

**UCONN**

**College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources**  
**Department of Kinesiology**  
July 2018

**FINAL ACTION PLAN**

*July 9, 2018*

*Reviewed by Planning Team, Workshop Attendees & Dean's office*

with assistance from  
Lighthouse Consulting Group  
Warren, RI

**College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources  
Department of Kinesiology  
Action Plan**

**OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE KINESIOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

A foundational step for the department is to agree to an overall purpose that recognizes the value of each of the units. This statement should provide a common understanding of why the department exists that is shared by all faculty and staff. The overall purpose of the Kinesiology Department is to:

**Promote and optimize health, wellness, and performance by training the next generation of exercise and healthcare professionals through research, community engagement, service and teaching excellence.**

To further define the delivery elements, each are described below:

- Research: Create and share knowledge globally.
- Engagement: Community outreach, health promotion, healthcare delivery and community education.
- Service: Serve our communities through health promotion and health care; advance our fields of research and clinical practice through professional service, and scholarship.
- Teaching: To successfully introduce next generations of healthcare providers and exercise scientists through education, training and mentoring at all levels.

**SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES**

These priorities were identified through the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis conducted as part of the phone interviews and confirmed during the workshop. These are not in any particular order:

1. Improve collaboration and efficiency within the department.
2. Clarify expectations about roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff within the department.
3. Expand the department's capacity with new hires and ensure they are mentored and supported properly.
4. Explore options for increasing advertising and marketing impact on enrollment. Not sure advertising is the issue - enrollments are strong but website does not reflect well on the department
5. Improve the department's functions and operations.
6. Design and support an external review of the department to create a benchmark against other universities.

**WHY THIS DEPARTMENT IS IMPORTANT TO ME**

Participants of the workshop were asked what they value about being part of the department. Their statements indicate they value:

- Being part of a team
- Helping the mission of the department
- Sharing a passion for promoting health
- Value the experience that faculty bring to the department
- Value collaborations that achieve goals and excel
- Respect opportunity for my talents skills & experience
- Working with colleagues and friends fostered in this environment

7. Complete the build-out of the human anatomy learning lab (HALL) and related infrastructure.
8. Work with college leadership to overcome constraints that inhibit the department from reaching its full potential.

Specific action steps are presented for each of these in the implementation priority section of this document.

## **CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING THESE PRIORITIES**

There are barriers to achieving this purpose that need to be recognized and managed. These include:

- Requirements by the different accreditation boards for fiscal autonomy of units.
- Weak and decreasing financial support from the University to the Department, in part this is a result of deminsting state support.
- Lack of the university and college administration's understanding of our mission, relevance and significance within the broader field.
- Lack of external program specific benchmarks that ensure our curriculum is current, evolving and being delivered efficiently.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES:**

### **PRIORITY 1: IMPROVE COLLABORATION AND EFFICIENCY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT**

Given the financial and human constraints the department is faced with, it is important that efficiencies be gained wherever possible.

- As a priority, identify and hire new teaching capacity that can work across units and content.
  - Support junior faculty assisting through PTR
- Complete the HALL Lab (see Priority 7)
- Develop strategies to co-teach across Physical Therapy and Athletic Training when course level and content overlap. (e.g anatomy, musculoskeletal pathology) (no need to work with accrediting agencies, but do need to comply with accreditation guidelines including assuring that faculty have the background and expertise to teach the content - this was heavily scrutinized in the last physical therapy evaluation)
- Understand and consider options for overcoming constraints to shared curriculum ventures:
  - Cadaver allotment
  - Undergraduate and graduate / professional program courses are incompatible for cross department instruction
  - Capacity of current room is small and won't easily allow for a ramp-up on student activities.
  - Accreditation counts of FTEs, even if they are for joint ventures. This constraint would have to be engineered around.

### **PRIORITY 2: CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY AND STAFF WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT**

This process seeks to clarify the primary focus for tenure, non-tenure and administrative staff. A shared set of guidelines is meant to decrease confusion and tension. These aren't meant to be rigid boundaries,

but to provide general guidelines that are agreeable to all. These should be shares with all new faculty and staff as part of their orientation.

