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Dear faculty and staff colleagues:

This month, six strategic initiatives task forces—composed of faculty and staff—will post the final reports of their work over the past several months at: <http://provost.uiowa.edu/work/strategic-initiatives>. In this letter, I'd like to highlight the context of, and the purpose for, these task forces.

### **The economic context for strategic planning**

Today, in Iowa and across the country, the economy remains fragile and funding cuts for public universities are staggering. In less than two years, because of falling tax revenues, the state has reduced our appropriations by \$65M. This represents a decline of nearly 25%, taking us back to the support level of the 1990s. As a result, tuition revenues now exceed our appropriations. Our cuts are among the deepest of all public universities in the nation.

President Mason has managed these reversions successfully, minimizing layoffs and avoiding furloughs by judicious use of one-time, federal stimulus (ARRA) funds to safeguard three priorities: Protect people. Protect education. Protect quality. ARRA funds this year backfilled about \$35M of the reversions. Without these funds, we would have eliminated 132 FTE faculty positions, 150 HTE teaching assistant positions, and 88 FTE staff positions in academic units. Instead, we were able to postpone until next year the elimination of so many positions, allowing us time to plan strategically for this shrinkage in workforce.

We are approaching a steep fiscal “cliff” on July 1, 2010. Budget shortfalls of this magnitude have real impacts on the University’s missions. A clear and present impact is on education. Next year, there will be a big gap between the demand for classes and our capacity to meet it. On the one hand, our undergraduate enrollments are climbing steadily—we are a destination University for students from across the state, the nation, and the world. On the other hand, we will have significantly fewer faculty and teaching assistants to meet the demand. We cannot diminish the quality of education, nor delay the timely completion of degrees, by cutting back on the classes our students need. Next year, there will be no ARRA lifeline.

Thankfully, the Governor recently proposed an appropriation increase for Regent institutions that will amount to about \$14M for The University of Iowa. If approved by the legislature, this increase would make the cliff next year a little less steep. Our reductions would total \$51M rather than \$65M. But the cliff would still be steep. We would still have to come up with new ways to deliver more classes to more students with fewer instructors, without compromising quality.

In this environment, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, has instructed Regent institutions to “operate in the most cost-effective manner possible.” According to planning guidelines of the

Board staff, this means “do fewer things” rather than “do more with less.” It also means that “continuing programs will still be top quality.”

### **Scope and purpose of the task forces**

The Board of Regents asked Regent institutions to undertake strategic planning for 2010-15. President Mason asked me to lead the effort, working with Senior Vice President True to coordinate financial management with strategic planning. I formed six task forces, composed of highly respected faculty and staff who were recommended by shared governance leaders and collegiate deans.

These task forces have labored diligently since May 2009. They held multiple public forums and invited campus input. Their charge was to offer ideas and recommendations to shape the academic direction of the University, bearing in mind the changing economic, demographic, and technological realities of our globalized world. The areas addressed are:

- (1) Research and creative work: Promotion of interdisciplinary research and scholarship, taking into account the strengths of the University in the arts and humanities as well as in scientific, technical and professional fields; principles for identifying areas for increased research investment.
- (2) Graduate and professional education: Assessments of 100+ graduate programs and recommendations for possibly strengthening, reorganizing, or phasing out some programs. These are not assessments of programs’ parent departments (which have broader missions beyond graduate education) nor of individual faculty.
- (3) Undergraduate education: Strategies for increasing student success and retention; a 5-year enrollment management plan to increase resident and non-resident students; research to assess educational outcomes.
- (4) Internationalization and diversity: Recruitment and retention of international students and domestic students of color, with special focus on Latino and Latina students (the largest and fastest growing minority group in Iowa); study abroad; globalization of the curriculum; campus climate.
- (5) Public outreach and civic engagement: Development of campus infrastructure for outreach; partnerships with community colleges to meet the expanding demand for baccalaureate education for working and place-bound adults throughout Iowa.
- (6) Strategic budgeting: Principles and strategies for budget allocations, reductions, and reallocations.

Once the final reports are posted, you will be notified of their availability. You will have the opportunity to comment during the processes of review and discussion of these reports, both at the collegiate and the University levels. Collegiate deans will submit to me any recommendations based on these reports and on any other relevant information. Any recommendations that I might then submit to the Board of Regents will be considered at its September 2010 meeting.

