February 23, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty Council
FROM: Lou Anna K. Simon, President
RE: Response to Faculty Voice Proposals
    Task Force II: Administrator Review
    Task Force III: Academic Program Review

I continue to appreciate the hard work and deliberation represented by each of the Faculty Voice Task Force reports. At the request of Faculty Council, I am providing a written response to Reports II and III. Provost Wilcox, ECAC Chairperson Potchen, and Senior Associate Provost Youatt have met to discuss these reports, and their conclusions have helped inform my comments.

Reports II and III each deal with a review process, and in each case, faculty assert that a more rigorous, systematic, and inclusive practice would better meet our goals.

The Academic Governance Program Review Task Force recommends a process and a rotation by which academic departments will be reviewed. I concur with the goals of the unit review as described in the Academic Program Review (guiding future directions and providing evidence for change), and I generally endorse the process described in the Academic Program Review (APR) report.

While the responsibility for determining the schedule and rotation of academic units to be reviewed within a college, is the responsibility of the College Advisory Committee in consultation with the Dean, the Provost should maintain the option of calling for an expedited review of any unit within the college. The Provost also needs the prerogative of requesting the review of a cross-college program (not accounted for in this proposal). It is understood that the metrics for the reviews are negotiated within the larger strategic plans of the University.

The Recommendations for Administrator Review similarly seeks to improve a University process, by endorsing a more inclusive and robust
process, by which administrators are regularly reviewed. The recommendations as proposed, however, raise a number of concerns which I mentioned to Faculty Council in October:

- The details of process by which any new tool would be developed and vetted
- the use of the feedback from the proposed system
- the relationship of the proposed process to other processes
- possible unintended consequences of the process

I reiterate my concern that inadequate consideration may have been given to the possible negative impacts of collecting and posting of administrator performance data on the recruitment of faculty to a unit, the recruitment of new administrators for a unit, or the influence the practice could have on an administrator’s decisions around a difficult change agenda, especially at the beginning of an administrative term. I believe it bears remembering that almost every department on campus has rejected the on-line completion of SIRS forms because of faculty concern of responder bias on the part of disgruntled students.

At the center of the Administrator Review proposal, however, rests the important and legitimate concerns of expanded faculty participation and timely review.

Academic Human Resource Policies (Section IV) currently describe the annual evaluation of chairpersons and directors. An assessment is to occur annually, with all aspects of performance evaluated. A copy of the evaluation instrument (criteria) used must be filed with the Office of the Provost prior to each annual cycle of evaluations, and the dean of each college must inform the Office of the Provost that the annual performance evaluation for each unit administrator has been completed.

Guidelines for the required five-year review of academic deans are also detailed in our Academic Governance By-Laws (2.1.4). Chairpersons, directors and deans are also subject to regular review at intervals not to exceed five years. The College Advisory Committee of each college has shared responsibility with the Provost to determine the procedures for the review of deans.

Given these guidelines for administrator review, it would appear that we have in place appropriate opportunities for feedback and input. We may well have been weak, however, in exercising the guidelines that are in place. Rather than create a second system, it seems prudent to work on our existing processes to see whether or not we could implement
changes that would make these more transparent and inclusive. After conferring with Provost Wilcox, we would like to offer the following recommendations:

- That the Office of the Provost post on the web the schedule for the five-year review for each Dean and Director, including the date by which the preparation of the review should commence so that the review can proceed within the five-year timeline

- That the Office of the Provost work with Deans and College Advisory Committees to determine the timeline for the review of each chairperson within the college, and that these be publicly posted on the web

- That the Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources (Office of Faculty and Organizational Development) provide at least one event annually that provides information to faculty and administrators on approaches to administrator performance review

- That, on the direction of Provost Wilcox, the Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources initiate an enhanced program of professional development support specifically tailored to the needs of department chairpersons

- That information on the shared responsibility for administrator reviews be an explicit part of the orientation program for new administrators

- That the Office of the Provost provide access to every academic unit on campus, an electronic survey tool which will allow the confidential collection of data from faculty for the purpose of dean, director or chair reviews

I welcome your response to these recommendations for enhancing administrator review and look forward to working toward implementation of the program review proposal.