

UMKC AAUP

To Properly Co-Govern UMKC /s to Move It Forward

UMKC AAUP Statement to UMKC Forward

July 25, 2020

As a process to generate new, bold ideas for the future of the university, UMKC Forward offered an opportunity for a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process. Unfortunately, this is not what is occurring. Instead, UMKC Forward fundamentally undermines the principle of co-governance at UMKC by substituting administrative fiat in place of existing institutions and co-governance practices.

We propose instead, that UMKC should engage in a systemic review of all university activities in a manner that respects the principle of co-governance. There are established processes at the university to evaluate academic programs fairly and objectively, and an established process to guide reorganization. These should continue to be used as the basis for decisions about changes to academic programs and reorganization. But UMKC lacks equivalent processes for review and assessment of non-academic activities, and it is these activities that have grown excessively and disproportionately over the recent past. Indeed, this growth now threatens the integrity of the academic mission of the university, and yet the UMKC Forward Team A Steering Committee makes no specific recommendations to reduce spending in these non-academic areas, while assigning specific targets for cuts to academic programs. This glaring difference is one of several clear indications that UMKC Forward is not fulfilling its promise to be an objective and participatory review of all university activities.

Our assessment of UMKC Forward is below. Because we find UMKC Forward has failed to abide by its initial commitments to collaboration, participation, and breadth, we also believe it is incumbent on UMKC AAUP to offer an alternative way forward. To this end, we offer several principles that should guide these efforts and several recommendations to help address the current challenges. We propose

the future of UMKC depends crucially in cutting spending in three specific areas: campus-wide administration, Intercollegiate Athletics, and organizations that are unrelated to the academic mission of UMKC. We believe this offers a way for UMKC to not only respond to adverse conditions, but also to achieve its potential as a model public, urban, research university.

An Alternative Way Forward

Respect established processes of university co-governance.

The Academic Program Review (APR) evaluates every program at UMKC every five years, with attention to budgeting, resource allocation, and alignment of programmatic operations and innovations with strategic plans. Potential outcomes of the APR include investment/expansion, program closure, or quality improvement (UMKC 2019, 1). The APR respects the principle of university co-governance by involving the department, the school that houses the department, and the Office of the Provost in this process. This process should form the basis for decisions about changes to academic programs.

Furthermore, there is an established process for university reorganization, which was developed and approved by the Faculty Senate (UMKC Faculty Senate 2017) and subsequently modified to allow for an expedited review process (UMKC Faculty Senate 2018). This process reflects the long-standing principles embodied in the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” (AAUP 1990 [1966]) and was used by UMKC in 2019 to move the Department of Chemistry to the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences and the Department of Theatre to the Conservatory.

Academic programs are the reason that UMKC exists. If financial circumstances force significant changes to university operations, cost-cutting should focus on non-academic activities first and should only be considered for academic activities after due deliberation. Reorganization of schools and colleges is costly, time-consuming, and disruptive. Considerable time and energy will be required from faculty

and staff that would otherwise be directed to teaching, research, and service. Reorganization should not be undertaken lightly in response to fickle academic trends or the desire of an individual leader, no matter how competent they may be.

Institute processes for regular assessment of non-academic activities paralleling those for academic activities.

Before legitimate procedures and processes yielding structural changes to the university can proceed, an imbalance at the university must be addressed. Robust reviews, assessment, and competitive performance metrics currently apply broadly and exclusively to academic/instructional units and faculty. This is itself a violation of the principle of co-governance, and it must change.

There have been internal and external efforts—some officially sanctioned and some ad hoc—to engage in meaningful review of non-academic activities in the recent past. These efforts have often been met with seeming indifference from administrators, and sometimes with direct opposition. When these efforts were able to proceed to a conclusion, their recommendations had very limited effect or were ignored. In short, there is no effective mechanism to hold non-academic functions, including campus-wide administration, athletics, and non-academic entities, to the same level of scrutiny that academic programs and faculty are routinely subject to. UMKC Forward promised to include these areas under the Operational review, but they have, once again, been largely left untouched, despite significant evidence that the university can no longer justify continued spending at the levels the currently received.

