February 26, 2010

ISU Faculty, Staff, and Students

Dear Colleagues,

I recently had the pleasure of attending a meeting of the Student Senate, where we discussed issues related to potential campus reorganization and a number of other topics. One of the Senators, Senator Holly Bullock, a representative from the College of Arts and Sciences, requested that students receive my weekly update letters. I believe this is a good idea, so beginning with this letter, students will receive Academic Affairs updates.

I would like to clarify a misunderstanding that arose from a discussion during Monday’s Faculty Senate meeting. I have spoken with Vice President Fletcher, and he confirms that the University has no plan to “sweep” local accounts. The Legislature and the State Board of Education have asked the universities to account for all institutional assets in order to arrive at a clear picture of the level of unencumbered funds in the institutions. ISU’s Finance and Administration is conducting an inventory of all accounts and of how much they contain, but there is no plan or even discussion among the vice presidents about appropriating funds from local accounts.

As you know, the deadline for faculty input on the draft report for campus reorganization has passed, but we are still receiving some useful and constructive input. I’d to thank all of those who have taken the time to provide feedback. Your input has been immensely helpful and much appreciated.

Because your input has been so valuable, President Vailas has agreed to extend his deadline for a final report from Academic Affairs. This will allow us the time to process your input and fine tune the final report.

As I mentioned last week, we have decided to accept the organizational structure as proposed by two of the task forces (Pharmacy and Health Professions as well as Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education), and we are coming substantially closer to what the task force for Science and Engineering has recommended.

Since we now have some additional time, I would like to take this opportunity to solicit some specific input from those of you in the sciences. As you might remember, the draft proposal arranged the departments into two schools, the School of Engineering and the School of Sciences. Judging from your input, there seems to be considerable support for two other models. One would be to constitute three schools (or “divisions,” if that term is more palatable): Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Engineering. The other would be simply to have departments without a divisional structure. The advantage of the school/division structure is that it provides for a larger aggregate within which to distribute workload.

I would like to hear from those of you in the sciences specifically about this subject. If you have strong feelings or thoughts about this subject, please send it to the input email address: provost@isu.edu. Of course, now that we have additional time, other constituents can continue to provide input on other parts of the reorganization plan as well. For example, I would like to hear more input about the role of department chair in the new structure, especially in a structure that has schools/divisions.
The Vice President for Finance and Administration and his staff are continuing to conduct a full analysis of how much the campus reorganization will save the university. They are also attempting to determine where there is “crossover” between savings counted for the possible reorganization and savings credited to the 2% and 4% scenarios. I will report to you about these efforts when I have the results of their analysis.

Finally, I’d like to repeat the good news that I mentioned in last week’s letter: President Vailas is considering reallocating some limited resources to create a modest implementation fund to help cover any unforeseen expenses arising from reorganization efforts. This fund will help us implement changes as smoothly as possible.

As usual, I will give you periodic updates on University and Academic Affairs issues as news becomes available, and I invite you to contact me or the staff in the Office of Academic Affairs if we can help you in any way.

Cordially,

Gary A. Olson
Provost and Professor