



Office of the Chancellor
Kimberly van Noort, Ph.D.

UNC Asheville's 2024 Academic Portfolio Review Background, Recommendations, and Next Steps

Background

Necessity of phasing out select programs

Similar to other colleges and universities across the nation, UNC Asheville is facing financial challenges. During the first several months of 2024, the University took immediate steps to address a structural deficit forecast at approximately \$6 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Efforts are ongoing to minimize and resolve an additional deficit in the University general fund in fiscal year 2025.

The deficits stem from several factors, including an enrollment decline of about 25 percent — more than 900 students in all — over the past five years.

Enrollment challenges are not unique to UNC Asheville. They can be observed nationwide due to reductions in the population of traditional college-aged students and a perceived decline in the financial value of a college education. I believe factors specific to UNC Asheville have also contributed to its decline in enrollment. Key among these institution-specific factors is a reluctance to scrutinize and evolve our academic offerings in line with student demand and relevance to 21st-century society. The University must provide relevant programs for which student demand is robust and sustained.

By carefully identifying a number of consistently underenrolled academic programs to be phased out, the University will ease its budget deficit and free resources for necessary reinvestment in higher-demand programs. The academic portfolio review, or APR, initiated in spring 2024 has allowed senior leadership to identify programs to phase out.

Other steps to address budget issues

The APR is among a host of initiatives that UNC Asheville has undertaken in recent months to address its budgetary pressures. Among key actions already completed or underway:

- Creation of a Budget Task Force to perform a holistic review of options
- Imposition of travel restrictions to limit expenses
- Renegotiation of procurement contracts where possible
- Scrutiny of proposed personnel actions, including hiring, by a personnel review committee
- Comprehensive review of staff positions and an associated reduction in force
- Implementation of the UNC System Faculty Realignment Incentive Program for eligible faculty, with at least twelve faculty participating over the next two years
- Reorganization of senior staff and elimination or consolidation of several senior roles: vice chancellor for admissions (eliminated), executive director — governmental and community relations (eliminated), chief of staff (consolidated), and chief financial officer/chief operating officer (consolidated)

Recommendations

Process

The APR followed a measured approach in spring 2024 to evaluate current program offerings. Academic leaders including deans, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and department chairs received findings from an external, independent academic program margin study. The material helped inform the identification of areas for greater attention and inquiry. Individual meetings with academic department chairs and associated deans helped to contextualize the quantitative data. Additional consultation with senior staff followed.

This proposal, if accepted by President Peter Hans and the UNC System Board of Governors, will involve the phasing out of select academic programs, a reduction in the University's collection of academic majors, and faculty reductions in some academic departments to align with enrollment trends.

Identified programs

If the UNC System accepts this proposal, the University will proceed to:

- Phase out the Ancient Mediterranean Studies degree program and academic department
- Phase out the Drama degree program and academic department
- Phase out the Philosophy degree program and academic department
- Phase out the Religious Studies degree program and academic department
- Curtail the Languages and Literatures academic department by eliminating concentrations in French and German

Through the APR, senior leadership sought to minimize the impact of prospective program changes, while setting the groundwork for longer-range strategic reinvestment.

Program context

If approved, these actions would affect five of the University's 27 undergraduate academic departments. In academic years 2020 through 2023, these programs and concentrations together have averaged 25 graduates per year.

During the same four-year period, UNC Asheville averaged 763 graduates a year. Graduates in the impacted programs accounted for about 3 percent of the total graduates in those years. More recently, in the University's census for Spring 2024, the five impacted programs counted 72 students as declared majors. Together they represented 3.5 percent of the 2,023 UNC Asheville students who had declared their majors as of the census.

Implications: students and faculty in impacted programs

While currently enrolled students in the impacted programs will be able to complete their chosen majors at UNC Asheville, future admissions to these programs would be halted. Detailed plans and timelines for winding down the programs — known as teach-out plans — would take shape and be announced following approvals at the UNC System level. The University would help students to complete their programs with minimal disruption and in full compliance with accreditation standards.

For any tenured and tenure-track faculty who would be impacted, the University would provide notice of up to 12 months in advance of any changes to employment. Other impacted faculty would receive notice and/or severance in accordance with applicable UNC System policy. The



University offers a process for potential appeal of any personnel decisions. Any faculty members being separated from the University would be eligible for reasonable assistance to pursue new opportunities.

Next steps

Asheville 2030

While UNC Asheville needs timely action to address its structural budget deficit, the APR is more than a stopgap. It should be a periodic exercise to make sure the University's academic offerings are the right mix to meet student needs, ensure sufficient support for programs, and keep the institution competitive, relevant, and fiscally responsible.

The 2024 APR will help make resources available as the University plans for strategic reinvestment in existing high-demand programs — in subject-matter areas where the University stands out — and in promising new programmatic areas. Developing these plans is an important part of [Asheville 2030](#), the University's community-wide, long-range visioning effort that will gather momentum in the 2024-25 academic year.

The University needs a sustainable enrollment of 3,800 to 4,000 students by 2030. In the Asheville 2030 overall vision, these students will be drawn to UNC Asheville's model of an innovative university of the future — known for its student-centered focus, liberal arts and sciences foundation, hands-on learning, technology-driven solutions, and career-ready emphasis.

By bringing the community together, Asheville 2030 will be, and already is, an inclusive process that prepares the University to capitalize on its greatest strengths and areas of opportunity. Through this work, UNC Asheville will be better prepared and better equipped to carry out its public-service mission for more students — and more communities — for generations to come.



UNC Asheville Department Chairs' Response to Proposed Program Cuts

28 June, 2024

Executive Summary

After an expedient Academic Portfolio Review (APR), Chancellor van Noort has made the recommendation that several academic departments be sunsetted or curtailed in order to ensure long-term university sustainability. The following is a response to that recommendation from the department chairs at UNC Asheville.

The APR has resulted in some difficult administrative decisions, and the Chancellor's proposal would likely result in programmatic losses and faculty and staff separations. In an ideal world, it would be preferable to retain all programs and positions for the moment and to employ a collaborative process over a longer period of time to make these shared decisions together, however difficult. We understand that we are not in those ideal circumstances.

We also acknowledge that Academic Portfolio Review is a necessary practice that should be undertaken regularly and systematically. Unfortunately, the combination of post-pandemic recovery, depressed enrollment, changing student demographics, shifting student demand, and budget shortfalls has created an undesirable context of expediency. This has necessitated bold administrative actions, and the resultant Chancellor's proposal has proven to be particularly distressing to many.

Making curricular and personnel decisions under duress creates a context of fear and uncertainty among all campus actors: students, faculty, and staff alike. However, we believe that we can come to creative and compassionate solutions in the face of these challenges. We propose that, rather than cutting programs and positions, we can "right-size" our faculty and improve efficiency by other means, as discussed below. We believe these approaches will better foster student success and promote institutional growth compared to a proposal of entire departmental or programmatic cuts. We also recommend a more robust, inclusive, and deliberative programmatic review process moving forward. We would like to work with the Chancellor to ensure that, in the future, UNC Asheville takes advantage of a culture of Shared Governance, in order to deploy a collaborative, dependable, multi-year process of Program Review, one that could potentially serve as a model for other UNC institutions across the state and not cause unnecessary uncertainty amongst prospective students as we strive to grow enrollment.

