Memorandum

September 21, 2015

To: Faculty Senate
   Graduate Council

From: Susan M. Ford
      Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Re: 2015-2016 review and analysis of academic programs

It has been approximately 25 years since the university took stock and did a single, cross-campus evaluation of its undergraduate and graduate degree programs, to determine which ones are doing well at their overall academic mission and which ones are struggling to fulfill their goals and those of the university and to meet the needs of our students. This cross-campus evaluation is long overdue, and many of our peer institutions undertake this exercise more regularly. Regardless of resource availability, in times of both abundance and scarcity, decisions must be made about resource allocations, and such an “eagle’s eye” campus-wide evaluation of academic programs provides critical guidance to those making decisions on where to strengthen, where to reward, and where to scale back investment. It is critical that this cross-campus program evaluation occur over this year completing by May 1, 2016, incorporating the criteria now in place by the IBHE for program evaluation.

Various types of reviews of campus units occur on an ongoing basis by the administration. These include reviews of administrative and academic units individually (such as departments and colleges and their leaders, units reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, student services, research centers, athletics, and others). A few years ago, a large committee including faculty reviewed many of these units for efficiency and effectiveness.

Academic programs are unique in nature and mission, however. Curriculum is the purview of the faculty at this institution, and curricular / programmatic review likewise should rest with the faculty. The state requires that academic programs are reviewed individually on an 8 year cycle, but these reviews are not done in a comparative context within the university nor within a cross-campus matrix. When the last cross-campus evaluative review was undertaken over 20 years ago, it was led and directed entirely by our elected faculty constituency bodies, the Faculty Senate and Graduate Council, working jointly, as the Academic Prioritization Task Force. President Dunn, Incoming Interim Chancellor Colwell, and I agree that this time, it should again be directed, driven, and undertaken by these elected faculty
constituencies. Part of this process could also be a consideration of how often such a review should be undertaken in the future.

The outcomes of such a broadly comparative evaluation will be used as the primary guiding document by chairs, deans, and the provost and chancellor for decision making over the next several years. In this uncertain political climate and in the midst of aggressive campus action to reshape our revenue streams and improve tuition revenue, our resource base is unpredictable. As a result of the last review, also in a time of fiscal difficulty, some weak programs were strengthened in various ways (including combining them with others or realigning them within college structures) and many stable programs received kudos and suggestions for ways the administration and program could jointly maintain that stability in the future. In these times of rapidly changing technology and workforce requirements in the world, the review might highlight critical directions in which to move for programs, program “nests” (related programs), or our academic initiative as a whole to better align our academic offerings with the needs of the 21st century. You might recommend some programs for merger or elimination. The review can and should consider the inter-nested nature of programs offered by the same faculty.

Last spring, Faculty Senate and Graduate Council indicated willingness to accept this charge and own this process. This memo is to affirm that I have the full support of President Dunn and incoming Interim Chancellor Colwell for this faculty-driven process and the importance of its integrity and outcome for providing guidance and information critical to academic decisions over the next several years. While no one knows what levels of resources will be available in the coming years, we all know that campus-wide restructuring is long overdue. A similar process, with committees including faculty and staff, will undertake a parallel process for non-academic units, directed by Interim Chancellor Colwell.

**To summarize, the request is for you to evaluate all academic degree programs** (those with CIPs codes) in a cross campus matrix of comparison. You will find a current list at [http://iquest.wiu.edu/program_review/](http://iquest.wiu.edu/program_review/) as well as links to key comparative data. You should determine and appoint the appropriate committee(s) (of whatever size and constituency you deem correct). The committee(s) will determine criteria and their relative weight, but these must minimally include those used by the state and IBHE at this time to measure program productivity. I urge you to incorporate the 2012 report prepared by your peers as a basis and starting point; this is available on the provost’s website at [http://pvaa.siu.edu/links/index.html](http://pvaa.siu.edu/links/index.html) (choose Program Changes Review Report). Similar evaluations are occurring on campuses across Illinois, and a good introduction to one process is available for NIU, at the following link:
http://niu.edu/program-prioritization/about/index.shtml. The committee(s) may determine the nature of the output and types of categories or “bins,” but minimally, I must request that you identify the top and bottom (by your own criteria) 10% and 25% of programs. At present, there are 103 (with 3 more approved) bachelors, 78 masters, and 32 doctoral programs on campus. (See table at bottom).

The committee(s) will have access to any and all resources we can provide centrally, particularly through Associate Provost James Allen’s office for recent program review summaries and state mandated evaluative criteria, and through Institutional Research for enrollment, graduation, costs, and other types of data. The Vice Chancellor for Research is making Academic Analytics available to members of the committee, to review comparative data (by discipline, nationally) on grantsmanship and research productivity, and Assoc. Provost Allen is scheduling two 60-minute training sessions for committee members (once identified) on Oct. 7 and 8. The Provost’s staff will facilitate access to any data as requested and as available.

I encourage you to select collaborative and broad-based committees of your peers, and to encourage transparency and openness with the campus community as the process unfolds.

I look forward to receiving your final report on a comparative evaluation of academic programs by May 1, 2016, to the provost and chancellor.

Cc: Dr. Randy Dunn, President and Interim Chancellor
    Dr. W. Bradley Colwell, incoming Interim Chancellor
    Dr. James Garvey, Vice Chancellor for Research
    Dr. James Allen, Associate Provost for Academic Programs
    Dr. David DiLalla, Associate Provost for Academic Administration
    Dr. John Evans, Director of Institutional Research and Studies

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