

Affirmation of Faculty Priorities

Approved by the NKU Professional Concerns Committee

April 5, 2012

Background: Since its inception, Northern Kentucky University has faced many challenges and, with the University's increasing growth, continues to confront new ones. The Professional Concerns Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that the University is at a pivotal time. As we search for a new President, enter NCAA Division I athletics, and decide how to respond to further cuts in funding from the state of Kentucky, it is important for the Faculty Senate to vote to affirm the following priorities.

Central to the mission of Northern Kentucky University is to provide opportunity for higher education that is of high academic quality and accessible. In order to fulfill the University's mission in a way that is true to its core values as described in the NKU Strategic Plan (<http://nku.edu/about/plan.php>), we believe that the matters cited below should be treated as key priorities for the Faculty Senate to address with the incoming administration.

Up Close and Personal

It is imperative that small class sizes remain a strategic priority and a valuable NKU brand asset. The NKU Strategic Plan cites our up-close and personal approach to teaching as "...one of the University's most distinctive qualities." This approach is critically important to maintain. However, as class sizes continue to increase, particularly in 100- and 200-level courses, and in online courses, it has become extremely difficult to generate the same high-quality learning environment that has been at the core of NKU's reputation. Additionally, the 2012 Faculty Priorities Survey ranks "Maintain(ing) small class sizes in support of our 'Up Close and Personal' mission" as the number one concern among faculty.

Investment in Faculty and Staff

It is crucial that the University be able to maintain its commitment to acquiring the resources needed to retain and recruit outstanding faculty and staff. This commitment includes providing annual raises, competitive salaries that meet or exceed CUPA standards, and funding for research and development.

Balancing NCAA Division I Athletic Costs

It is critical to establish transparency in spending which reflects a balance between academics and athletics. As the increased athletic costs will be subsidized in part by the institutional budget, we hope that competition for funding will not occur at NKU, as is frequently the case with other institutions. Many faculty are concerned about the long-term sustainability of Division I athletics in a financial climate where annual

athletic budgets typically rise at rates faster than institutional funding. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics reports that between 2005–2009, the median growth in athletic spending per athlete grew 31 percent compared to 15 percent in academic spending per student at public institutions without football classified in NCAA Division I.* As NKU grows, we face a number of budget-related challenges that affect the University's ability to sustain academic quality. In particular, the university's ability to continue to make available to its students an approach to learning that is authentically up-close and personal is at serious risk.

Conclusion

We affirm these priorities as fundamental principles for the ongoing sustainability and future success of Northern Kentucky University.

*Source: Produced by The Delta Cost Project for the Knight Commission using data from the following sources: USA Today's NCAA athletics finance database of NCAA financial reports; NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Office of Postsecondary Education Equity in Athletics database. 2009