We offer a three-stage view of our response to crisis and growth:

1. **Immediate Response:** We would like to affirm the work that has been done through the assiduous efforts of faculty (alongside staff and administration alike) in order to respond to the budgetary necessities made starkly clear by our Chancellor this spring.
2. **Short-term Consolidation:** If these efforts have not proven sufficient to address the financial situation on campus, we, as faculty, offer some pragmatic suggestions that would prioritize a) the preservation of the academic values offered through our current programming, and b) the preservation of as many faculty (and staff) positions as is rational and humane under a severely compressed timeframe.
3. **Future Growth:** Alongside the pragmatic suggestions, we offer a forward-looking vision that projects growth and improvement toward the Chancellor's Asheville 2030 vision, based on the values exemplified by a public institution, especially the cross-disciplinarity and relevancy of a liberal arts and sciences education.

1. Immediate Response: Faculty Retirement and Curricula

Upon learning about the extent of the budget deficit on campus, all members of the campus community were called to take action to curb expenditures and reduce costs. Acknowledging the severity of the financial situation, faculty took these requests seriously and responded in good faith, resulting in substantial savings (some relevant examples of these faculty responses are detailed in [Appendix A](#)).

Predominant among the efforts to address the budget realities on campus has been opt-in retirements, supported by the UNC System's Faculty Realignment Incentive Program (FRIP). As senior faculty retire, both salary costs and the cost-of-instruction per student decrease significantly. This cost-cutting is already taking place, as at least 12 faculty (of 217 total faculty¹) are pursuing the FRIP opportunity, according to the Chancellor's APR proposal. As a concrete example, due to strategic retirement planning this year, the average faculty salary in the department of Philosophy is projected to drop from ~\$90,000 to ~\$73,000 over the next two years, with a resulting 55% drop in total salaries in that one department. Despite the associated decline in Philosophy faculty by half in this timeframe, they will be able to adapt the departmental curriculum to continue serving their students. These retirements are dramatic gestures to address the budget reality, undertaken willingly, though under an uncomfortably quick timeframe.

In addition, faculty are already working to streamline departmental and university-wide curricula, which will allow us to provide a high quality educational experience for students that is more relevant and cost-effective. Most notably, ongoing reforms to our general education program, the Liberal Arts Core (LAC), are already underway; the goal is to make the LAC less costly to deliver, more manageable for students, and more focused on career readiness, while maintaining an emphasis on University-held values such as critical reasoning, historical perspective, and problem-solving. Further, departments across campus (including those

¹ <https://irep.unca.edu/institutional-facts-staff-faculty-demographics/>

targeted for curtailment and sunseting) have already been engaging in departmental curricular reform in order to streamline costs, making it possible, in some cases, to deliver their curriculum with fewer faculty (see [Appendix B](#) for program-specific statements).

2. Short Term Consolidation: Right-Sizing and Creative Redeployment

We recognize that, despite the significant progress we have made with respect to the budget, we may have to take additional measures to address the deficit. **We would like to maintain all current academic departments, programs, and faculty on campus, and we strongly encourage the consideration of a measured approach to do so.** Rather than the outright cutting of programs and positions, we believe that “right-sizing” can be accomplished through natural attrition (which has averaged over 6% per year²) and more strategic future hiring. To augment this, we recommend that the UNC System consider extending the FRIP opportunity for our campus as well as the adoption of a more careful and deliberative process regarding faculty position allocation decisions moving forward. This approach recognizes that the enrollment decline and associated budget deficit on campus is neither the fault nor responsibility of any one department or program or small handful thereof.

However, if it is a financial necessity to eliminate majors or departments, as proposed, we encourage the creative redeployment of essential programming. Specifically, majors can be retained even if departments are closed; majors can be replaced with minors or as concentrations in other majors; faculty can be reallocated to related departments; and courses can be interdisciplinary and cross-listed to increase class sizes.

This creative redeployment has already been happening on campus, as is the case with concentrations of French and German in Languages and Literatures and the minor in Religious Studies. The elimination of departments would lead to cost-savings for the university in terms of departmental operating budgets, department chair stipends, and course releases.³ Faculty in these departments could then be reallocated to related departments with more robust enrollment levels, while still delivering their disciplinary curricula, contributing to University service obligations, providing co-curricular performances, and offering study abroad programs. The Religious Studies minor provides a good model for how this could be implemented for other affected departments, as it is a cost-effective complement to many majors that is already structured to be delivered by faculty from across the university, rather than from a particular department. By retaining access to these disciplines, students have greater choice and they develop skills that are valuable in their careers and personal lives.

It is worth enumerating some of these skills explicitly, as they are also necessary for career readiness and employment potential. These include critical thinking, creativity and innovation,

² <https://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/bog/doc.php?id=66644&code=bog>

³ Fewer course releases translate to more student credit hours produced at low cost, with less reliance on adjunct faculty

problem solving, ethical judgment, deliberation, public speaking, and communication. Indeed, the skills central to these affected programs are exactly those identified in national surveys of business leaders as being the most essential in the workforce.⁴ These skills also complement the technical skills and experience in applied technologies that students receive through other fields on campus, such as Computer Science, New Media, and Engineering. As an illustration of this important synergy, we expect that a grounding in philosophy and ethics will become ever more necessary as artificial intelligence increasingly becomes part of everyday life. We feel that the skills that these departments help students develop should be retained through a creative and efficient allocation of resources on campus and slight reorganization of academic departments.

Further, the faculty in the departments proposed for elimination or curtailment also offer essential programming and academic opportunities for students well beyond their departments. Many courses in these programs are cross-listed or support students concentrating in other disciplines, as follows:

- Ancient Mediterranean Studies supports Pre-Med students and the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) program, offers Study Abroad opportunities, and cross-lists courses with History, English, Anthropology, Indigenous Studies, and Art History. The department also offers language courses open to all students and that are part of the LAC requirements.
- Drama supports the Interdisciplinary Studies: Arts and Markets concentration emphasis area in drama and provides courses for the minor. The department also has close curricular ties with Music, New Media, Art, English, Mass Communications and Legal Studies while contributing to WGSS, Atmospheric Sciences, Humanities, Honors, and Education. Furthermore, Drama's public performances just last year involved 82 students (half of whom were not Drama majors) and approximately 1300 audience members (about half of whom were from off-campus), which helps connect our campus and community.
- German supports Religious Studies, History and WGSS, while French supports Psychology and WGSS and is working to support other areas with new emphasis on career readiness. Introductory German and French courses provide additional options for students to fulfill LAC requirements.
- Philosophy supports and offers courses in interdisciplinary programs such as Africana Studies, Environmental Sciences, Legal Studies and Human Rights Studies.
- Religious Studies supports WGSS, International Studies, Anthropology, Asian Studies, and Africana Studies.