- Tenure track
  - Focus on research and graduate advising and teaching
  - Some administrative duties and service, but expected to be limited. This, however, has to be tempered with the reality of the current level of available administrative support.
- Non- Tenure track
  - Focus on filling in gaps, especially in teaching and clinical and advising
  - Will be responsible for some Administrative (e.g. program director, undergraduate) work
  - Continue to pursue their clinical, technical, research or lab work
  - Share in administrative and operational responsibilities to keep the department functioning smoothly.
- Graduate Students
  - There are approximately 100 DPT students who have access to about 80% of an administrative FTE to manage clinical education compliance, placement etc. These students also receive additional support from the administrative team on internal administrative issues, registration, and special projects.
  - There is a diminishing number of MS students supported primarily with clinical services contracts. With the exception of payroll authorization and a minimal amount of help with graduate school administrative compliance, these students are general well served and with the additional administrative position will continue to be well-served.
  - There are 15 or so PhD students who are supported on a mix of teaching assistantships, research assistantships and clinical contracts. They manage research projects, teach etc and require a good bit more support. The gap in resources and issues with a new payroll system and collective bargaining agreement with these graduate students has been a stress point.
- Administrative
  - Work across units to deliver a range of services and support.
  - It is estimated that the administrative team is short at least one full time equivalent given the department's growth. (new hire is on the job so this issue is resolved)
  - To ensure that there is equal and appropriate treatment across the department, the leadership cabinet will help the administrative team prioritize workloads and focus on a quarterly basis.
  - To help prioritize, the leadership cabinet will define administrative leads for projects/assignments with assigned back-ups in a shareable matrix so it is clear where to go for guidance.
    - Travel
    - Payroll (faculty, GA, special payroll, student labor)
    - Purchasing
    - Grant support
    - PTR
  - Expand the Admissions Committee to include administration so that they can better support the admissions process and onboarding of new students.

**PRIORITY 3: EXPAND THE DEPARTMENT'S CAPACITY WITH NEW HIRES AND ENSURE THEY ARE MENTORED AND SUPPORTED PROPERLY**

As the department continues to expand, new tenured and non-tenured hires will be required. To ensure the selection of the right talent and their smooth transition into the department, the following guidelines will be followed:

- While developing job descriptions for new hires, consider the following attributes:
  - The ability of the individual to collaborate and communicate across Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, and exercise science
  - What other skills can they bring to the department in addition to their research/clinical/teaching background. For instance, do they have applicable experience with big data, marketing, IT in addition to their research interests.
  - Do they bring knowledge, networks and funding that will support departmental growth in existing or new areas?
    - Support prosthetics (clinical doctorate)
    - Rehab Sciences – PHD program (research/ funding/Ideas)
- If being groomed for a future leadership position, ensure that they have a broad healthcare background and can work across all units.
- Review the mentoring process for new/junior faculty to ensure they are making choices that will advance their professional career track and meet the Department's needs.
  - Ensure that accurate and timely information is being used to advise during tenure process.
  - Identify constraints to achieving tenure and make overt decisions about how to overcome these (i.e., balance teaching load with research requirements).
  - Identify creative ways to use teaching service hours towards tenure requirements.
  - Create a culture wherein senior mentors are able to help balance new/junior faculty workload so they are meeting the department's needs and are not jeopardizing their ability to get tenured.

**PRIORITY 4: EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR INCREASING WEB PRESENCE TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT**

The department recognizes the need to improve its web presence for the purpose of presenting itself and introducing prospective students. There are limited resources and skills within the department to make these changes, therefore we will:

- Consider adding dedicated IT support to the next budget
- Explore what is available via UCONN existing services to improve marketing impact, including E-campuses.
- Include marketing/business/IT experience when hiring new faculty and staff.

**PRIORITY 5: IMPROVE THE DEPARTMENT'S FUNCTION**

- Create a common understanding of how decisions are made in the department and who makes them. Consider: when is everyone involved, when does cabinet make decisions, when does department head make decisions, when does department defer to college.
- Evolve the management structure to include a department head who is supported by a leadership cabinet made up of representatives from the three units. These representatives, led by the department head, will:

