

REPORT  
TO THE PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
OF THE  
INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON FACULTY ISSUES

FEBRUARY 16, 2001

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Provost appointed an Interdisciplinary Committee on Faculty Issues in February 2000 with the charge *to facilitate interdisciplinary interaction in teaching, research, and service*, in accord with the strategic mission of the University of Iowa for 2000-2005.

Our deliberations are reported in the following document. We divide our concerns into four topics: *policy and procedures; administrative structure; administrative leadership and incentives; and curriculum.*

Ten key recommendations summarize our conclusions; some recur within our focusing topics.

1. New and revised policies in faculty appointment and review.
2. Improved procedures of data collection, reporting, and assessment of interdisciplinary activity across the campus.
3. Annual reports of progress from units to the Office of the Provost in response to strategic planning goals for interdisciplinary education. We recommend a set of indicators for evaluation of faculty and units.
4. An annual report of progress in interdisciplinary activity from the Office of the Provost.
5. Appoint an Interim Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Activities.
6. Annual awards for distinguished efforts in interdisciplinary teaching.
7. A five-year program of *budgetary incentives*, with special emphasis upon undergraduate education.
8. Assessment of academic units across the campus under Strategic Planning guidelines for the allocating and reallocating of funds to promote interdisciplinary goals.
9. Recognition of team-teaching and mentoring of students to model and encourage activity that extends outside departmental boundaries.
10. Funding to promote undergraduate, graduate, and professional curriculum initiatives.

REPORT TO THE PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
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December 11, 2000

1. **PREFACE**

The University of Iowa stands proudly in a long tradition of leadership and innovation in its undergraduate liberal arts curriculum, in the Graduate College, and in the professional schools. As early as the 1930's Iowa took the lead among state universities in seeing and acting upon the opportunities of coordinating and encouraging cooperative interaction among disciplines and professions. We have long enjoyed the rewards generated by this culture of cooperation and leadership in achieving strengths and pursuing innovations.

This tradition and this culture distinguish the University of Iowa among its peer institutions, both private and public. It is an explicit goal of strategic planning to build upon these strengths. Societal and global changes driven by new technology give urgency to the task. Hence the high priority we place upon efforts to foster an ever more pervasive culture of interdisciplinarity at Iowa.

The Provost appointed an Interdisciplinary Committee on Faculty Issues in February 2000 with the charge *to facilitate interdisciplinary interaction in teaching, research, and service*, in accord with the mission statement of the University of Iowa for 2000-2005. This committee task follows upon strategic planning commitments of *Achieving Distinction 2000: A Strategic Plan For The University Of Iowa*, and widespread faculty discussion that resulted in the 1999 Forkenbrock Report to the Provost from the Interdisciplinary Programs Strategic Planning Committee, and an explicit goal in the new strategic plan. Strategic Planning goals guide our efforts, especially *to lower barriers and promote an environment conducive to interdisciplinary activity, and to reallocate resources to promote distinctive and visible interdisciplinary programs*.

Much fundamental research is inherently interdisciplinary, requiring cooperation and teamwork among faculty with various skills, diverse types of knowledge, and styles of research. The best teaching, the most powerful research, and the most effective service often require more than one set of disciplinary skills to be brought to bear. Our profession as educators and our contributions to the State of Iowa and the nation demand new ways to encourage and support cooperation in our classes and laboratories. To realize to the fullest the interdisciplinary potential of our faculty requires change in the University.

We understand our task as largely practical: to reduce barriers and increase rewards and satisfactions among faculty, and thereby to contribute to a more supportive campus climate for cooperative teaching, research, and service among disciplines.

## 2. *THE FOCUS OF THIS REPORT*

The central issues of this report apply throughout the University, to the colleges, departments, and other units. There are two broad areas of concern if we are to achieve a more productive and congenial environment for interdisciplinary work—procedural changes in hiring and the review of appointments, and structural changes in leadership and expectations among units, administrators, faculty, and students.