Interdisciplinarity is necessary for solving real-world problems, and it is an integral part of our institutional mission and one of our greatest strengths. Faculty in the affected departments regularly contribute to our general education program and they also teach creative first-year seminars to engage and retain our first-year students. And initiatives such as UNCA's NEH Connections Grant: Digital Fluency and Experiential Learning: Promoting Digital Humanities in

⁴ See this piece from [Insider Higher Ed](#), this one from [Fortune](#), and this one from [Forbes](#)

Undergraduate Research exemplify UNC Asheville's tradition of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

Though our general core curriculum is currently under review, we expect and hope that faculty in the targeted departments will continue to contribute heavily to it, in whatever shape it takes. In particular, with the addition of the new Foundations of American Democracy requirement for UNC campuses, effective in the 2025-2026 academic year, we believe it will be more necessary than ever to have faculty with expertise on democracy and the founding principles of the American republic on campus. Faculty in Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Ancient Mediterranean Studies can readily offer these courses and indeed already do so. While we recognize the need to be strategic about course offerings and curriculum and to consider budgetary efficiencies in doing so, we believe that cutting these programs entirely will have a disproportionate impact on our ability to deliver the curriculum as a whole, including System-mandated courses. Their elimination would also negatively impact student success and our ability to recruit and retain students.

In light of all this, we believe it is essential to maintain the presence of these disciplines on campus and encourage the Chancellor to consider retaining the faculty in the departments identified in her proposal, should it be approved.

3. Future Growth: Looking toward Asheville 2030

The Chancellor's Asheville 2030 plan envisions UNC Asheville as an "innovative public liberal arts and sciences university of the future known for its student-centered focus, hands-on learning, technology-driven solutions, and career-ready emphasis."⁵ She also envisions a significant growth in enrollment as a result. The faculty fully support this vision and are eager to work collaboratively to make it a reality.

Fortunately, we are well-positioned to meet these goals in a variety of ways. North Carolina is one of the few states that is projected to have an increase in high school graduates by 2030, which makes it reasonable to believe that we can increase our enrollment at UNC Asheville.⁶ Because of our University's rich history of interdepartmental collaboration, we can offer strong and innovative programs that reflect student interest and center student success both in the classroom and after graduation. To achieve this goal, however, the university needs a variety of academic content and disciplines. This variety will attract more students and allow faculty to design creative and innovative interdisciplinary opportunities that will respond to the ever-changing needs of students and employers. Faculty have already begun this process by calling for a revision of our general education requirements to better utilize faculty and academic resources, develop career readiness, and create more flexibility for student choice in their

⁵ "Asheville 2030," <https://new.unca.edu/asheville-2030/> (accessed June 27, 2024).

⁶ See Table 10, page 48 in the U.S. Department of Education's "[Projections of Education Statistics to 2030](#)"

education. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Chancellor to create a curriculum that will fulfill the mission of the University and support the Asheville 2030 vision.

However, we believe that widespread cuts to programs, departments, and faculty will have negative repercussions for this 2030 vision. Such actions restrict student choice, making us less attractive than some of our peer institutions, and affect perceptions of the institution. This can thus adversely affect student recruitment and retention. The continued instability this will cause also has the potential to weaken our Moody's credit rating, exacerbating many of our current challenges.

Rather than cutting programs, we need a collaborative process for building and executing the Asheville 2030 vision. We need a plan that projects strength and inspires confidence amongst all stakeholders in the institution. Regular academic program review is necessary for a healthy institution. But implementation of that review should include reasonable time for departments to respond, adapt, and improve. The faculty are committed to program review, and have already begun to develop such processes, as evidenced by the in-process revision of our general education program and Faculty Senate document IDC 3,⁷ which passed this spring.

4. Conclusion

The faculty of UNC Asheville acknowledge and recognize that we as an institution have been faced with a decrease in enrollment that has led to a budget deficit, which requires immediate action. In response to these challenges, Chancellor Van Noort has recommended the sunseting of Ancient Mediterranean Studies, Drama, Philosophy, and Religious Studies programs and the curtailment of Languages and Literatures. Such targeted cuts would free up instructional costs and potentially reduce the budget deficit as early as fiscal year 2026. The stated goal of such program eliminations and curtailments is to create a sustainable business model that reflects current market demand in the face of decreasing student enrollment. However, such cuts limit student choice, make our university less competitive, negatively affect our public image, put our credit rating at risk, and narrow our academic offerings. We, instead, recommend a more holistic approach that addresses the financial crisis through faculty retirements and natural attrition, contraction and combination of departments, strategic and efficient development of our core curriculum, and regular, collaborative program review.

We seek to work with the Board of Governors and Chancellor van Noort's Administration (especially including incoming Provost Villanueva-Russell) to balance sustainability, budget, skills development, and academic choice to prepare UNC Asheville and its students to adapt to current and future challenges. As such we believe that our proposal meets these expectations and will further the mission of the university.

⁷ <https://www3.unca.edu/facultysenate/2023-24/IDC%203%20Academic%20Program%20Review.pdf>

Signatures

Kevin Sanft, Ph.D. [Presiding Officer]
Chair of Computer Science

Tamie Beldue
Chair of Art and Art History

Christopher Godfrey, Ph.D.
Chair of Atmospheric Sciences

Jonathan Horton, Ph.D.
Chair of Biology

Lise Kloeppel
Chair of Drama

Leah Greden Mathews, Ph.D.
Chair of Economics

Tiece Ruffin, Ph.D.
Chair of Education and Director of Africana Studies

Kirk Boyle, Ph.D.
Chair of English

David Gillette, Ph.D.
Chair of Environmental Science

Sarah Judson, Ph.D.
Chair of History

Reid Chapman
Interim Director of Humanities Program

Sonia Kapur, Ph.D.
Interim Chair of Interdisciplinary and International Studies

Greta Trautmann, Ph.D.
Chair of Languages and Literatures and Interim Chair of Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Sonya DiPalma, Ph.D.
Chair of Mass Communication

Becky Sanft, Ph.D.
Chair of Mathematics

Jonathan Toby King
Chair of Music

Victoria Bradbury, Ph.D.
Chair of New Media

James Perkins, Ph.D.
Chair of Physics and Astronomy

Ashley Moraguez, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of Political Science

Peter Haschke, Ph.D.
Co-Chair of Political Science

Mark Harvey, Ph.D.
Chair of Psychology

Katherine C. Zubko, Ph.D.
Chair of Religious Studies

Marcia Ghidina, Ph.D.
Chair of Sociology and Anthropology

Amanda Wray, Ph.D.
Director of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Appendices

Appendix A

- Actions already taken by UNC-Asheville Faculty:
 - We radically changed course schedules without the participation of adjunct faculty.
 - We suspended all travel expenditures and expenses that were not mission-critical.
 - We raised capacities on courses to meet student demand at lower costs.

- We relied on endowed funds and departmental donations, instead of state funds, for many of our expenditures.
- We put our critical research expenditures on hold to prioritize student and institutional needs.
- We considered early retirement, under the FRIP plan.
- Proposed Increased-Efficiency Plans:
 - Ongoing curricular reform will facilitate cross-listed courses, improving enrollment numbers for many upper-division courses.
 - Class sizes are being increased where appropriate, allowing us to use our teaching resources more efficiently and thus at a better cost-ratio.

