

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

As you know, NNU took action recently to begin a process of change intended to foster growth. These decisions grow out of a mandate from the Board of Trustees charging the university leadership to ensure that we are financially sound and organizationally responsive to the changing marketplace.

In reviewing programs and enrollments and future trends, we identified two programs where change was needed: the Graduate Theology program and the Graduate Counseling program. While enrollment has declined in these two areas, other areas are being targeted for enrollment growth. As a result, we sought to realign resources by eliminating two faculty positions and four staff positions overall.

Decisions such as these are not easy, nor are they taken lightly. Like other organizations that face lay-offs and change, the university seeks to provide support systems for the individuals that are impacted. There are policies that ensure that faculty members are respected and protected as part of the process.

At the same time, while our intentions were to act with respect and care, we did not achieve this. I want to publicly apologize to Dr. Tom Oord for the way in which he learned of the change. Discussions occurred via mail and email due to spring break and the March 31st notification deadline. That was not respectful of Dr. Oord and his many contributions to the university. I also want to apologize to the leadership and faculty in the School of Theology and Graduate Counseling regarding how they were informed of the matter. While our actions were policy-driven, we did not demonstrate the compassion and care reflective of our values. We can and should have done better.

When missteps occur in today's environment, unfortunate things are often stated in the social media. I want to state unequivocally that no individual in this process was targeted for academic or theological reasons. Any statements that would suggest this are irresponsible and inappropriate. We continue to value and respect academic freedom and the value of tenure. I do agree that the faculty is justified to call attention to the errors that occurred in this process, including how we involved these departments.

NNU is an academic institution with a diverse faculty and vibrant student body. We value critical thinking and intellectual engagement in an environment that is Christ-centered and reflective of our commitment to the Church of the Nazarene. As a campus community, we challenge ourselves to pursue excellence both academically and spiritually. That has not changed and will not change.

During this difficult time, I would ask for your prayers and support for all involved. In the days ahead, we will work intentionally to discuss with the community the direction of the university. We will also provide support for those involved with the lay-offs. For those of us in leadership, we will seek to listen and learn from missteps, while at the same time seeking to embody NNU values.

Sincerely,
David Alexander