## **Strategic vision for 2010-15**

Strategic planning addresses two basic questions: Where is the institution going? And, how is it going to get there? The first question is about vision—that’s primarily the responsibility of the University and collegiate leadership to articulate. The second is about the plan—that’s the work that faculty and staff task forces have been charged to begin. Shared governance groups must consult on both questions.

The vision of the 2005-10 strategic plan—“*The Iowa Promise*”—is a *promise of excellence* in the University’s core missions of educating students, creating knowledge, and contributing to the culture, health, and economic vitality of the people of Iowa and beyond.

The vision for 2010-15—“*Renewing the Iowa Promise*”—is a *promise of focused excellence*: To do an even better job in our core missions, and to do it in new ways in this fraught recessionary period.

If we continue to function as if our world has not changed, our future excellence will be at risk. We shall have to “think anew and act anew” in building on our strengths, to quote Abraham Lincoln upon signing the Morrill Act. We cannot presume that we have the resources to pursue academic pre-eminence in everything we do as a research university. We have to be sharply focused on the areas where we are or can be pre-eminent. When the economy gets back to “normal”—and it will get back, though nobody knows how long that will take—we will be stronger than before because of our focused excellence in core missions.

## **Priorities of the renewed Iowa Promise**

The three building blocks for focused excellence in 2010-15 will be:

- Hire 100 tenure-track faculty members. The goal is to advance disciplinary and interdisciplinary excellence in existing and emerging areas of strength.
- Put first the success of students. The goal is the best undergraduate educational experience in the Big Ten, founded upon a 1<sup>st</sup> year experience that focuses on the retention and success of students.
- Shape a leaner and stronger University. The goal is to protect and strengthen our strong and/or high priority academic programs and activities, emphasizing quality over quantity.

These are complementary priorities. The important values and goals of diversity, internationalization, and civic engagement will continue to be advanced through these priorities.

## **Strategic planning in lean times**

In times of plenty, we have the luxury to branch out and do many things. In times of austerity, we must marshal available resources to focus on areas where we excel and on new opportunities that build on our strengths. Our tools are the 4 R’s:

- Revenue generation—provide incentives to units to increase various revenues streams.
- Reductions—implement cost-savings in programs, personnel, and operations in ways that are strategic rather than tactical or expedient, in order to live within our means and protect

the quality of our programs. Academic units are expected to make differential (not across-the-board) reductions to balance their budgets, guided by their respective priorities.

- Reorganizations—promote collaborations or combinations across organizational boundaries in instruction, research, and administration to achieve new synergies as well as greater efficiencies. The resulting whole will be stronger than the sum of its parts. Innovative approaches to the organization and division of work can enhance the productivity of programs. Faculty and staff must be rewarded for their contributions to successful reorganizations.
- Reallocations—create a “Strategic Excellence Fund” based on new and reallocated dollars to invest in the priorities of the renewed Iowa Promise. This Fund will make a real difference in focused areas of research and creative work, learning and teaching, and civic engagement—all areas that are important to our standing as a premier public research university. All units will be able to apply for these resources, on a competitive basis, to advance their priorities that dovetail with University-wide strategic priorities.

I know that some people are worried about the economic uncertainties and the potential impacts on their academic programs and professional careers. I understand their worries. While I cannot say that the future will be what everyone wishes it to be, I can say this: I will listen to your concerns. I’m educable on the issues. Your views will be considered in the planning and decision-making processes. By working collaboratively and thinking anew, I believe everyone will have something to gain from a stronger, though leaner, University.

### **Working together to renew the Iowa Promise**

During the Great Flood, we came together as a community to save the University. During this Great Recession, our challenge is to come together to renew the Iowa Promise.

The simple truth, frankly spoken, is that difficult times require difficult choices. This means that we have to work together in the spirit of shared responsibility and shared commitment toward the common endeavor of delivering—despite limited resources—even better education, research, and service to the people of Iowa and the world. The strategic decisions we make now will strengthen the University.

This is what Iowa expects of The University of Iowa. This is what we shall deliver.

To the 80+ faculty and staff who worked on these task forces, I want to say that I greatly admire your creative ideas and I truly appreciate all the work you have done and are doing, as well as the collegial and reasoned manner in which you do it. Your ideas will make a difference. To all my colleagues, I want to thank you for your dedication and your many remarkable accomplishments that continue to distinguish our great University.

Sincerely,



Wallace D. Loh