- *Policies in recruitment, appointment, retention, and promotion* of faculty require change in order to facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation among tenure-granting departments and other units.
- *Leadership* is required for continuing vitality and innovation in research, teaching and service, within the University and in the larger academic, professional, and civil society. It is a responsibility of administrative leadership to expect and encourage cooperative interdisciplinary efforts, and to support them with adequate resources and appropriate incentives. It is a responsibility of all faculty and staff to recognize and further the values of innovation, cooperation, and institutional change that are the aim of interdisciplinary research, teaching, and service. We recommend specific attention to curriculum, administrative leadership, and institutional structure.

## 3. *POLICY AND PROCEDURES*

Changes in basic University policy and procedures are needed to support and encourage interdisciplinary work at Iowa as activity increases across departments and colleges. Appointments, review procedures, data-collection, and the content of reports must be adapted to new expectations of interdisciplinary activity throughout the institution.

- Revise policies for *appointments* across colleges and departments, and including appointments in non-departmental units. Appointments may be independent or joint, tenure-track or for specified terms, as appropriate to the circumstances. (see *Appendix A*)

- Revise policies for *review procedures*, so that reviews of faculty with interdisciplinary appointments are governed by procedures that guarantee fair articulation of the roles of different units. These procedures should be included in a letter of agreement among the faculty member and the units of appointment. (See *Appendix B*)
- Review procedures to *credit interdisciplinary activity* for all participating units and individual faculty. Additional methods of data-collection and/or management may be needed to capture cooperative interaction in research, team-teaching, cross-college cooperation, and short-term agreements or “buyouts.”
- Require *specific commentary on interdisciplinary activity in annual reports* of all teaching and research units and colleges to demonstrate progress in response to strategic planning goals for interdisciplinary education. While inputs will vary among units, all colleges, departments and non-departmental units should be held regularly accountable for contributions. Appropriate indicators include but are not restricted to the following:
  - joint appointments and other formal affiliations*
  - cross-listed and team-taught courses across disciplines*
  - joint research projects across disciplines*
  - interdisciplinary service projects*
  - publication by unit faculty in a broad variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals and other venues*
  - joint authorship of research publications*
  - internal and external interdisciplinary grant funding*
  - honors and awards recognizing interdisciplinary achievement*
  - institutionalization of interdisciplinary projects within the colleges*
- Request annual reporting through the Vice President for Research, and the Provost if applicable, of activity that may not be captured in collegiate data.
- Report on progress in interdisciplinary activity annually by the Office of the Provost to the Faculty Senate, the Deans, and other appropriate audiences to measure and account for the kinds and degrees of activity, and the collegiate and departmental leadership exercised.

#### 4. **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

To facilitate more effective and innovative interdisciplinary work across the campus much depends heavily upon the commitments of colleges, departments, and other units. Promulgating clearer expectations of administrators and faculty members is in order. Only in this way can we fully respond to those problems that have arisen in the past when interdisciplinary activities were often seen as interstitial or supplemental, rather than

integral to faculty and unit responsibilities. With such changes we will address future needs and goals. Permanent change in administration is not needed at this time. An interim position is in order to coordinate activities during a period of change across campus. In the Office of the Provost, these commitments can be shared in several ways.

- The Associate Provost for Faculty should expect colleges and departments to demonstrate the focus and creativity to recognize opportunities for recruitment in interdisciplinary appointments that strengthen the University.
- The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education should pay specific attention to cooperation in teaching where diverse units intersect and complement each other. Especially where intercollegiate cooperation is involved, the Office of the Provost has the responsibility to see that departments and colleges actively cooperate in appropriate tasks with due respect and recognition for all concerned.
- The Associate Provost for Graduate Education should encourage the exploration, revision, innovation, and development of new research areas and their application in the professional and research curriculum. Central administration should provide active leadership to encourage the graduate and professional colleges and programs to develop interdisciplinary courses and to recruit students who wish to explore areas beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries.
- Appoint an Interim Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Activities for a five-year term. This position will bear the charge to evaluate current interdisciplinary units, oversee university-wide interdisciplinary initiatives, and advocate for interdisciplinary activity with the collegiate deans, DEOs and program directors, as well as within the Provost's Office. These activities cannot be added onto current duties of the existing Associate Provost's positions. Neither can the entire burden be borne independently by the colleges. Success in achieving strategic planning goals for interdisciplinary activity, after such a period of transition, will indicate whether the colleges have adopted the expected leadership and can bear the burdens without continuation of a separate position in the Provost's Office.
- The Vice President for Research and the Provost together must cooperatively fill the crucial roles of leadership and coordination in regard to funded research. Especially with regard to grants accounting issues and credit in faculty reviews for work undertaken outside the home department, the Office of the Vice President for Research serves a central role in supporting and recognizing faculty efforts.

