing or revised majors in all of the areas of Art, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences should be retained. This does not imply that every concentration or specialty should be retained.
• Consistent with the select mission and historical emphasis in teacher education, all of the current teaching majors should be retained.

With units already addressing budget reductions and program restructuring, administration and governance should openly, clearly, and regularly provide information to campus about the changes.

• All units have made adjustments to meet the current (and past) budget challenges. Yet these changes have not always been announced as clear as possible to individuals outside of the immediate unit.
• This lack of effective communication creates a perception of lack of transparency and thoroughness in decision making. Changes to the current communication model are critically important. In order to better understand the state of the budget situation, changes made in all units since the issuance of Point Forward should also be clearly communicated to campus.

The development of metrics for the evaluation and elimination of people and programs should be developed in an open process, should be clearly documented, and should be consistently shared with all units.

• Certainly, some steps have been made in this regard. Nonetheless, the current financial crisis purportedly forced the implementation of metrics before they were approved by shared governance.
• Development and application of metrics should be done in consultation with units as part of a larger formal departmental review process, integrated planning, or other strategic planning.

If Point Forward is a call for reform and innovation within units, departments, and majors, then all programs should be given fair opportunity and ample time to do so.

• If it is true that we have no obviously failing programs (as the Provost has stated publicly several times), then no programs should be suggested for discontinuation without opportunity to reposition themselves.
• Several recommendations for revising the majors suggested for elimination have been brought to the Provost since Point Forward was released. These revisions should be considered under a process of shared governance and conducted in a transparent and thoughtful manner.
• It is difficult to do the necessary market research and consult with important stakeholders in a short window of time. When the future depends on proper curricular design, more than 6 months of planning is necessary.

If academic programs are to be judged to the extent that they foster “career preparation” and “applied learning,” then these standards should be applied to all programs across campus.

• These notions must be clearly defined in the context of all disciplines. This recognizes that disciplines cannot be prejudged on the relevance of these principles.
• If programs suggested for elimination meet these criteria (and demonstrate reasonable enrollments), they should be considered equally viable programs and not targets.
• If program not currently suggested for elimination does not meet these criteria, then serious consideration should be given to having them be reformed or eliminated.

If program elimination is to be further considered, administration should publicly provide and discuss a revised document that re-examines each program on the list in a transparent process.
• This reexamination should include a clear budgetary and curricular analysis of the programs to determine whether their elimination is still deemed necessary.

• Knowing that all metrics of a program’s vitality and viability are imperfect, additional metrics – such as Cost per SCH, general cost/benefit analyses, reputation of the program, etc. – should be incorporated into the analysis.

• This reexamination should also include all administrative and academic support positions. While these units may require different metrics, they could still be evaluated on the basis of need, viability, and effectiveness.

• This reexamination should not be left to just a consultative committee. Both administration and a consultative committee are responsible for providing an up-to-date analysis.

Regardless of whether a program elimination leads to the layoff of tenured faculty (by invoking RPD 20-24 and its related local policy), campus should form the equivalent of a consultative committee immediately.

• This committee should have broad representation similar to a formal Consultative Committee. This insures that all aspects of campus are duly informed and involved. This particularly recognizes the importance of staff and student involvement in the process in addition to faculty involvement.

• Should RPD 20-24 then be invoked, this committee could operate as the formal Consultative Committee.

• Campus should consider making this a standing committee that works in conjunction with the existing planning councils.

If program elimination leads to new or revised units (i.e., colleges, schools, departments, etc.), the units should be proposed in a manner that fosters the development of professional identity of its faculty and staff.

• If curricular revision is predicated on establishing an identity for the university, then structural revision should give serious thought to the identity of the individual faculty and staff.

• Units should be formed that allow faculty and staff to develop meaningful identities beyond “service” to other units. These identities could be in interdisciplinary majors, minors, and General Education.

If campus is being encouraged to reimagine the liberal arts, then administration should commit to an academic home for General Education.

• The changes suggested in Point Forward are inextricably intertwined with General Education, likely more than any other cluster of programs that could have been targeted.

• Because the goal is to ensure that all students achieve the strongest possible liberal arts grounding in their majors, units that directly teach identified core components of the liberal arts should be charged with coordinating General Education.

• Given that University College is described as “services that support the academic program” but does not house an academic program, it may not be the best home for General Education.

If career preparation is to be a focus of the new curriculum, campus should develop a comprehensive plan for developing career preparedness.