Appendix B: Departmental Recommendations and Statements of Support

[Ancient Mediterranean Studies](#)

[Drama](#)

[Languages and Literatures](#)

[Philosophy](#)

[Religious Studies](#)

[Art and Art History](#)

[Atmospheric Sciences](#)

[Biology](#)

[Business](#)

[Computer Science](#)

[Department of Education](#)

[History](#)

[Interdisciplinary Studies](#)

[Mass Communications](#)

[Mathematics and Statistics](#)

[New Media](#)

[Physics and Astronomy](#)

[Political Science](#)

[Psychology](#)

[Student Success](#)

Ancient Mediterranean Studies

The Ancient Mediterranean Studies department proposes that a minor in AMS be retained at UNC Asheville in order to keep courses that have proved popular with students over the past decades and a body of expertise that they will no longer have access to at all if all three members of the department lose employment at UNC Asheville.

The major in AMS has always attracted a steady number of students which has not decreased during the university's enrollment decline. The only consistently low numbers are in our specialized upper division Greek courses: with regret, we recognize that these are unlikely to be an option in a new minor, but they could be covered on the UNC language exchange for minors who wanted this option. Enrollments in the Latin and Greek that count towards the LAC are solid (currently 28 across Latin 1 and 2 and 18 across Greek 1 and 2), suggesting that there is demand for elementary courses in these languages. Latin has always been an attractive second language option for pre-law and pre-med students. From Fall 2021-Spring 2024, between 66% and 75% of our teaching has contributed to well-enrolled courses across the Liberal Arts Core, and we have taught other electives that have appealed to students who are interested in the ancient Mediterranean world but have other priorities for their major discipline. Whatever form the Liberal Arts Core eventually takes, it is certain that faculty from the AMS department will be able to contribute to it with well-enrolled classes. We are a versatile department and we have contributed over the past few years to DI, DI-R (for Spring 2025) Scientific Perspectives, Second Language, FYS, Study Abroad, HUM, HON, and ARTS.

A slightly reconfigured minor in AMS would concentrate on accessible classes taught in translation, whose popularity has been proven in past iterations and which can be cross-listed with other departments' offerings for increased overall efficiency. The department offers classes that no other department has the expertise to offer. For example, Dr Mills' Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World, cross-listed with WGSS, has always been well-enrolled, as has Mythology which could be included in the continuing RELS minor. Several courses taught by Dr Hook and Dr Butera as FYS courses (e.g. Protest and Dissent in the Roman World, Ancient Roman Woodworking and Democracy and Tyranny in Athens, Rome...and America?) either have been, or could be reworked as 300- or 400-level courses which would attract AMS minors but also students from across the university if formally cross-listed with other departments, such as HIST, ANTH and others. In recent years, AMS has also taught a Greco-Roman medical terminology course which is a scientific perspectives course with clear use for STEM students. Again, this offering is unique to our department.

Each member of the department has their own expertise which is not duplicated in other departments. If the department were to be disbanded, there are several natural homes for each of us elsewhere: obviously, the highly interdisciplinary nature of AMS would make Interdisciplinary Studies one option, but we have been placed for the last 2 years in Languages and Literatures. Alternatively, Dr. Mills and Dr. Hook could deepen the offerings of the English department with courses taught in translation but based in their expertise in the original language, while Dr. Butera's historical and archaeological focus would strengthen the History Department. Dr. Butera regularly offers ancient art courses for Art History that are also not duplicated elsewhere. We are also able to contribute to the new Foundations of American Democracy course required by the state, since the founders used ancient Greek experiments in democracy and the "mixed constitution" of the Roman Republic as models, and to LANG 120.

Drama

Personnel Reductions and Savings

We believe this proposed personnel structure is sufficient to deliver our revised curriculum and provide foundational support for the overall vision, at least until the program meets its financial and programmatic sustainability benchmarks. The faculty's terminal degrees (MFAs) prepared them to bridge theory and practice through rigorous intellectual exploration and research combined with hands-on learning.

- 2 Full Professors retired in 2020 & 2023 and have not been replaced.
- 1 Full Professor is housed in Interdisciplinary Studies. They currently hold an endowed professorship in Drama. After their term ends in Fall 2025, they could return full-time to their home department in Interdisciplinary Studies. They are planning to retire in the near future.
- New sustainable staffing structure & university support that aligns with evolved strategic vision:
 - 3 full-time faculty retained can deliver the curriculum.
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ Administrative Staff Support
 - $\frac{3}{8}$ Technical Director shared with STEAM Studio
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ Production Support Staff shared with New Media
 - Using student workers and work-study to give career-ready experience and reducing staff and faculty needed to deliver the curriculum.
 - Right-size and right-time to continue a growing major.
 - Eliminate release time for production. Only use the credit-hour model to handle production. This will effectively add 1.25 FTE from the current teaching model using contact hours.
 - Sunset Theatre Arts Licensure. This frees one faculty member to devote time to the major and general education requirements of the university.
 - Sunset Dance Program and Minor. This eliminates a full time faculty member and multiple adjunct professors that work within this program.

Immediate future rightsizing

- Restructure curriculum to remove redundancy and release time and replace with credit-hour only model. This equals more teaching of classes and less administration of programs.
- Create a live entertainment certificate program with existing classes to appeal to new student demographic to aid in reaching 4000 students
- Create a more sustainable production schedule that does not rely on state funding.
- Sense of belonging and teamwork will increase retention in students that would otherwise not be retained.
- Increase majors to a sustainable level to produce steady graduates and help in retention efforts with minors and overall value added student and community participation.
- Use of production photos to make visually appealing recruitment materials.

- The drama department is achieving a reputation for excellent training for beginning students and a home for transfer students from other state schools including Western Carolina, Charlotte, ECU as well as private schools including Mars Hill, Elon and many others. With our recruitment at the Southeastern Theatre Conference, the largest theatre conference in the nation, we are achieving a regional and national reputation for effective training and community based production that draws the community together.

Needs

- Continued support from the University's Communication & Marketing, Admissions, Career Center and Advancement Departments
- Collaboration with key community partners to expand recruitment base into demographics that are not being recruited or reached. This is already happening with plans of expansion in the near future.

The current composition of faculty are working as a cohesive, harmonious unit and therefore have greater capacity to deliver the curriculum in more efficient, cost-effective, and forward-thinking ways. We are on the cusp of something great.

Languages and Literatures

Our Department provides excellent instruction in the target languages, recognizing that efficient communication requires the acquisition of socio-linguistic skills – learning and performing in meaningful contexts. Many departmental courses integrate community-engaged pedagogies, and we encourage and also design study abroad programs to promote students' learning outside the classroom.

We are proud to prepare students for professional contexts that require excellent communication skills, and the ability to work/produce/engage with people across cultures and languages.

We believe that our work not only with languages but with language (communication/meaning) is essential at the university level, and in full alignment with our mission.

I. Budget elements:

- Contractions: by 2025 we will have had 2.5, possibly 3.5 TT retirements within two years.
- Our faculty/student ratio will be "healthy" / sustainable because we are a service department to General Education requirements.
- We can deliver quality instruction with an efficient budget (we are not an expensive department to run).