The basic premise of UMKC Forward has not been adhered to.

As originally described, UMKC Forward Team A consisted of Academic and Operational Review Groups including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. These groups were tasked with studying various aspects of university operations in-depth and make recommendations for cost savings. These

recommendations—the product of extensive research and deliberation—would then serve as the basis for recommendations from the Steering Committee to the Chancellor. It was this process that made it possible to describe UMKC Forward as a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process. However, this is not what occurred.

Instead of selecting from among the recommendations received from Academic Review Groups, the Team A Steering Committee constructed their own recommendations and is offering these for further consideration by the Chancellor. None of the three academic recommendations put forward by the Team A Steering Committee originated in the Review Groups. At best, they have a very distant connection to the recommendations from the Review Groups, and, in some cases, directly contradict recommendations from these groups. By arrogating responsibility for generating recommendations and ignoring much of the work conducted by the Review Groups, the Team A Steering Committee not only disregarded the time, expertise, and hard work of members of the Review Groups, it undermined the basic premise of UMKC Forward itself as a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process.

It is within the purview of the UMKC administration to initiate a process that engages faculty and students to make changes to university operations when it deems these to be desirable. But it is disingenuous to ignore the work that results when it does not suit what now seem pre-determined outcomes. This violates the good faith and trust that faculty, students, staff, and administrators gave to this process at the beginning.

Protect and Enhance the Academic Mission through Inclusion and Research

(Kansas City) has a long, dismal history of lack of opportunity for its African-American citizens . . . Kansas City's second great challenge is that it lacks an essential institutional requirement for competitive strength in the knowledge economy. Kansas City is almost alone among important American cities in not having in its midst a world-class research university that is deeply engaged in meeting all the city's opportunities and challenges (Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, 2005, 3)

UMKC aspires to be a model public urban research university with a comprehensive academic portfolio (University of Missouri Kansas City 2018, 10, 22). This would make it the university that Kansas City clearly needs to achieve socially, culturally, and economically. And yet many of the recommendations from the UMKC Forward Team A Steering Committee would significantly and adversely affect the academic mission of the university for little obvious financial return. We oppose the current recommendations involving substantive changes to academic programs. All would further damage UMKC's standing as a comprehensive research university, while realizing, in most cases, insignificant sums of money in return. The Team A Steering Committee makes the following specific recommendations for academic restructuring.

- Proposal 1: "Merge departments to eliminate chair positions and reduce future hiring."

Most department mergers reduce educational opportunities for students. Reducing educational opportunities diminishes UMKC's standing as a comprehensive university that adequately serves the needs of greater Kansas City and will adversely affect our ability to recruit and retain students. Furthermore, with each chair's stipend representing approximately the annual tuition of one student, the amount of money potentially saved by department mergers is likely to be more than offset by declines in recruitment and retention. It should be noted that department mergers were considered by many of the Review Groups and dismissed because they offer little in savings while potentially incurring significant cost through declines in enrollment. This recommendation should not be considered further, and instead the APR process discussed above should guide future decisions about department mergers.

- Proposal 2: "Reduce the number of graduate programs, IPhD disciplines, and graduate assistantships by fifty percent."

This proposal strikes directly at the heart of the teaching and research mission of the university. Graduate education is one of the defining features of a research university and eliminating half of the graduate programs and assistantships would be a significant retreat for UMKC from its position as a research university. UMKC is the only research university in the Kansas City metropolitan area. With a few exceptions, it provides not just the only opportunity to study for the Ph.D. degree, but also the only opportunity for graduate study at any level in the Kansas City metro. This should not be discounted. M.A.-level programs directly contribute to students' professional development and future advancement in their careers. This proposal for an arbitrary reduction in graduate education is offered without justification or basis in the work of the subcommittees. Program changes like the one proposed here should also be addressed through the established APR program.