## 5. *ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND INCENTIVES*

The University of Iowa has lacked a coherent common understanding of appropriate incentives for interdisciplinary work. Several kinds of change should be pursued with leadership from the Office of the Provost, the colleges, departments and other units.

- Establish expectations that interdisciplinary work is a normal part of university activity and faculty effort.
- Guarantee that colleges and departments nurture and respect high quality interdisciplinary activity.
- Stand as the protector of high quality and rigorous interdisciplinary units.
- Annually recognize distinguished faculty efforts in interdisciplinary teaching with appropriate ceremony and awards.
- Reward interdisciplinary team-teaching for its intrinsic value to students and its benefits in furthering faculty development.
- Assess the efforts of academic units across the campus, under Strategic Planning guidelines, for appropriate interdisciplinary expertise in research, teaching and successful innovative hiring, and reward units by reallocating faculty lines.
- Undertake a five-year program of *budgetary incentives* to further interdisciplinary and interdepartmental teaching, with special emphasis upon undergraduate education. (see section 6 below):
  - i. Establish a funding pool at a minimum level of \$500,000, a sum evident in the 1999 Forkenbrock report as a base budget to enhance interdisciplinary activity successfully.
  - ii. Provide funds to the colleges for faculty leadership and staff support that are adequate to encourage and sustain innovative teaching for interdisciplinary degrees, minors, and certificate programs.
  - iii. Offer special competitive one-year renewable funding for innovations in interdisciplinary projects in teaching, research, and service across the colleges.
  - iv. Retain funds in the Office of the Provost and in the colleges to meet the needs of ‘bridging’ support so that curriculum development and implementation does not conflict with continuing obligations.
  - v. Establish mechanisms to review and sustain successful innovations, including but not limited to reallocation of funds to more successful and innovative units.

vi. Provide funds for graduate and undergraduate student opportunities to participate in interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

vii. The success of this five-year program should be evaluated for renewal or revision after four years.

## 6. *CURRICULUM*

The university *curriculum* stands in the center of much interdisciplinarity. We owe our students examples of the teamwork that unites different kinds of expertise and different disciplinary practices in teaching, research, and service.

Leadership in curriculum requires attention both to current activities, to see that they receive adequate support and recognition, and to opportunities for new endeavors that can bring new strengths to learning.

- Review current teaching efforts, and assess current curricular programs with respect to their centrality and quality related to coordination among academic units within and across colleges.
- Encourage and facilitate interdisciplinary *undergraduate* education throughout the colleges. Advocate and support joint appointments, cross-listed courses, and cooperative innovation among departments and non-departmental units, and across colleges. Attention should be given equally to general education, to enriching established disciplinary majors, and to developing interdisciplinary majors, minors, and certificate programs.
- Recognize the benefits to students, of interdisciplinary interactions across departments and colleges in *graduate*, *professional* and *research* education.
- Undertake a five-year program of *budgetary incentives* to further interdisciplinary and interdepartmental teaching. (see section 5 above)

## 7. *CONCLUSIONS*

By its traditions and its strategic planning alike, the University of Iowa recognizes the centrality of interdisciplinary activity. Interdisciplinary research and teaching directly reflect our core values: *learning* in “constant inquiry and continuous reinterpretation of knowledge”; “a richly diverse and intellectually stimulating *community*”; and “[our]

*responsibilities* not only to [our] disciplines and professions but also to the institution and to society.” The strategic plan appropriately calls for opportunities in interdisciplinary activities for all our students.

In striving to be a comprehensive university, the University of Iowa must facilitate the intellectual pluralism necessary to a major research university. Interdisciplinary endeavors contribute centrally to the University’s relative position among peer institutions in meeting this challenge.