II. LL: Profile: *sustainability and versatility*

- Beyond language / lit instruction in languages other than English, our faculty contribute regularly to many university programs and other majors. These include LAC programs (HUM, Arts and Ideas) and beyond: WGSS, AIIS, HIST, EDUC, PSYCH, ENG, Human Rights Minor, Latin American Studies Minor, with possibilities in Botany, Drama, Anth/Soc, MCOM (film history courses), etc. –that is to say, we are highly **versatile** faculty
 - Added point; our expertise as pedagogues is a skill that is highly transferable and will be more so as new teaching styles need to be considered with new technologies
- Contributions to UNC Language exchange with healthy enrollments (example: SPAN 332 spring has healthy enrollment via cross listing and language exchange)
- Upper level courses will continue to be cross listed (Germ 390 has close to 20 students with cross listing in WGSS and HIST. Eleven of those students are in the GERM program)

III. Looking to the future:

It is possible that our numbers do not currently sustain concentrations (majors in individual language tracks) that we have to staff completely; thus we are currently considering a possible reconfiguration of some of our concentrations to healthy minors—with a concentration (major) possible with semester-long study abroad— and language instruction (including current languages; growing with Japanese and Mandarin); development of language lab; taking advantage of grants and initiatives such as:

- Department of Defense and Dept of State grants for ‘languages critical to national interest’: Portuguese is classified as highly critical and receives lots of funding [cf. Univ of Oregon Portuguese program and dodea.edu]; German and Spanish are also classified as ‘highly critical’; DoD language training status also means increased enrollment because DoD personnel could then get proficiency certified through us
- More explicit collaboration with: SLA teacher training, bilingual primary/secondary ed. training
- Additional revenue stream: gaining accreditation to administer/evaluate national language proficiency exams (TestDaF/Goethe Zertifikat Deutsch, DELF/DALF, DELE, Celpe-Bras/CAPLE). Testing centers concentrated currently in Atlanta, Miami, DC; the Southeast is currently underserved.
- Building summer initiatives (ej: Portuguese intensive instruction + study abroad to provide a minor for system-wide programs; other language ‘camps’)
- Concentrating on faculty development opportunities to understand how our discipline blends with AI opportunities, and to receive the appropriate training

IV. Growing majors:

- We are currently working on APC documents in order to streamline our curriculum for efficient delivery toward minor (and major) completion. This will include a small reduction in required hours, and a recognition that our majors will likely be in tandem with another field of study (double major).
- We will work on sustaining our concentrations via SABR (we will not have to staff all classes) as we envision enrollment growth on campus. Students can complete concentrations with a semester-long Study Abroad, and we are earmarking scholarships for student support. We have also identified donors wanting to support this.

Other efforts:

- Greater outreach to K-12 in the area
- Diversifying schedule, including more asynchronous offerings to serve a wider population/profile of students
- Strengthening advising (being more intentional), especially with support for students wanting to study in more than one area.
- Working toward creating microcredentials for students and K-12 instructors (ej. 'Proficiency' stamps for transcripts that can indicate certain levels of proficiency in different languages)

V. Conclusion

We will continue to consider 'problems' as well as discipline, and in doing so, reconsider identity (department of 'intercultural communication'?) perhaps with more than one track.

Important takeaways:

- AI cannot replace human to human communication, and industry and government (GM, Toyota, Buncombe County Sheriff's office, software startups, etc) are hiring people with language backgrounds and looking for people trained in intercultural communication.
- Spanish continues to be fundamental and needs to be supported and strengthened as we work toward building and supporting our demographic of latinx students;
however, industry, military and government are deeply interested in other languages as well (see above about DoD grants, etc.)
- Other high impact, qualitative contributions to our students: We provide students with skills that employers look for, including such concepts as global market readiness (we embed career readiness—portfolios for multinational experience, etc. in our courses), engaging difference, creativity, and certainly understanding and creating the elements of narrative.

Philosophy

We respectfully request that the BOG reconsider the proposal to eliminate UNC Asheville's Philosophy Department. The Philosophy program at UNCA is a longstanding university asset. Forfeiting its many contributions will deprive our students, campus and community in ways that have not been fully accounted for. We ask the Board to take stock of the true value of this vital program.

Philosophy is a foundational discipline and a keystone of higher education that has endured for over 2000 years. Indeed, it is where the academy started. Most importantly, its relevance has lasted for good reason—Philosophy assures students a broadly applicable preparation for contributing to society that never loses value. Students of any major who take Philosophy courses develop crucial skills that are the distinctive hallmarks of the discipline. With its dedication to analytical rigor, philosophical study encourages intellectual fitness that positions students to adapt with and contribute to dynamic workplace demands and society's changing needs. Data from numerous nationwide studies shows philosophy as a clear path to a variety of careers - including the top professions. Consider that Philosophy is focused directly on core skills: critical thinking, logical analysis, ethical reasoning, research, an ability to understand and communicate about complex human problems, and ability to deal with abstract concepts and apply them to everyday situations. These skills are needed by all college students, and all citizens, not just philosophy majors. They are also precisely the abilities that business executives and hiring managers identify in nationwide surveys as the most needed in today's dynamic workplace. If they are not on a narrow specialized professional track, a student is best served when their education teaches them how to handle questions that do not have easy answers in a systematic way.

These skills are evidenced in studies that track philosophy majors. Philosophy students consistently rank among the highest for standardized tests, career readiness skills and post-graduate earnings. Philosophy graduates tend to pursue high-earning professional roles. This is reflected in the success of UNC Asheville philosophy graduates. We have alums in law, government, scientific research / IT, non-profit management, the financial and investment sector, business, and real estate development. From a business standpoint, a philosophy degree has a high return on investment.

We emphasize that UNCA Philosophy faculty are accomplished, award-winning instructor-scholars and campus leaders who are well-positioned to contribute to the UNCA's new LAC curriculum. Philosophy is the traditional home of Civics education. The latest work in our field is at the forefront of current societal issues and human problems (AI, Technology, Environment, Medical Ethics, Criminal Justice, Free Speech, Rights Law, Neuroscience and the Mind, etc.). Our faculty model the professional relevance of philosophical training. One worked in industry specializing in corporate communications and another has a JD and acts as Pre-Law advisor for the campus.

Basing a decision to eliminate the program on a study that omits the most important information is problematic to say the least. The rationale represents oversights that grossly distort the work of the Philosophy Department: all PHIL faculty contribute extensively outside our home department. From 2020-2024, 58% of the Student Credit Hours taught by the Department were courses outside the PHIL designation. Philosophy is one of only four departments that teach all four Humanities courses and offers classes for every “core” LAC requirement. The essential importance of philosophy at UNCA has always been independent of the number of philosophy majors. We would expect a program review to give an accurate account of our value by evaluating the full extent of our role. Philosophy’s impact and the relevance of content we deliver beyond our major was completely ignored in the study. Had the study instead considered departments for their campus-wide reach and applicability, Philosophy would be among the top contributors to sustaining UNCA’s mission. We urge the Board to consider that this decision process has been short-sighted and hasty. It now recommends what will be a sweeping loss to students and the institution without meaningful faculty input and only this meager opportunity to correct the misrepresentations that have brought us to this point.