Kansas City needs a comprehensive research university to maintain a thriving and adaptable economy, help mend its frayed social fabric, and enhance its cultural resources. Abdicating its role as a comprehensive, nationally-competitive research university would significantly diminish UMKC's contribution to a vibrant Kansas City metropolitan area. Graduate education is also presently the most important source for enrollment growth at UMKC. Setting an arbitrary goal for eliminating graduate programs makes little or no financial sense when students are enrolling in graduate and professional programs in increasing numbers.

- Proposal 3: "All academic programs (undergraduate, graduate, professional) should be systematically reviewed for potential elimination, downsizing, or merger."

As noted above, this process is already undertaken every five years through the APR. Furthermore, reviews of this type were part of the basic charge for the UMKC Forward Review Groups. This recommendation suggests the Team A Steering Committee concluded the Review Groups did not pursue this charge with sufficient vigor, the APR process is not effective, or both. In either case, AAUP

opposes arbitrary changes to academic programs without a deliberative process involving various university constituencies and a rigorous cost-benefit consideration that includes the full range of program benefits.

Stop the prolonged and significant reduction in faculty.

Faculty Senate Budget Committee (FSBC) research demonstrates that faculty positions have consistently been the target of cost cutting efforts (UMKC Faculty Senate 2020).

- Since 2008, Tenured and Tenure Track (T/TT) faculty have been reduced by 127 positions, a 28% reduction.
- Non-tenure track (NTT) and Adjunct faculty positions have also declined, though less than T/TT.
- Since 2012, overall full-time faculty positions have declined by 117, a 14% reduction.

In addition to declining faculty numbers, UMKC also has a well-documented problem with low faculty salaries, which has been compounded over the past decade by significant reductions in retirement benefits and health-care contributions. This makes UMKC even less competitive in attracting and retaining highly-qualified faculty.

This decline in both the number and the economic status of faculty has several obvious impacts on the university. The academic mission of the university is the core of why UMKC exists, and this is the primary purpose and responsibility of the faculty. Fundamentally, faculty provide the instruction and mentoring that attracts students to the university and keeps them here. Faculty, especially those who are tenured and tenure-track, are also responsible for the research mission of the university. Low levels of funded research at UMKC are a consequence of the declines in tenure and tenure-track faculty and the increasing burdens of non-instructional labor. This is one of the ways that the short-sighted cost-cutting focused on reductions in faculty negatively impacts university revenues as well.

The success of the university fundamentally and irreplaceably depends on the faculty. Spending for non-academic purposes cannot change this basic reality, and yet over the past decade UMKC has focused the bulk of its cost cutting on the faculty. For UMKC to successfully navigate current and future challenges, this must change.

Reduce Administrative Spending; Increase Spending on Student Services

The university must undertake a thoroughgoing review of administrative spending. While faculty numbers have declined, spending on campus-wide administration or “Institutional Support” (executive direction and planning, legal and fiscal operations, public relations/development, etc.) has outpaced the growth in spending for all other activities on campus except for Intercollegiate Athletics. The growth in annual spending on Institutional Support amounted to \$9.5 million from AY08 to AY19, a 55% increase or almost \$1 million a year. This growth in spending continued unabated even as enrollment declined and state support remained flat. This is unsustainable, and, because it absorbs resources badly needed for research and teaching, it is an impediment to achieving UMKC’s academic mission.

Paradoxically, while spending on Institutional support has grown substantially, spending for Student Services (admissions, registrar, financial aid, career services, etc.) has declined. Incredibly, spending for Student Services in AY19 was slightly below what it was in AY08. The well-known problems in student recruitment at UMKC are obviously connected to this decline in support.

Align Athletics with the Academic Mission

A second area that has seen disproportionate growth at UMKC is spending is Intercollegiate Athletics. Between AY08 and AY19 spending in this area on salaries and benefits alone increased by 74%, and total direct spending (not including scholarships) increased by 54% or \$2.9 million dollars per year. In AY19, Intercollegiate Athletics ran a deficit of \$6.5 million, which was only partially offset by the

student Athletics Fee (which generates approximately \$1.2 million annually) and other smaller sources of funds.

