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Dean Chaden Djalali
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The University of Iowa

Dear Dean Djalali,

This correspondence constitutes a final statement on the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) collegiate review. University of Iowa (UI) policy requires our colleges to undergo a review at least every seven years and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost is tasked with organizing and directing the process and formulating final conclusions. CLAS was due for a review in 2012. I instructed CLAS to prepare a self-study that assesses the College, with special attention to how its activities support the UI strategic plan. CLAS is a large and complex college. For the UI to prosper, it is imperative that CLAS support the UI strategic plan and achieve progress toward that plan within its current budget. I organized my charge to the CLAS Review Committee around the four “pillars” of the plan: Pillar 1) student success; Pillar 2) knowledge and practice; Pillar 3) new frontiers in the arts; and Pillar 4) better futures for Iowans. Specifically, I asked the committee to give special attention to the following questions:

Pillar 1 - Student Success: Is CLAS optimally deploying instructional resources to achieve the UI strategic plan objectives of higher quality education experiences, and cost containment through efficiency and innovation?

Pillar 2 - Knowledge and Practice: Is CLAS successfully promoting the UI research mission by supporting and advancing UI’s cross-disciplinary cluster initiatives, and reorganizing available faculty positions to build areas of research strength and meet student demand?

Pillar 3 – New Frontiers in the Arts: Is CLAS using the opportunity to rebuild the arts campus in the wake of the 2008 flood to reimagine arts programming – especially cross-unit collaborative programming – in education, presentation, and performance?

Pillar 4 - Better Futures for Iowans: Is CLAS actively encouraging and rewarding faculty for high-quality publically engaged research and teaching, and tactically working to align collegiate resources and messaging with important state needs?

I want to reiterate that, per University of Iowa policy on academic reviews, the review was of CLAS and not of any individual within CLAS.

In preparing my final statement, I have reviewed the following documents:

- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Report of the Self-Study Committee (Dated Spring, 2013)
- Findings of the Committee Reviewing the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Iowa (Dated December 6, 2013)
- Response of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to the Review Report (Dated May 30, 2014)

In addition, I met with CLAS leadership, UI leadership and the CLAS Review Committee to discuss the process and recommendations. The CLAS Review Committee made recommendations focused on seven broad themes, repeated here for reference:

- Increasing financial transparency and communication regarding College and University operations generally.
- Instituting a formal strategic planning process for the College.
- Establishing a comprehensive institutional data system to inform strategic planning and decision-making.
- Engaging elected and appointed faculty leadership, and faculty of all ranks in strategic planning and decision-making.
- Deploying instructional resources more effectively and aligning the assignment of tenure-track and lecturer lines with enrollment.
- Reallocating tenure-track lines to promote interdisciplinary research and build on areas of institutional research strength.
- Utilizing a divisional administrative structure to strengthen operations, increase efficiency and promote faculty input.

Since the report was issued, the College has made significant effort to address most of the recommendations. In summary, I am pleased with CLAS's proactive response and the degree to which it has reflected on the recommendations. I commend the faculty, staff and CLAS leadership. The following comments provide additional direction to CLAS in addressing the thematic areas identified by the CLAS Review Committee:

Strategic Planning: Since the CLAS External Review Committee's report was issued, the College has initiated a strategic planning process that addresses review committee recommendations, engages a broad constituent audience, and will be coordinated with the University's ongoing strategic planning process. The College's strategic plan should be visionary, address existing strengths of the college across the three primary missions (teaching, research and service), while simultaneously addressing a realistic budgetary outlook for the next five years. The College's plan should also address strategies and tactics for enrollment growth that mirror the University's plan and should include specific plans for revenue enhancements. In order to maximize new revenue, the College should encourage and assist departments to generate and retain revenue for department educational and research needs.

Interdisciplinary Research: The collegiate response states "To be competitive, we must build strength across departmental boundaries in areas of strategic importance." I fully endorse this

statement as a strategy for growing the College's research portfolio and staying current with shifting trends in research and scholarship. The Review Committee also provided some useful strategic recommendations regarding future resource allocation efforts:

“The deployment of instructional resources has an effect on efforts to build research strengths and to develop new interdisciplinary research initiatives. By following legacy commitments to faculty lines, research opportunities may be lost.”