- Be responsible for advocating for their unit, but also working as a team to make decisions that are in the best interest of the entire department
- Ensuring that decisions made by the cabinet are communicated to their units
- Develop the unit's annual budget and bring these together into a departmental budget
- Work with the department head to develop departmental all-hands meeting agenda
- Make decision on behalf of their unit, with the full power and authority of the persons in that unit
- Provide a direct line for better dissemination of major decisions made @ CAHNR top levels to faculty and staff
- Have an agenda for each meeting and keep accurate notes of their meetings in the form of agenda item/action-decision made
- Create an annual budget using a transparent budgeting and financial decision-making process that brings the three unit plans together. The budget should:
  - Be open and transparent (especially with DPT tuition differential)
  - Account for revenues (KSI, summer teaching, etc.)
  - Maintain auditable lines
  - Include Grant funding, clarifying overhead impact to the department
  - Investing in current and future senior faculty
  - Includes a rolling long-term capital plan that defines long term investments that need to be made to support the department's growth (infrastructure, equipment, faculty) and how those can be paid for with increased revenue. Consider developing these with three lenses: best case, expected and worst-case scenario.
  - Be available to the entire faculty, ensuring that they understand how and why decisions were made.
- Expand the use of the Q-drive to the entire department. This drive provides single shared area where common files (travel forms, procedures, etc) can be accessed. This drive has been successfully tested with KSI and the lessons learned as part of this test will be included in the departmental roll-out.
- Restructure all-hands departmental meeting so that the group's time is focused on visioning, pro-active planning and decision making. Do not use these meetings to focus on updates and individual unit issues. These can be communicated via email or can be handled at the unit level.
- Create Standard Operating Procedures that capture the main functions that everyone needs to be aware of and provide clear instructions on how to complete them. These would likely include: Travel; Payroll (faculty, GA, special payroll, student labor); Purchasing; Grant support and PTR. These should be available to everyone, provided to new hires as part of their orientation and reviewed and revised annually. Changes to these should be communicated at monthly meetings.
- Promote communication within and between units in a way that appreciates the different role each has in departmental leadership

**What do we value?**

Participants of the workshop were asked how do you want to be treated by the other members of the department?

- Treated with respect, tolerance and understanding
- Treated with courtesy, patience & candor tempered w/kindness
- Treated fairly, recognizing strengths, and appreciation
- Valued for knowledge and experience
- Valued equality and receptive to ideas
- Must exhibit and demonstrate professional behaviors at all times

**PRIORITY 6: DESIGN AND SUPPORT AN EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT TO CREATE A BENCHMARK AGAINST OTHER UNIVERSITIES**

The goal is to improve the department's functionality, ensure that is working at the leading edge of the profession and understand how it compares to other, innovative programs. An external team will not only evaluate the department's strengths and weaknesses, but share their insights about opportunities for innovation and improvement. To do this, the department should create a short-term task force that will explore the methods and mechanisms for conducting a review and how it could be paid for. This task force should report to the leadership cabinet by August 31.

**PRIORITY 7: COMPLETE THE BUILD-OUT OF THE ANATOMY LEARNING LAB AND RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE**

As enrollment continues to increase and the department seeks to improve its efficiency, completing the anatomy lab and increasing classroom sizes will be critical to growth.

- Complete the HALL. This is important for the development for all anatomy courses (esp. Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, Speech/language, development of a orthotics/prosthetics program in conjunction with biomedical engineering, and nursing )
- Increase the size of the classrooms for foundational PT/AT courses at the Bio 4 Building.

**Priority 8: WORK WITH COLLEGE LEADERSHIP TO OVERCOME CONSTRAINTS THAT INHIBIT THE DEPARTMENT FROM REACHING ITS FULL POTENTIAL**

Although there are a number of important steps that need to be taken by the department to improve its efficiency and impact, there are several items that are important to the department's success that fall into the college's purview. The priorities include:

- Additional administrative support that keeps pace with departmental growth
- Promoting and supporting scholarship by increasing available discretionary funds for faculty. Other than start-up packages provided to new faculty, there is no money budgeted at the college or department level for equipment, assistance and travel support. There are some competitive internal funding opportunities for faculty but in general research faculty need to secure some funding in grants.
- Encourage establishing college level leaders dedicated to health missions by creating a-n associate Dean/Provost for "Healthcare" aspect of CAHNR
- A deeper understanding and acceptance of the hybrid model of traditional academic (research-based faculty) and professional clinical educators. Specifically, create a dedicated line items in the budget to support the goals of the Department: Teaching, research, service and clinical practice
- Develop a more robust and rationale business model that creates flexibility for investing in new ideas, equipment or people. The department is well positioned to increase revenue for itself, the college and the university if the appropriate investments are made. The Department can define these in business terms and is prepared to offset expenses by anticipated increase in revenue.
- Ensure a hiring plan is in place to support enrollment growths, specifically within the Exercise Science and Physical Therapy programs.