May 7, 2020

Dear Campus Community,

It’s been yet another wild and woolly day. Both you and I wish I would stop saying that.

At the Board of Regents meeting, President Ray Cross talked about concerns with COVID-19 and the future. One school in Wisconsin, Holy Family College in Manitowoc, has already closed.

I have included President Cross’ written communication on his opinion and proposals to the Board of Regents below so that you could see it in his own language. Among his comments, he recommended that the comprehensive campuses engage in program review and prioritization to better distinguish themselves and reduce duplication. As you may be painfully reminded, we have been through extensive program review since 2012. Regardless of how this transpires, I want to assure you that campus leadership and I are working extremely and exceedingly vigorously to remind UW System and the Board of Regents that we have already done this tremendously hard work. Frankly, we have already addressed programmatic issues, the faculty have admirably instituted monitoring mechanisms and protocols, and we have a distinctive mission and programs that derive from these efforts.

President Cross’ Statement is as follows:

Beginning with the premise that each of our comprehensive universities cannot continue to be “all things to all people” and be financially sustainable, each university must focus its resources on distinctive programs and collaborate with the System’s universities to serve the state’s needs across other programs. This will make them stronger, not weaker. In fact, the very futures of these universities depend on it. It is not a should-do; it is a must-do. It is not for “someday”—it is for now. These critically important universities are at risk because of the following: Declining state investment, Tuition cashflow; Demographics; Workforce. Thus, our institutions will need to review the resources to be reallocated in support of a more distinctive identity and mission.

Recommendation: The UW System must implement a process for prioritizing and evaluating academic and administrative programs/services across comprehensive universities using modified traditional tools. Given the need to accomplish this
significant change rather quickly while balancing the interests of the state with the interests of each university, UW System Administration must play a larger role than planned under the previous incremental strategy. The UW System must switch from the convener/collaborator/COORDINATOR of this effort to the director and manager and must provide clear guidelines and mandates so that the comprehensive universities engage in this accelerated process of prioritization and evaluation of all of their programs. Ultimately, each university will need to submit to the Board of Regents a revised or updated mission statement.

**Responsibility:** Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Anny Morrobel-Sosa, who has already been working with the Provosts at the comprehensive universities to accelerate the process of analyzing and evaluating programs. Traditional models for evaluating and prioritizing university programs (see Massy1, Dickeson2, and Comstock and Booker3 models) should guide the process; however, they should be adapted to expedite the process of identifying the desired programs and offerings that will form the core of the revised or updated university mission statement.

**Timeline:** Evaluating and prioritizing programs should be completed prior to January 15, 2021. Revised or updated university mission statements should be submitted to the Board in March 2021 with implementation to begin in the fall of 2021. This is an aggressive timeline, but this is critically important to the future of the comprehensive universities and to the state of Wisconsin.

In addition, President Cross also announced two other recommendations as follows (again in his language):

**Recommendation:** To expedite this process, UW System Administration must mandate that those already identified functional areas immediately begin the process of transitioning to UW-Shared Services. IT services must be rapidly assessed and consolidated to realize both initial savings, reduce future costs, and support services at scale across the comprehensive universities. Further, rather than engage all stakeholders in the optimal design and desired actions in each operation, as is currently being done, UW-Shared Services must immediately adopt a standardized process and implement it with the understanding that the optimal process design may happen at a later day. Standardization and a shift in oversight responsibility must occur quickly.

**Responsibility:** Vice President for Administration Robert Cramer, who has overseen centralization through UW-Shared Services.

**Timeline:** Complete the design and transition of identified functions to UW-Shared Services by June 2021. Complete the transition of IT functions by January 2022.
**Recommendation:** The UW System must transition to a unified, strategic online education delivery model to better serve both nontraditional students who do not live on campus and traditional students who may live on campus and want to use this learning option.

1. **For traditional/on campus students:** Improve the quality (content, inclusive-minded pedagogy, and technology), effectiveness, and efficiency of individual courses and programs aimed at traditional students who may live on campus and who seek individual online courses to enhance their education and advance their progress/time to degree. 
   a. UW Extended Campus should expand the support it provides to campuses in instructional design and media development to assist in creating well-designed online courses and experiences for traditional/on campus students. UW Extended Campus should expand its student coaching model to assist campuses in providing direct support to students in the online environment.
   b. These expansions should use a “train the trainer” approach to engage and build campus-based networks and capacities.

2. **For nontraditional/nonresidential students:** The UW Extended Campus collaborative degree model for nontraditional working adults should be expanded with the following additions:
   a. UW System Administration should designate the collaborative model as the default approach to all new online degree and nondegree programs. UW System Administration would require any UW university to provide extensive justification for an online program offered only through its own university. Collaborations would continue to be opt-in; no campus would be required to participate.
   b. UW System Administration should delegate the responsibility for determining potential or existing market demand to UW Extended Campus.
   c. Any proposed online program offering should include a recommendation from UW Extended Campus as part of the presentation for program approval to the Board of Regents.

**Responsibility:** Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Anny Morrobel-Sosa and Senior Associate Vice President/Executive Director for UW Extended Campus Aaron Brower.

**Timeline Recommendation 1:**
1. **Product development:** Complete four self-paced courses by the first week of June 2020. UW Extended Campus is currently developing three self-paced courses on online instruction and one self-paced course on the student coaching model of student support.
2. **Dissemination/adoption:** Product/deliverable is dependent on the number of users/adaptors but should occur in June, July, and August 2020.
3. **Instructor and student support during semester**: Complete between September and December 2020.

4. **Continued growth in entire project**: Continue product development and dissemination/adoption during the 2020-21 academic year and ongoing.

**Timeline Recommendation 2**: Implement at the beginning of the new fiscal year, July 1, 2020.

There was no formal action taken by the Board of Regents but the proposals were received favorably. I assure you that I and the Chancellor’s Staff are learning all we can about these announcements today and beginning to assess how our campus might be affected. We will continue to advocate strongly for our institution, all the good and hard work that we’ve all done to date, and for our future flexibilities to the best of our ability.

In addition, the Board of Regents has approved the waiver of ACT and SAT scores for admission through the next two years (except for UW Madison). We know that the number of students who have taken the test have decreased by half and there is great concern about the number of students who will be college bound. Thank you to everyone’s superhero efforts as we take every step possible to maximize our enrollment potential and to retain our current students.

There is again more talk about what may be happening in the fall. We will be open in the fall, but the question is around what this will look like. Regardless of whether we are back in some modified form in the fall or fully online, it will help our campus planning efforts to hear from you about concerns, ideas, and expectations. To that end, we are going to be sending out a brief survey for you to fill in so we can hear your voice at this critical time of scenario planning. You should expect a survey link to arrive in your mailbox by Monday. I encourage you to provide your insight and feedback. We need to know your concerns, ideas and views to inform the critical work in process and to come.

You should also know that even if the governor’s Safer at Home order expires in May, we don’t expect to be back in May, more likely mid-June is the best case -- and even that is speculation. We want to ensure that we are able to do so as safely as possible and in coordination with Douglas Co. Public Health. If it means extending telecommuting
agreements, we will do that. I appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to make this process of coming back to campus one that puts care for our community first.

On the good news side, the CARES funding arrived and is being distributed to students. Additionally, the end of the year showcases are being held in innovative ways. I highly encourage you to attend these showcases if you can.

Again, take a deep breath. The topics above are part of the chaos out there (not just here but also across the nation) and you should know that our campus leadership is on the forefront of planning and in advocating for our campus community.

Please be safe. Thank you for your goodwill.

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