Finally, there is no need to eliminate the Philosophy Department entirely in order to “right size” its place at UNCA. With three confirmed Spring 2025 retirements, the changes already represent an immediate 50% faculty reduction. With this re-sized department in Fall 2025, anticipated UNCA enrollment growth, and a streamlined curriculum emphasizing a reduction in upper division courses already in the planning, philosophy class sizes will increase significantly without reducing the Department’s contributions to other programs. Our refreshed curriculum will focus on content that represents essential skills for job preparedness. Philosophy Department professors can offer civics and citizenship courses, ethics, civil discourse, Pre-Law and Legal Studies as well as the essentials of critical thought and logic. Further, given the chance, the Department could offer innovative new courses in ethics and AI, ethics, in science and technology, law, and justice & sustainability. One example of this new civics-oriented curriculum is a new UNCA National Collegiate Ethics Bowl Team supported by donor funding 2024-25. We also have a new Philosophy Alumni Group - led by PHIL alum Michael Raymond (UNCA Foundation Board, UNCA Alumni Board, Donor) that is aimed at career mentoring, internships, and professional networking for PHIL majors. Simply put, if given the chance, our tradition of campus leadership will be an asset to defining and implementing the University’s UNCA 2030 goals.

We are gravely concerned about the impact on UNC’s proud reputation. The UNC System is an example to the world of a rigorous education that combines the aims of citizenship and economic productivity. UNC Asheville upholds this quality on a smaller scale in Western North Carolina, and our Philosophy Department is a significant contributor in that project. Accepting the Chancellor’s proposal to eliminate the Philosophy Department at UNCA will be a fundamental betrayal of the school’s responsibility to prepare students to make their best possible contributions to the overall well-being of the state, including its economy. At the very least the State’s designated liberal arts university should offer its students a minor in philosophy—yet even this has not been brought up for discussion.

Finally, It is profoundly significant that the centerpiece of our Highsmith Student Union is a mural-- an oversized reproduction of Raphael's famous School of Athens--created by the UNCA students and faculty. The painting symbolizes the great philosophical traditions of courageous inquiry and pursuit of knowledge. We respectfully ask the BOG to preserve these traditions at UNCA and to provide the opportunity for future generations of Western NC students to benefit from them.

Religious Studies

The Department of Religious Studies is currently staffed with approximately .75 faculty, down from 3 TT positions. Because of the budget crisis and relatively low enrollment, replacing faculty is not a possibility. As such, it was already proposed and accepted by the Provost to dissolve the Department while exploring other forms of offering Religious Studies at UNCA while supporting currently enrolled Religious Studies majors. One remaining faculty member, Dr. Rodger Payne, is on phased retirement which concludes summer 2025. One faculty member, Dr. Kate Zubko, is currently CTL Director but needed a departmental affiliation. Because of her background, a departmental affiliation change to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology was approved by the Provost, effective July 1, 2024. Dissolving the Department of Religious Studies and the reassignment of Dr. Zubko to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology saves the university the cost of 2 tenure-track positions, a Chair's stipend, a course release, and assists in addressing the larger issue of realigning low-enrolled programs. While the original proposal included shifting the RELS major to a stand alone program, akin to WGSS, with the budget shortfall and limited teaching capacity of the one remaining faculty member, we recommend retaining a RELS minor only. This complementary component to a BA or BS degree in a variety of other disciplines would be cost-effective to deliver as it is already structured as an interdisciplinary minor with contributions from 14 different faculty members from across campus and would not require any further faculty hires to maintain. The minor is likely to evolve in the next few years to continue to meet new student career and life needs, such as the study and practices of conflict transformation that are often rooted in religious contexts but now are being deployed in secular, civic contexts.

Art and Art History

The Department of Art & Art History would like to acknowledge the impact the Chancellor's recommendation to sunset the departments of Ancient Mediterranean Studies, Philosophy, Drama, and Religious Studies while curtailing the course offerings of Language and Literature by eliminating concentrations in French and German would have on our students. Separate from private art schools that train artists and art historians to be 'practitioners' of their medium through technical capabilities, our program celebrates and excels at educating 'artists' and 'art historians' to use their medium as a voice. Contemporary artist, Antonio Lopez Garcia says "you can be very talented and have nothing to say". Our students excel at engaging with the breadth

of courses and cross-disciplinary study that UNCA offers through the liberal arts curriculum. Collaborations are frequent between students in Art & Art History and Drama, Philosophy, Religious Studies and perhaps the most significant, Ancient Mediterranean Studies. Future students in our department would be at a great disadvantage, losing the robust education our graduates are recognized for. Our department will continue to work diligently in response to the decline of enrollment with initiatives to increase enrollment through targeted outreach and increased retention through peer mentorship programming. Cost saving measures include, but not limited to, our department increasing majors by 74 students even though at the end of FY25 we will have decreased in full-time faculty from ten years prior. The elimination of four departments on our campus will greatly affect our ongoing efforts and the attraction of UNCA to prospective students and families.

Atmospheric Sciences

Consider these points from the Department of Atmospheric Sciences:

- One tenured faculty member is leaving the university after the Fall 2024 semester, leaving only three tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the department.
- The broadcast meteorology concentration within the atmospheric sciences major requires a course in public speaking (DRAM 213), which will be unavailable in the absence of our drama department.
- Grace Campbell, who is housed within the Department of Philosophy, teaches a crucial Environmental Ethics course (ENVR 324) that satisfies an element of the Liberal Arts Core. This course is very popular with natural sciences students, especially those majoring in atmospheric sciences.

Biology

The faculty of the Biology Department agree with other faculty that the Chancellor's proposed termination of four departments (Ancient Mediterranean Studies, Drama, Philosophy, and Religious Studies) and curtailing another (removing French and German concentrations from Literatures and Languages) are premature and will decrease the University's ability to deliver a well rounded curriculum to its students, while not necessarily addressing the financial shortfall in the upcoming academic year. We understand the need to make curricular adjustments to address the current budget shortfalls. Our Department, like everyone, has discontinued the use of adjuncts to deliver our curriculum. We will be reviewing our curriculum during our summer faculty retreat to streamline the delivery of our curriculum and find areas where our faculty can contribute to our general education curriculum (which is also undergoing a formal review/revision). We have also reduced course supply budgets and are being careful with spending requests for supplies and travel. We have also increased the amount of unrestricted donor support in recent years to support our activities, physical spaces, and student scholarships.

