APARC PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS
2020-2021

Part of APARC's charge is "To develop budget priorities that emerge from planning processes and assessment of academic programs and present upcoming academic year budget priorities to the Senate...". As in previous years, our budget priorities are guided by SSU's Strategic Plan Implementation Goals, Priorities, and Tactics. Acknowledging that the University's budget in the coming years may be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, APARC has taken into account recommendations from the University Program Review Subcommittee (UPRS) and consultation with schools and faculty to prioritize some of these tactics.

In previous years, the faculty have expressed a desire for a visible and explicit mechanism for monitoring progress and improvements and that communication regarding decisions and adjustments to our planning progress happen on an ongoing basis. We recognize, too, that there has been progress on the issue of diversity in hiring. We recommend a continued emphasis on educating the greater university community on the importance of diversity in hiring and the importance of efforts to reduce unconscious bias.

Recommendation 1: Increasing Resilience -- Over the last three years, Sonoma State has consistently experienced serious disruptions to the academic calendar, culminating with the sudden and unprecedented shift to 100% remote instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is clear that our faculty, staff, and students need support to build our resilience and to better enable us to respond to these disruptions.

    a. Increased and continued professional development for faculty to build adaptable and flexible curricula, to teach and assess student learning effectively online when needed, and continue to provide support for students who might be struggling to adapt to change or to learn in challenging environments.

    b. Increased technological support for staff working from home and the development of business practices and processes that can be completed remotely if needed. Sonoma State does not have a history of supporting remote work, and many staff do not have the resources at home to work effectively. Building our support for remote work at all times, and not just during a crisis, will develop flexibility and resilience in our business practices.

    c. The development of a more robust online learning infrastructure. Sonoma State has been slow to adopt online learning, and **our emphasis on high-touch, in-person instruction should not be abandoned. Our student-centered approach should be a centerpiece of instruction in any mode**. IT and the Faculty Center have done amazing work bringing SSU into online learning rapidly and under extreme pressure; we encourage the university to continue to support funding and staffing for IT and the Faculty Center to support online learning initiatives, to fund secure, stable, and usable online learning tools, and to support the library in

providing electronic resources that are accessible remotely and can be easily embedded in online course management systems.

d. Governance processes that can be enacted in emergency situations to ensure key stakeholders are informed and can provide input to decision making. It is a frequent complaint in universities that governance moves too slowly to be consulted in emergency situations. We would argue that, in these situations, it is even more important to involve faculty in decision making. APARC recommends that the Academic Senate and Executive Committee, in partnership with the administration, focus in the coming year on developing mechanisms for consultation that are agreed upon and that can be enacted quickly. Ideally, these mechanisms would also include provisions for consultations during the summer and winter breaks, when faculty are not on campus.

Recommendation 2: Prioritizing Lecturer Working Conditions --The university has made gains in recent years in combating salary inequities, inversion, and compression for tenure-track faculty and for staff. We have also put resources toward improving tenure density and bringing our tenure-track numbers up. APARC asks the university to focus on lecturer compensation and job security, including beginning to investigate and develop a plan for lecturer conversion. We recognize that a path to lecturer conversion faces more impediments in some schools than others, and we recommend SSU begins by identifying what specific obstacles exist.

Recommendation 3: Continuing Attention to Facilities -- In the past year SSU has made significant strides in improving the efficiency, comfort, and appearance of our learning spaces. APARC recommends we continue to work to increase the use efficiency of existing space to make SSU more student-centered. We also recommend our scheduling practices, including acquisition of necessary software, continue to work towards the goal of efficient classroom usage as well as multi-year scheduling. As SSU continues to make classroom upgrades, we implore the university to work with faculty from across the campus to design versatile spaces for effective delivery of a variety of pedagogical approaches.

Recommendation 4: Building Assessment Capacity -- In order to build long-term assessment capacity, the university should continue to commit resources for faculty professional development and implementation of effective assessment practices. Some critical steps for expanding assessment efforts at SSU include providing funding for assessment coordination across the campus and within academic programs. We should also continue to offer workshops on assessment development.

Recommendation 5: Continuing Transparency in Budget Process -- We recognize there have been significant advances with respect to the transparency of the budget with the development of online dashboard budget tools, which have revealed differences in budget allocations and instructional metrics between schools. There has also been some positive movement in the communication of how budget decisions are reached, but faculty feel there is still room for

improvement. We recommend that these efforts be continued in the years to come, especially as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic begin to take shape.

    a. Increase transparency in how resources are distributed between schools, including funding for tenure track faculty and lecturer budgets.

    b. Establish principles for transparency and communication in the budget process.