

November 13, 2020

Chancellor Ronnie D. Green  
201 Canfield Administration Bldg.  
City Campus 0419

Dear Chancellor Green:

The Academic Planning Committee (APC) has completed a review of the set of budget reduction proposals that you presented to us on August 10, 2020. As you know, we recommended approved for Phase 1 of the budget cuts on August 26, 2020. On November 4, 2020, we completed our consideration of all matters related to Phase 2 of the proposed budget cuts. We decided to separate our decision processes into three distinct discussions and votes, as follows.

The APC first considered all of the proposed budget cuts in Phase 2 *except* for those related to the Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design (TMFD) program and the Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Management (HRTM) degree in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR), which were separately voted upon. The Committee voted unanimously (20-0) to approve those Phase 2 reductions, including the suspension of the Master of Arts in Business with a specialization in Intercollegiate Athletics Administration in the College of Business. The APC considered these proposed reductions to be sensible measures in the face of the extreme financial constraints faced by the University due to the COVID pandemic and its effects on our budget and its aftermath. However, the APC believes that these reductions impact the mission of the University and are not at all painless. We are certain you agree.

#### Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design

The APC considered the TMFD program administered by the College of Education and Human Sciences and partially funded by the Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (IANR). The Committee reviewed numerous resources related to the program, spoke with the Dean of CEHS and the Vice Chancellor of IANR, and heard testimony from every faculty member in the department. Also, over 60 people spoke in support of the program, many of these students, alumni, and others in the State, and from around the country. We understand that the University's State budget allocation to the program is approximately \$1.9M/year. The APC recommends against the proposed elimination of the TMFD program, by a vote of 10-7 with 3 abstentions.

We considered many factors in our evaluation of the proposal to eliminate the program, the most critical being that the proposal for elimination did not meet the relevant APC guidelines. The Committee deemed the program to be of high quality, as contributing substantially to the University mission, and to be one with great potential to succeed. More specific reasons include the relatively unique status of the program within the State, the seeming interest and involvement that the program receives from those in related industries in the State, and the support of the

University community for the program. We learned that members of the program established a strong working relationship with Metropolitan Community College, the Omaha fashion community, and textiles businesses throughout the State. They also have worked effectively with sectors of the agricultural community in Nebraska toward developing sustainable fibers for fabrics. Students in the program spoke very strongly in favor of the program—while such comments were not surprising, their enthusiasm for the work they do was exciting. They believe that they are receiving first-rate and very diverse educational experiences.

A minority of APC members voted to support the recommendation to eliminate the TMFD program. These APC members noted that both college deans supervising the program asserted that its enrollments were falling and that national projection statistics suggest slow or limited growth for graduates. (There was some dispute about these issues from community stakeholders.) Moreover, dissenters deferred to Dean Jones's view that eliminating the TMFD would enable the College to better focus on its core mission areas of thriving young children, accessible health and wellness, and strong communities. Despite recognizing that the program had real value, some on the committee believed that it was reasonable for Dean Jones to propose eliminating the program because, in part, it would better position the College for revenue enhancement under the new budget model.

Committee members seemed to agree that, in short, Dean Jones is attempting to make the College a national leader and believed that not to cut this program would “cut muscle” from the other programs and departments in the College and thwart her efforts to help CEHS reach the goals set for the College. Given the situation she was in, it made sense for Dean Jones to recommend cutting TMFD. However, with a broader view, the dissenting members of the APC felt that this was a program worth saving and that perhaps cuts need to come outside of CEHS in order to save the TMFD program. There was also discussion on whether TMFD was in the right “home” and, as EVC Spiller noted, there is no easy answer to this question, and it is one that other universities have struggled with. One Committee member felt that *if* we are to save TMFD, it might be worth organizing a task force focused on exploring potential locations for the program so that CEHS can retain its newly defined focus.

### Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Management

The APC recommends the proposal to close the CASNR degree in HRTM by a vote of 12-5 with 3 abstentions. The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska (Regents) on September 16, 2005, approved the HRTM program as a single, jointly offered program supported primarily by CEHS and the CASNR, with input from the Nebraska Extension Division and the College of Business. For at least a decade the program appears to have functioned as such. However, in recent years it has become clear that the program is fundamentally a combination of two programs, with some different requirements for degree completion (residency, P/NP options). There is also evidence that student interest and success in CASNR has declined in recent years, which speaks directly to program quality.

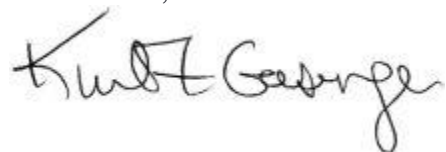
After programmatic changes in 2018, the courses offered by CASNR in the two programs are elective-only and are significantly undersubscribed with an average of 4.5 CASNR majors per semester per course. In Fall 2020, the number of majors in CEHS-HRTM totaled 126 and,

CASNR-HRTM totaled 27. The CASNR-HRTM first-year retention rates were 100% for the two academic years 2015-2017 years but fell to 67% for 2018. In addition, the University conducted previous academic program reviews of HRTM separately for each degree, once in CEHS through the Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences and one in CASNR in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication. Hence, by definition, the proposal to eliminate the CASNR-HRTM program is the elimination of this degree program.

The opposition to the recommendation focuses upon the question of whether the CEHS and CASNR programs are a single program. For example, at the September 16, 2005 meeting, the Regents approved a request to create a single major in Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management (HRTM), “including the College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS), College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR), and Cooperative Extension Division as well as course offerings by the College of Business Administration (CBA)” (Board of Regents minutes). Minutes from the Academic Planning Committee meetings of April 13 and May 11, 2005, describe APC’s consideration of a single HRTM program, and further archival materials include a set of letters in support of the creation of the single program. Besides, the course requirements for the majors within CEHS and CASNR are identical. Those dissenting from the recommendation believed that the evidentiary record to be crystal clear: from its creation, HRTM has been a single program, provided jointly by CEHS and IANR. Also at issue was whether the remaining CEHS-HRTM program would have sufficient breadth of offerings to remain an attractive major.

In closing, while we regret having to recommend any of these reductions, we do appreciate the many positive interactions that the Committee had with members of the University and stakeholder communities throughout the budget reduction process. We understand the difficult process that the administration encountered in making these recommendations. The APC functioned as one team of colleagues – a unit of shared governance – facing a very difficult fiscal situation. We appreciate the efforts of everyone involved. I am sure that the Committee would be pleased to discuss these recommendations with you at your discretion.

Best wishes,



Kurt F. Geisinger  
Chair, Academic Planning Committee  
Distinguished University Professor, Department of Educational Psychology