This means the College needs to take the lead in working with DEOs and department faculty to increase the number of interdisciplinary lines and reward departments that embrace interdisciplinary teaching and research and scholarship. The College also needs to expand beyond CLAS departmental boundaries to include units across the entire UI campus. It is recommended that the college actively pursue its plan to identify collegiate cluster areas where it can make strategic collegiate investments in faculty to advance the college in select areas. Specifically, the college is encouraged to develop a strategy for leveraging the campus's strength in the health sciences by partnering with the University's five health science colleges whenever possible. In particular, the recent opening of the Pappajohn Biomedical Discovery Institute offers timely opportunities for growth in biomedical-related research and the recruitment of students with an interest in health science careers, providing CLAS with recruitment opportunities unmatched by much larger peer institutions. An excellent example of interdisciplinary research that will benefit CLAS is the recent restructuring of the Center on Aging, with center leadership now shared between CLAS (Bernd Fritsch) and the Carver College of Medicine (Dr. Susan Schultz). Another example worth noting is CLAS's strong commitment to the UI Informatics Initiative.

Expanding Educational Opportunities: At the undergraduate level, the College has made a significant effort under the leadership of Dean Djalali and Associate Dean Dettmer to develop new courses, new degree programs, and accelerated bachelors-professional degree options. CLAS is commended for its efforts to expand educational opportunities for the students, including the introduction of constellation courses. Furthermore, the College's collaborative model of faculty/staff advising is to be commended and is directly supportive of Pillar 1 – Student Success in the University's Strategic Plan.

With respect to the use of lecturers, the College's response did not directly address the committee's recommendation to increase the number of full-time, fixed-term lecturers and its indirect impact on the College's research mission. Specifically, the Review Committee stated “the lack of flexibility in the budget attributable to the disproportionate reliance on tenure-track lines contributes to an environment where resources for change and experimentation are severely limited.” The committee made its recommendation with firsthand knowledge from the external reviewers that most peer universities use a higher fraction of lecturers. The College needs to address this issue to make optimal use of limited resources. It is recommended that CLAS review the faculty-to-lecturer ratio at peer institutions and use those data to inform its decision on how to respond to the dynamics of changing disciplines, enrollment changes, etc.

Regarding infrastructure, the University fully supports the College's highest priority, a new building for the educational and research needs of the Department of Psychology.

Communication: In its response to the report issued by the CLAS Review Committee, the College acknowledged the need for improved communication at all levels, particularly as it relates to “increased access to reliable data, financial transparency, and the allocation of resources.” Since the issuance of the committee’s report, it is my understanding that the College has undertaken a number of actions to address this issue, including changes in policies and communication strategy (DEO mailings, clarification of roles, etc.). In addition, the Office of the Provost has partnered with CLAS administration to increase the frequency and depth of briefings on budget and policy.

Data and Financial Transparency: Since the CLAS Review Committee report was issued, the College has made changes in staffing to more effectively manage and access institutional and collegiate data. The Office of the Provost is reorganizing staff to better serve as a cross-functional resource for institutional data to better serve the needs of the colleges. Furthermore, the Office of the Provost has scheduled more frequent budget briefings for CLAS leadership. And, the CLAS Office of the Dean has scheduled more frequent collegiate budget briefings.

College Organization: The CLAS Review Committee commented that “CLAS is a large and complex organizational unit that struggles to handle, in an efficient and timely manner, the new volume of work and decision making in the Dean’s office.” The Review Committee has also recommended that “to improve the administrative structure of the College, the Dean should consider reorganizing the College’s administrative leadership along divisional lines.” After studying the recommendation, the College has moved to a hybrid model where each associate dean acts as a liaison for one of the four academic areas (arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences) while retaining functional responsibilities. This new model has the support of the Provost, Dean and collegiate faculty. In addition, the College is putting in place a plan to grant DEOs more autonomy in the allocation of their resources. Given the limited resources, I also ask the College to continue to look for ways to strengthen operations, increase efficiency, and promote cross-disciplinary synergies through organizational structuring and consolidation of small units. This includes shared service centers, divisional structures and the merger of departments, all of which would allow for the creation of positive synergies and collaborations that would enhance the mission of the College.

Conclusion:

The Office of the Provost has completed its review of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The report of the CLAS Review Committee addressed a number of very important areas where, in their opinion, changes will improve the College. It is my understanding that the College, under the leadership of Dean Djalali, has taken the review seriously and is working to implement the recommendations. Moving forward, I will ask the dean to provide a progress report on the actions taken on an annual basis.

Sincerely,



P. Barry Butler
Executive Vice President and Provost