



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

November 5, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

For fall 2016, UHCL's total enrollment declined from 8,903 in fall 2015 to 8,677 in fall 2016. While our undergraduate enrollment increased from 5,650 to 5,790, our graduate enrollment declined from 3,253 to 2,887.

The major project for the 2016-2017 academic year is a review of our graduate programs, since our overall graduate enrollment continues to decline. For the years leading up to and including fall 2015, graduate enrollment was declining in three of our colleges and significantly increasing in one (College of Science and Engineering), resulting in relatively flat overall graduate enrollment on a year-to-year basis. For fall 2016, graduate enrollment declined in all four colleges. A decrease of this magnitude has a very significant impact on our budget for 2016-2017 due to the amount of tuition and fee dollars generated, particularly given the tuition differential between undergraduate and graduate tuition and resident versus non-resident tuition. For 2016-2017, our total tuition shortfall was \$4,985,932. This amount will be reduced to \$4,283,796 with a debt service shift. This \$4,283,796 shortfall will be covered by university reserves (40% or \$1,736,317) and by department reductions (60% or \$2,547,479). The reductions for each component across our university are listed in the attachment. The fact that this enrollment decline occurred during a base year (summer and fall 2016 and spring 2017) is also significant, since future formula funding in the form of state appropriations for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 is based on enrollment during the base period.

With the trends noted above, we are in the process of taking a number of actions. First, I have asked the deans of each of our four colleges to provide responses related to their low-enrollment graduate programs and they have done so. Second, we will be retaining Ruffalo Noel Levitz, the leading enrollment management consulting firm, to assist us in identifying graduate programs we already offer that have potential for growth, those likely to remain stable and those likely to continue to decline. They will also assist us in identifying potential new programs to offer that would increase our graduate enrollment. Third, we are in the process of making sure that students who are taking a degree program only online will have adequate seats available, while other online seats will be available for students who take a combination of online and face-to-face courses. We will increase the awareness of current and prospective students of our online degree programs by emphasizing UHCL Online, which will represent all programs that can be taken completely online. I do note that some actions for graduate programs have already been taken or are in process at the college level, with respect to delivering a graduate program online rather than face-to-face, given the students served and addressing curriculum revision to have a more competitive graduate program. The faculty in each of our graduate programs, along with college-level administration, should be having a real discussion about how to respond to declining program enrollment.

In the review of graduate programs, a number of factors must be considered. I will only mention a few including (1) number of majors in the program; (2) number of semester credit hours generated by the program, including hours generated from program majors and hours generated from service courses provided to non-program majors; (3) programs that have both an undergraduate and graduate major in the same field and the enrollment trends for each program; (4) graduate programs which are stand-alone programs and offer few, if any, service courses to non-majors; and (5) how our graduate program compares to graduate programs with which we compete. Additional considerations, given our increasing undergraduate enrollment, will include overall enrollment growth in core curriculum courses, and the projected growth of specific undergraduate majors. With regard to this last point, it should be noted that of the top ten intended majors listed by our freshman students, six programs are

on the list for all three years, and four additional programs are on the list for two of the three years. Many of the programs listed as intended majors for our freshmen are already some of our largest programs. The point being that we must look at both potential graduate and undergraduate growth in order to determine where to reallocate existing resources within or between our colleges, as well as the allocation of any new resources.

The issue of graduate enrollment is critical not only for 2016-2017, but also for the future growth and development of UHCL. It is an issue we can and must address.

Best regards,

William A. Staples
President