



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Nick Danz, Dean of Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies
Maria Stalzer Wyant Cuzzo, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

TO: Academic Departments and Schools

RE: Course release and overloads for program coordination and related duties

DATE: January 24, 2021

As you know, over the past few months we have been working to learn about the practice used in academic departments and schools at UW-Superior to provide compensation for non-instructional roles. By compensation we mean course releases, stipends, and overload contracts in addition to typical base salary. As is the case with many roles and responsibilities across the institution, it has become clear there is highly variable practice among departments.

These practices impact UW-Superior Academic Affairs budget planning and raise equity issues between programs, departments, and schools. Thus, we've carefully examined these practices by researching the budget commitments and resources used, obtaining information from chairs and others to outline what the variability is, and we've analyzed how this might impact both budget and equity issues. We've concluded that some alterations in past practice are needed to realize budget savings and ensure equitable practices between academic departments and programs across campus.

A notable example of variable practice is the role of 'program coordinator.' This role typically includes leadership responsibilities such as serving as a liaison to the chairperson on programmatic matters, leading and facilitating program meetings, being responsible for facilitating the completion of programmatic reports, etc. Across the university, some departments use program coordinators and some do not. Some departments provide compensation for the coordinator and some do not. Several programs are small enough that one individual faculty or instructional staff member is responsible for much or all of the program-specific duties. Sometimes these single individuals are compensated in some ways, but in many cases there is no additional compensation. While we do not know the full history of why various departments have come to employing compensated coordinators, we do understand that some programs are required to have a coordinator by an accrediting body, others have advocated and received an administrative approval, and others have simply created them without approval. Programs who do not use coordinators may simply have felt it was not appropriate to ask. Taking all these factors together, the variable use of compensated program coordinators across the institution has created what we believe to be an important issue of equity – currently the use of the program coordinator role, particularly as this role is compensated, is not done consistently or fairly across departments.

The administrative tasks that programs must accomplish, ranging from curricular development, assessment, participation in marketing and admissions efforts, planning, reporting, etc. are the collective and shared responsibility of all program members. Although employing a program coordinator may make the completion of programmatic tasks more efficient, there should be no more or less required tasks in programs with or without coordinators. Thus, we believe that program coordination, where employed in departments, should be considered under the umbrella of service expectations as with all programmatic duties, and as such it should contribute to the annual workload of the coordinator without additional compensation.

While looking into the issue of program coordination, it has also become clear there are many additional non-instructional roles that occur within departments for which compensation is provided. These activities are many,

and include familiar examples such as lab coordinator, school newspaper advisor, accreditation coordinator, technology coordinator, etc. As with program coordination, there is highly variable practice across departments, and again we do not have full information on the historical timeline or rationale for approval for all these roles.

We believe now is the time to take action to re-set the practice of compensation for non-instructional roles. The changes listed below have the goal of improving fairness and equitable compensation for non-instructional roles across departments. Also, as we all know at this is time our campus is facing significant budget challenges. For the past several years, we have been repeatedly trying to control a structural deficit, and the covid-19 challenge has made our fiscal situation even tighter. The changes listed below are designed to bring more consistency across the institution and also lead to substantial savings from Academic Affairs. We project these changes to yield savings of at least \$30,000 annually compared to current practice.

Moving forward we are re-setting the practice on compensation for non-instructional roles by enacting the following:

- Starting with the 2021-2022 academic year, program coordination will not be compensated. Programs may of course continue to employ coordinators in a non-compensated manner. Exceptions may be provided upon approval in the following situations:
 - Programs for which an accrediting body requires a program coordinator
 - Programs in need of short-term focused attention that request and receive approval for a coordinator. This may include new programs, or programs undertaking significant actions or a special initiative that warrant the need for a coordinator.

Programs who wish to request compensation for a program coordinator should submit written request to the Dean including a rationale, timeline, and amount of compensation (release or stipend/overload).

- Starting with the 2021-2022 academic year, all course reassignments for non-instructional purposes in departments and schools will need approval by the Dean. This includes prior planned or recurring reassignments that are known well in advance such as serving as a lab coordinator or school newspaper advisor, 'buying-out' time for research, etc., or for late-breaking reassignments that may result from last-minute course scheduling changes. Department Chairs and School Directors should submit requests for course reassignments to the Dean in writing, including the rationale, timeline, and requested amount of release. Requests will be considered on a rolling basis, and approvals will be recorded in a master list for more clear and transparent tracking purposes.

We considered feedback from departments on all sides of this issue, some in favor of making these changes and some opposed. There were many departments who have never been compensated for program coordinator duties and others who had created innovative ways to provide compensation/course release. We seriously considered whether an incentive-based system could be developed to provide compensation for program coordinators, ultimately deciding there was no equitable way to do so given our fiscal realities. We acknowledge the important work coordinators do and the degree to which some coordinators routinely go above and beyond. Furthermore, we understand this reversal of long-standing practice in departments may feel to some as if we are penalizing some programs for the great work they have done. There is no intention to punish any program but rather to achieve a clear, consistent re-set of the process and then proceed forward in a transparent, defined manner. These decisions are not made easily or lightly, and are ultimately about generating budget savings and creating a more equitable workplace across departments. We are confident that you will work with us as we all learn more about how to become more equitable, save needed budget resources, and thoughtfully discern when exceptions may be appropriate, fair, and transparent.