• This may involve allocating monetary and other resources at multiple levels and to multiple units: ACAC centers, departments, etc.
The plan needs to account for the fact that students change majors (often multiple times), that programs that seem career-oriented do not always match students’ needs and desires, and that career planning goes beyond any one program.

Faculty governance should promote integrated thinking and creativity about curriculum in the context of limited budgetary resources.

- Given that growth is not the same as innovation, governance should take a more active role in limiting the programs that get approved, in identifying redundancies, and in promoting interdisciplinary programs.
- Faculty and student governance should offer clear definitions of what courses and curriculum are necessary, especially with regards to General Education.

Administration and shared governance should perhaps budget and plan for even lower enrollment than we currently anticipate.

- A proactive process could help avoid annual budget reductions and therefore the associated loss of morale and reputation.
- Similarly, this process could help each unit set aside some money for reimagining the curriculum, sharing positions, creating content together, reducing costs creatively, and more.
- This would also permit the ability to restore sabbaticals, increase travel support, and foster other professional development opportunities.

Final Points: Why are More Suggestions and Time Necessary?

Considerable planning and change has occurred on campus in the time since the issuance of Point Forward. Therefore, the necessity of the program eliminations spelled out in the document is severely questioned.

- Data and explanations from the Deans, for example, show that the budget reductions for the next two years are likely to be met (and this occurs without formal program eliminations).
- The issuance of Point Forward probably spurred a much higher rate of departures and retirements. In COLS, for example, the short-term budget reductions were met with these departures and retirements.
- It is for this all-encompassing reason that this report did not target specific programs or units for possible elimination.

Administration should move the target date for issuing a final proposal. August 1 is simply too early to gather the type of data and suggestions necessary given the momentousness of the task and the fact that many of the necessary stakeholders are not on campus at that time.

- Curricular revision and innovation depends on open processes that takes significant time, solicits feedback from all constituents, and utilizes real civil discourse.
- A deficient process for initiating curricular revision creates uncertainty and anxiety that further erodes the ability to accomplish the goals.

With some agreement that the true issue at hand is one of campus identity, campus should immediately convene a task force or other entity to address the intertwined issues of university mission (e.g., the Partnership for Thriving Communities), College and School structure (i.e., reorganization within the Colleges and University as a whole), and curricular array (e.g., majors, minors, GEP, etc.).
• Development of an integrated sense of mission, structure, and programing also takes significant time, requires feedback from all constituents, and requires real civil discourse.
• The current campus identity is one that has developed over a long history, a history that should not be profoundly altered in one year.
• There is and will remain, of course, a difference in opinion about that identity. It is likely rooted in deep philosophical differences about the nature of the university.
• The issues are already compounded by the challenging integration of multiple campuses within the UW System. Collaboration across campuses is of paramount importance and will take additional time.
Appendix:
Data Used in the Response

Fifteen Years of Employee Counts

Forty-Three Years of Student Enrollment
### Current Budget Reductions by Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>FY18 GPR/Tuition Budget</th>
<th>% of Total Budget</th>
<th>FY19 Reduction Amount</th>
<th>FY19 GPR/Tuition Budget</th>
<th>% of Total Budget</th>
<th>FY20 Reduction Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>$1,238,601</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>($62,623)</td>
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<td>Advancement</td>
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<td>Business Affairs</td>
<td>$6,689,891</td>
<td>13.53%</td>
<td>($338,238)</td>
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<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>$39,591,375</td>
<td>80.07%</td>
<td>($2,001,722)</td>
<td>$38,216,434</td>
<td>79.77%</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
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<td>($2,500,000)</td>
<td>$47,908,027</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>($2,000,000)</td>
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### Current Budget Reductions within the Division of Academic Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>FY16 102 Budget</th>
<th>FY16 FTE</th>
<th>Reduction as % of Budget</th>
<th>FY17 102 Budget</th>
<th>FY17 FTE</th>
<th>Reduction as % of Budget</th>
<th>FY18 102 Budget</th>
<th>FY18 FTE</th>
<th>Reduction as % of Budget</th>
<th>FY19 Reduction as % of Budget</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
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<td>($116,962)</td>
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<td>$4,318,111</td>
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<td>$4,244,159</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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<td>($150,717)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$4,315,987</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>$40,754,019</td>
<td>602.90</td>
<td>($1,413,639)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$39,591,375</td>
<td>589.90</td>
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Program Changes in the Catalog Over 20 Years

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<th>1997 to 2007</th>
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<th>2012 to 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Majors:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Renamed</td>
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Chart of Current Major Enrollment by Department/Unit