Statement from Law and Ethics faculty in the Business Department

The Philosophy Department has been a substantial, integral resource and collaborator for developing ethics content for the Business Department's Law and Ethics course over the years. Philosophy faculty have served as guest lecturers in this business course numerous times, reviewed and contributed to the course's ethics content, answered questions, and provided ethics resources. In addition to course content collaboration, Philosophy faculty have substantially supported and encouraged my scholarship, including inviting me to join their panel presentation at an ethics conference and helping refine my content. This scholarship, both substantive and pedagogical, has benefited the Business Department's course development and students. The Philosophy faculty also invited me to co-facilitate a cross-disciplinary ethics learning circle for the Center for Teaching and Learning. This Philosophy-lead, semester-long ethics learning circle was composed of faculty across several departments and substantially aided and supported ethics content development across the curriculum, as well as fostering cross-disciplinary content awareness, collegiality, and collaboration (an invaluable CTL, which greatly benefitted students as a result). Due to Philosophy faculty introducing and supporting my participation in relevant ethics conferences, I have subsequently presented on my own and also served as a judge for the National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl for several years. In that vein, we have discussed the possibility of UNCA having an Ethics Bowl team of its own, and I was excited to see that the Philosophy Department received Ethics Bowl donor funds for the '24-25 school year. The National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl is a tremendous opportunity for cross-disciplinary promotion of ethics because Ethics Bowl teams include students across majors, including Business. The Philosophy Department is essential to leading this endeavor, including providing an ethics course, a specific philosophy course to support a team, and coaching. Finally, the Philosophy Department houses UNCA's pre-law program and hosts the legal studies minor, which includes the Business Department's Law and Ethics course and, this fall, business law undergraduate research for a pre-law student minoring in legal studies.

Computer Science

The Computer Science department supports a solution that retains our current excellent faculty in the five targeted departments and maximizes student choice. Developments in areas such as Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence highlight the importance of training in Philosophy and ethics, in particular. Game development and virtual reality experiences benefit from expertise of storytellers and writers and those trained in Drama. Computer Science has utilized Drama faculty to teach public speaking and interview skills. The Computer Science department believes we can retain our excellent faculty, offer a wide variety of courses in the programs, and achieve cost savings via natural attrition and strategic hiring.

Department of Education

The UNCA Licensure Program is approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and nationally accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). It serves the people of North Carolina by preparing teachers to seek and

maintain employment in the rural areas of the far western mountain region and all other areas of the state and the nation.

Unlike institutions that offer degrees in the field of education, UNCA's model of educator preparation requires candidates to complete both a disciplinary major and a series of professional education courses leading to the North Carolina Standard Professional 1 Teaching License. In addition to their major coursework, candidates take rigorous and practical professional education courses along with a complementary **arts and sciences core curriculum** that fosters broad perspectives and critical, reflective, and creative thinking skills. Currently, teacher licensure is offered in the areas of Special Education: General Curriculum (K-12), Elementary Education (K-6), Math (9-12), Science (9-12 Biology, Chemistry, Comprehensive Science, Earth Science, or Physics), Middle Grades Education (6-9; Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies), Art (K-12), Theater Arts (K-12), English (9-12), **Latin (9-12), and Social Studies (9-12)**. The University's academic program review and curtailment affect our department's ability to offer licenses for Latin (9-12) and Theater Arts (K-12). Furthermore, it impacts our ability to offer licensure students a strong, high-quality complementary **arts and sciences core curriculum** necessary for today's intercultural and globally competent teachers. The phase-out of some humanities disciplines and curtailment of languages and literatures does not support the teaching profession.

History

Chancellor Van Noort's proposal to phase out the departments of Ancient Mediterranean Studies, Philosophy, Drama, and Religious Studies while curtailing the course offerings of Languages and Literatures by eliminating concentrations in French and German would significantly limit the overall capabilities of the University of North Carolina Asheville to provide a full and robust undergraduate education. Faculty from the impacted disciplines have supported our majors in a variety of capacities. The History department has created connections across disciplines to enhance the curricular experiences of our majors. Regarding budget matters, the History Department has had a faculty retirement (Dan Pierce), a postdoc departure (Abena Boakyewa-Ansah), while losing Darin Waters to the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, meaning that teamwork in an interdisciplinary way is ever more necessary. As we make changes to the curriculum this type of cooperation across fields will be imperative. With the imminent introduction of the Foundations of American Democracy requirement into our Curriculum (Fall 2025), History and Political Science will not be able to shoulder that load alone. Our Philosophers and experts in Ancient Mediterranean Studies are acutely qualified to join in meeting that demand moving forward. We will need them to deliver the General Assembly's mandate. Drama, while not directly connected with the History major, has been a fundamental presence on our campus – prompting students to choose UNC Asheville as well as remain active learners in the arts while here. Moreover, Drama courses allow students to broaden their approaches to storytelling, a career skill that historians -- and many other professions -- should master. Envisioning collaboration moving forward with theater is not difficult and we believe those faculty members would be receptive to dialogue on such efforts.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Majors, minors and certificate programs in our program are interdisciplinary by nature and students take courses across different prefixes to fulfill their degree, minor, and certificate program requirements. The curtailment/elimination as announced by the Chancellor will impact the disciplinary diversity of courses students will have to choose from and consequently limit the knowledge and skills they would gain from those prefixes which would have counted towards their degree in our program.

Due to the paucity of time, we have not done a full-fledged study of the reduction in the number of elective course offerings for our students, but we believe this will impactfully limit the elective choices for students in our programs. The elimination of the Drama Department will particularly impact our Arts, Management, and Entrepreneurship (now Arts & Markets) concentration and minor.

Mass Communications

The curtailment of the Drama Department will impact interdisciplinary learning opportunities for MCOM students in the areas of acting, directing, and public speaking. These skill sets prepare students for roles in journalism, public relations, television and film. Performance based activities assist students in the development of soft skills such as teamwork and problem solving. Culturally, stage products enrich the campus community through the exploration of ideas. Students may not be familiar with Broadway productions or regional theater, thereby making the campus drama department their first exposure to staged productions.

Some of the students who major in Mass Communication also minor in Drama and vice versa because of the interdisciplinary nature of both departments. So, having a Drama Department helps attract students to the Mass Communication Department as well as UNCA as a whole because they can also study and practice drama.

MCOM has taught cross-listed interdisciplinary courses with the Drama department several times over the last 15 years including: Directing/Acting for the Camera and a senior seminar film class. MCOM video students also actively recruit Drama students for their films every semester. In addition to casting sessions we have had various workshops and guest speakers that benefit both departments.

Students in all programs slated for elimination or curtailment have enrolled in MCOM 104 or VMP 205. Having these students in our courses reinforces the strong interdisciplinary effectiveness of the subject matter. Students bring important ideas from their respective majors to discussions, group projects, and assignments. As an institution committed to open inquiry, the diversity of students within these classes from various majors is essential. MCOM majors and minors learn from their fellow students. Losing the affected majors will silence important ideas from being shared amongst all.

Mathematics and Statistics

The Department of Mathematics & Statistics has implemented several cost-saving measures in response to enrollment trends, the departure of a faculty member in the 2023-2024 academic year, and the university's financial situation. First, our department is developing a proposal to merge the pure and applied concentrations. This consolidation will lead to a reduction in the number of upper-level courses offered regularly, enhancing both flexibility and efficiency within our department. Additionally, we have introduced two summer courses--STAT 185 Introduction to Statistics and MATH 167 Precalculus--in asynchronous formats to address staffing changes and alleviate the demand for these courses in the fall. These measures aim to reduce our reliance on adjunct faculty and enable us to manage our curriculum effectively, despite the departure of a faculty member last year.