In considering spending for Intercollegiate Athletics, it is critical to acknowledge that in 2017 UMKC convened a task force (the Committee of Institutional Efficiency Task Force on UMKC Intercollegiate Athletics), which included the most senior administrators (Chancellor, Provost, VC for Finance and Administration, Director of Athletics) as well as members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Budget Committee, and members of the Senate. This task force was charged with determining whether UMKC should continue to have intercollegiate athletics, and, if so, what the appropriate level of institutional subsidy from UMKC General Revenues should be. This task force represented the most concerted effort by UMKC in recent memory to study Intercollegiate Athletics.

The task force concluded that UMKC should continue to have intercollegiate athletics but voted unanimously that the university “must reduce its annual investment in Intercollegiate Athletics from General Revenues” (CIE-IA 2017, 2). The task force recommended the direct subsidy (exclusive of scholarships and in-kind support) from the university be reduced from the \$5.8 million in General Revenue it received in AY2017 to a subsidy “in the \$3 to \$4 million range” (CIE-IA 2017, 3). In other words, the task force recommended that UMKC reduce its subsidy to athletics from General Revenue by \$2-3 million. In response, UMKC reduced its subsidy in AY18 by \$1 million, but there is no indication that further reductions have been made, and, in fact, spending on Intercollegiate Athletics increased in AY19 relative to the previous year.

Perhaps more importantly, this task force also made a unanimous recommendation for action if university revenues changed significantly in the future:

The voting Task Force Members unanimously recommend that if UMKC’s General Revenues increase or decrease significantly over time, UMKC’s

Institutional Investment in Intercollegiate Athletics can and should be re-examined in view of such increase or decrease and set at a then appropriate level to help advance the strategic goals of the University (CIE-IA 2017, 4).

Given that a premise of UMKC Forward is to address an anticipated decline in revenues, it is unequivocal that spending on Intercollegiate Athletics should be significantly reduced, and this reduction should be even greater than what was recommended by the CIE task force in 2017.

Reduce or Eliminate Spending on Organizations that do not Contribute to the Academic Mission of the University

UMKC supports several organizations that either have no connection to the academic mission of the university, or whose connection to that mission is tenuous. Most obvious among these are the Kansas City Repertory Theatre (KC Rep), KCUR, and the National Museum of Toys and Miniatures. Employees of all these organizations appear on the UMKC salary report, indicating that these are benefit-eligible employees of the university. It is not possible to use publicly available records to estimate the amount of General Revenue or in-kind support UMKC provides to these entities, so it is not possible to estimate how much could be saved by reducing or eliminating these subsidies. But the magnitude of these subsidies, either direct or in-kind, is in the millions of dollars. Some of these organizations may generate contributions or have endowment income to offset their cost partially or fully, but it is clear that this is not the case for them all.

In AY19, UMKC spent \$14 million overall on Public Service (non-instructional services to the community), an increase of 34% or \$3.6 million over 2008. Some of this spending is for purely humanitarian purposes such as public health, which UMKC AAUP fully supports. But non-humanitarian spending in this area needs to be carefully evaluated in light of the current challenges facing the university.

The KC Rep receives substantial direct and in-kind support and competes directly with the UMKC Conservatory for space. Consequently, the Conservatory occupies substandard facilities on-campus and must lease space off-campus, which increases its cost of operations. The presence of the KC Rep on campus also increases the cost of the new facility being developed for the Conservatory, which must duplicate space currently occupied by the KC Rep. A reasonable estimate of annual direct and in-kind support for the KC Rep would certainly exceed \$1 million, and it is, quite simply, unconscionable that UMKC would continue to subsidize this organization at anywhere near that level while cutting programs that are part of our academic mission.

Except for humanitarian programs, continued spending for non-academic purposes by UMKC must be significantly reduced. To do otherwise is simply a violation of our obligation to prioritize the academic mission. Cutting academic programs while continuing to offer generous subsidies to outside entities that do not contribute to the academic mission will lead to a loss of faith in the leadership of the university.

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