Participation in discussions leading to the Forkenbrock report clearly demonstrated strong and wide-spread faculty commitment to cooperation among diverse disciplines. The time for action is now, if we are to realize fully in the next five years the goals of and new focus upon interdisciplinary interaction identified by strategic planning. The barriers can be diminished readily, the divisions bridged.

Interdisciplinary teaching, service, and research at Iowa contribute the very best to our students and society. To maximize the benefits of interdisciplinary commitments requires the new policies, initiatives, and leadership recommended in this report.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION REGARDING FACULTY APPOINTMENTS TO NON-DEPARTMENTAL UNITS**

*A vital part of University of Iowa traditions has long been the furthering of innovation in service, teaching, and research. The University, especially with its increased emphasis on interdisciplinarity, carries the burden of providing sufficient faculty resources for all academic units.*

*To facilitate appointments in non-departmental units, we recommend the following policy.*

#### **FACULTY APPOINTMENTS TO NON-DEPARTMENTAL UNITS**

Appointments in non-departmental units may serve the needs of students, faculty members, and academic units alike, both meeting individual needs and recognizing common interests between units and departments. Other types of short-term agreements, e.g. "buyouts," for a semester or a year also contribute to productive interdisciplinarity without the formality of appointment.

Non-departmental units may make faculty appointments, budgeted or non-budgeted as specified below, for such reasons as specific curricular needs, special projects such as grant-funded programs, and the regularizing of unit responsibilities. Such appointments are subject to all university policies and procedures regarding faculty appointment and review and must meet the approval of an established overseeing faculty body of the unit, such as a faculty steering committee or executive committee, according to the unit by-laws, as approved by its college(s) and the Office of the Provost. Unless otherwise specified, all appointments noted below must receive the approval of the collegiate dean, or if involving more than one college the several deans, or the appropriate vice president, and the provost.

Budgeted faculty appointments are usually longer term and may recognize significant divergence between a faculty member's efforts in a department and those in a non-departmental unit, for example, interdisciplinary teaching and research.

I. A unit, with the approval of its dean, or if involving more than one college the several deans or the appropriate vice president, and the provost, may make *0% budget*, renewable faculty joint appointments from the university faculty, generally for a term of one year or longer, not to exceed five years.

Terms of such appointments will be set in a letter of agreement, signed by the faculty member's DEO, the director of the unit, the dean(s) or vice president and the faculty member, specifying the faculty member's privileges and responsibilities with respect to the unit, frequency and procedures for review and renewal, allocation of funds, and the expected activities and percentage of effort allocated to the unit in teaching, research, and service.

II. A unit, with the approval of its dean, or if involving more than one college the several deans or the appropriate vice president, and the provost, may make *adjunct* (up to 3 years, renewable, at less than 50%) faculty appointments for purposes of demonstrated teaching or other needs.

Terms of such appointments will be set in a letter of agreement, signed by the appointee's DEO (if any), the director of the unit, the dean(s) or vice president, and the appointee, specifying the appointee's privileges and responsibilities with respect to the unit, procedures for review and renewal, allocation of funds, and the expected activities in teaching, research, and service.

III. A unit, with the approval of its dean, or if involving more than one college the several deans, or the appropriate vice president, and the provost, may make renewable, budgeted *non-tenure-track* faculty appointments, generally one year or longer, for a specified term.

Terms of such appointments will be set in a letter of agreement, signed by the director of the unit, the dean[s] or vice president, and the faculty member, specifying the term of the appointment, the faculty member's privileges and responsibilities with respect to the unit, procedures for review and renewal, allocation of funds, and the expected activities in teaching, research, and service.

IV. A unit, with the approval of its dean, or if involving more than one college the several deans or the appropriate vice president, and the provost, may make renewable, *budgeted* faculty joint appointments from the university faculty, generally one year or longer, not to exceed five years.

Terms of such appointments will be set in a letter of agreement, signed by the appointee's DEO, the director of the unit, the dean[s] or vice president, and the faculty member, specifying the faculty member's privileges and responsibilities with respect to the unit, procedures for review and renewal, allocation of funds, and the expected activities and percentage of effort allocated to the unit in teaching, research, and service.