The proposed elimination of departments could adversely affect our efforts to develop innovative interdisciplinary programs. For example, we are launching a data science minor in Fall 2024, with potential plans to expand into a data science major. Collaboration with the philosophy faculty will be vital in this expansion. Given the profound impact data-driven decisions have on individuals and society, integrating ethics into our curriculum is essential for building a robust data science program. Additionally, philosophy courses will equip our students with critical tools for analyzing complex problems, understanding the broader implications of their work, and communicating effectively. These types of interdisciplinary approaches prepare students for diverse and impactful careers.

New Media

The Department of New Media has been in discussion for some time with the Department of Drama about expanded collaborations in the areas of projection mapping, theatrical video projection, physical computing, wearable fashion, 3D printing, and motion capture. We view Drama as an important and fruitful collaborative partner. Faculty members from The Department of Drama who are retained at UNCA could be invited to teach New Media elective courses in some of the above areas - keeping us in a place of creative thinking about ways in which experimental, immersive, and virtual productions are expanding. Our colleagues in Drama are experts in their field and would be clear partners in this growth.

Physics and Astronomy

The Department of Physics and Astronomy has both cost-saving and revenue-generating actions already underway that will contribute to offsetting the current deficit and promoting long-term financial stability. The full-time faculty have been reduced by one lecturer position going into the 2024-2025 academic year, decreasing salary expenditures. Two courses for majors which have been taught every year are being moved to an offering cycle of every-other-year, thereby increasing class sizes. Additional cost savings will be achieved with decreases to the number of lab sections that are being offered. In terms of revenue generation, a significant enrollment boost is expected from a pending 4-year \$2M NSF S-STEM award,

shared with the departments of Computer Science and Mathematics and Statistics, which will provide dozens of externally funded student scholarships in the near term.

Political Science

From a budget perspective, the POLS department has contracted significantly in the past year, with a faculty retirement and a postdoc departure, which together alleviate some of the institution's financial pressures.

Further, we believe that the “phase-out” and curtailment of the proposed departments on campus will adversely affect our institution's ability to offer the required Foundations of American Democracy curriculum and will severely limit our ability to prepare students for post-graduate studies and careers in law.

- In Spring 2024, the Board of Governors approved the new Foundations of American Democracy (FAD) requirement for all students in UNC system schools, which will go into effect July 1, 2025. The impetus behind this proposal was a shared belief among legislators, System staff, and faculty that students need a stronger and shared foundation in American democracy. Given the rollout of this requirement in the 2025-2026 academic year, we believe that we will be in more need than ever of faculty who are equipped to teach about democracy and to engage students with the founding documents and principles of the American republic. Three of the departments with faculty most equipped to teach these courses, Philosophy, Ancient Mediterranean Studies, and Religious Studies, have been proposed for elimination. If approved, this plan will render the new required curriculum incredibly difficult to offer on our campus. The other two departments that can most readily offer FAD courses, Political Science and History, have both experienced key retirements recently that will limit their ability to offer FAD courses while still delivering their departmental curricula. As such, we think the proposal to eliminate these departments is premature and that there is a significant and pressing need to retain the faculty of these departments on campus
- Further, both departments offer courses that are foundational, if not essential, for students who plan to attend law school or embark on a career in the legal field. Course offerings in AMS (including language courses, like Latin) help prepare our students to understand the foundations of our legal system and the legal terminology that is common in the field. PHIL courses, such as Introduction to Logic, also provide students with the foundational skills necessary for the law school entrance exam and the practice of law. Further, the Philosophy department houses and offers a bulk of the courses in the Legal Studies minor on campus, which is a popular minor for students with certain majors, such as Political Science. The Legal Studies minor is also attractive as a recruitment tool for pre-law students who are considering which university to attend.

We also worry about the proposal to eliminate Drama. The impact of that department goes well beyond the majors or minors in the department—many students engage in their productions. This strikes us as an important aspect of community-building on campus, which directly affects

student success and retention efforts. Cutting this department, and the programming and opportunities it provides, could have the unintended effect of further hurting enrollment and all our retention efforts

Psychology

Psychology recently cross listed a Philosophy course (Philosophy of Psychology, Spring 2023) and a French course (Mind and Language, Fall 2023). In addition, Psychology and Drama faculty collaborated on a research and teaching project on conscious breathing, due to the intersection of acting techniques and mindfulness practice. That project led to numerous student research and learning opportunities. Another Psychology faculty has collaborated on community service with Drama faculty coaching an Odyssey of Mind team at a local elementary school. In service to the university, Drama and Psychology and other faculty collaborated by co-facilitating learning circles for the Center for Teaching and Learning. Lastly, Psychology faculty noted that Drama majors add unique insights and perspectives to their psychology courses and serve as an inspiration to think beyond the discipline. In general, Drama and Philosophy, disciplines that date to antiquity, have and continue to inform psychological theory and practice. (Separately, it was noted that consulting with the Liberal Arts Core Task Force would be pragmatic prior to initiating program curtailments.)

In Psychology, current cost-savings result from discontinuing the use of adjuncts; losing a clinical faculty (pre-tenure) but denied a request to search for a replacement therefore losing a faculty line and operating with a single clinical faculty (another clinical faculty retired last year and was not replaced); and sharing, even though we have the most student majors in the university, a program assistant with another department.

Student Success

The departments proposed for elimination by the Chancellor have had a significant impact on a number of core student success strategies. Members from all departments proposed for elimination have been active contributors to our First Year Experience, offering First Year Seminars every Fall for the past decade and playing a fundamental role in the onboarding and orienting of our newest students to campus. Several members from these departments have also received training to support our students in the role of Academic Success Coach, each working to provide one-on-one academic coaching to a cohort of 15-20 students on Academic Warning.

These departments also work in many immeasurable ways to foster our students' sense of belonging. Be it a Philosophy conference bringing Philosophy students and scholars from across the nation together; be it a Mediterranean Dinner and a staging of a classical piece, translated and performed by students; be it the Pancake Dinners during Finals Week; be it a theater production that involves students on stage and behind the scenes; be it a Languages in Action event that showcases the diversity of languages spoken, taught, and lived on our

campus - all these events involved a significant number of our student populations and most importantly a significant higher number than the majors and minors in these departments. Students don't need to major in Drama, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Ancient Mediterranean Studies, French, or German to care about and greatly benefit from these experiences. In fact, it is the experiences, the connections, and community outside of the classroom, unrelated to their major endeavors and the pressures often associated with that that have a deep impact on students' wellbeing and their overall success. I have supported numerous students on Academic Warning, whose one thing that kept that going through a hard semester was being part of a play, being involved in a project that had (on the surface) nothing to do with their major, meeting people outside of their departments, connecting to work ever so slightly bigger than themselves. And it is in these circumstances that students have developed skills that will make them ready for the team-based work environment, the significant volatility and uncertainty of the future job market, and that have helped them develop confidence and self-advocacy skills.

Many of our students in departments not selected for curtailment or elimination at this point in time are successful in those majors because of the classes taken in the departments flagged by APR and because of the events/services/support offered by those departments. Cutting these programs will significantly diminish the wealth of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences that are core elements of student success and that have benefited our students greatly. The experience of all students will be impacted by the elimination of these programs.