## APPENDIX B

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION REGARDING REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR JOINT APPOINTMENTS

*Joint appointments have long been a vital part of University of Iowa traditions, particularly when they serve interdisciplinary research, teaching, and service.*

*In order to recognize faculty effort and achievement, all review procedures for joint appointments, both within and across colleges, should be carried out with attention to the following guidelines. We recommend that this document be an official supplement to other University policies regarding review procedures, including the Procedural Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure Decision Making.*

*The core of the joint appointment is the letter of agreement, detailing the expectations, privileges and responsibilities among the appointing units and the faculty member, including the specific details of review procedures.*

#### UNIVERSITY POLICY FOR JOINT APPOINTMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES

1. *Promotion and tenure reviews.* The participating units form a joint internal review committee, roughly proportional in its makeup to the percentage of faculty effort in each unit for all annual, reappointment, tenure and promotion reviews (see 1.4 below). Units or the faculty member may seek approval of the dean(s) for an alternative structure in exceptional circumstances, including cases of marked discrepancy between percentage effort and percentage salary support across the two units. This committee reports, both in writing and at (a) meeting(s), to each unit consulting group.
  - 1.1. The participating units may form a joint consulting group, if mutually agreed upon by the faculty member and the units. In such a case, the units may submit either joint or separate votes and reports.
  - 1.2. If a joint consulting group is formed, the executive officers may submit either a joint letter or separate letters reporting the deliberations and making the recommendation(s) for promotion and tenure.
  - 1.3. When standard review procedures differ between units (e.g., delegation of review of teaching, research and service to separate subcommittees vs. using a single internal review committee for all three areas), a joint decision shall be made establishing procedures that are mutually acceptable to the faculty member and the units in advance of deliberations of the review committee[s].

1.4. When a faculty member holds a 0% joint appointment in a unit, that unit may take a subordinate consultative role in the tenure and promotion process, as mutually agreed upon in a letter of agreement (see #3).

2. *Appointments.* A letter of agreement between the faculty member and the participating units concerning terms of appointment, and approved by the dean(s) shall specify review procedures. The letter shall specify, at a minimum, the faculty member's privileges and responsibilities with respect to the units and the expected activities in each unit in teaching, research, and service. Differences in unit policies and procedures should be recognized and resolved in the letter of agreement. Sample letters are available for review at: [URL](#).

2.1.1. For appointments new to the University, an agreement about review procedures shall be made either in the letter of appointment, or as part of a more comprehensive letter further detailing the terms of the appointment within the first year of the appointment.

2.1.2. For appointments from within the University faculty, review procedures shall be included in the letter of agreement concerning terms of appointment.

2.2. The letter of agreement should be reviewed at each reappointment. It may be revised at any time by mutual consent of the faculty member and the participating units, and with the approval of the dean(s).

3. *Annual, reappointment, and post-tenure reviews.* The same procedures described above shall be followed for annual and third-year reappointment reviews with the one exception that written report(s) from the internal review committee and unit consulting group(s) are optional. If there is no written report from the internal review committee, at least one member of each unit must participate in the oral committee report to each unit consulting group.

4. *Timetable.* No later than the end of the academic year before a promotion and tenure review, an appropriate timeline should be established to enable gathering of information, reasonable committee review, the faculty member's response to the committee report, and consulting group deliberations.

5. *Exception.* In the unusual case in which two units are contemplating a joint but non-interdisciplinary appointment, such that joint review may be inappropriate, the units may petition for an alternative review structure. Such a petition should be presented to the Dean(s) who will seek final approval from the Provost.

## APPENDIX C

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Lee Anna Clark, <i>ex officio</i>	Professor	Department of Psychology and Office of the Provost
Connie J. Delaney	Professor	College of Nursing
Ronald Ettinger	Professor	College of Dentistry
Lois J. Geist	Professor	Department of Internal Medicine
Vicki L. J. Hesli	Professor	Department of Political Science
Jon G. Kuhl	Professor	Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
James D. Marshall	Professor	Department of Curriculum and Instruction
James Merchant	Dean	College of Public Health
Alan F. Nagel, <i>Chair</i>	Professor	Departments of English and Comparative Literature
Horace A. Porter	Professor	Department of African-American World Studies
Ronald D. Schoenwald	Professor	College of Pharmacy