Projecting forward, what do you see as the future of UNI to the state, region, nation and internationally?

UNI is the comprehensive university in Iowa. We have a special niche, and a special role to play. We can offer students all the amenities and regional, national, and international experiences of a large university, but in a smaller more personalized setting; with appropriate class sizes; and with a majority of our classes taught by regular faculty members. The key is we need to differentiate what is unique about UNI and communicate this to students, parents, the state, Midwest and beyond. Our academic excellence is robust. Our graduates are successful (and I understand they often times begin their promising careers in Iowa), and we need to make sure students and alumni share these views and attitudes. We need to continue our outstanding programs – and brag about them – change programs for future successes, and add appropriate programs that are good for UNI, the state, the region and the world. We need to make sure that we not only brag about our outstanding programs, but also the core programs in the arts and humanities that make those programs outstanding.

What strategies will you use to build your relationship with the faculty and staff of the university?

I will listen! I plan to meet with many faculty, staff and students in the summer of 2013, throughout the rest of 2013 and into 2014, and on a continuous basis; to listen, learn, motivate, lead and move the university forward. I want to get to know individuals and hear from them. I’m planning for some robust meetings with each of the colleges, each division on-campus, student leaders and organizations, and various councils, senates, committees etc.; along with members of the Cedar Falls/Waterloo community as well as Iowa in general. I want to hear their input and begin to build relationships with everyone. I want to enjoy their company, hear suggestions for continuation of success and thoughts for improvement, and hear about their passion for UNI.

What are the greatest challenges facing UNI and higher education in general as we move into the 21st Century?

We are a student-centered, learning organization; we need to be an organization continually evaluating and strategically looking at where we can expand our capacity to grow for our future. To do this, we must be more nimble at times, embrace opportunities, build relationships, partner
with others and focus our efforts with our available resources. Programs in all of our colleges are doing well and we need to showcase them.

Some of the greatest challenges we face include the increasing competitive environment for top students and faculty. We also face a competitive environment for state appropriations, a stagnant tuition revenue stream, increased federal and state regulations, and increasing labor and operational costs. I will meet with several individuals on-campus first, but as with many institutions, I believe we will need to continue to work on enrollment management (Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, Recruitment, and Retention) efforts which include the recruitment and retention of students (especially minority and underrepresented students). We need to continue to build on offering an inclusive learning environment where all feel welcome and part of the UNI family. I think the learning communities planned for fall 2013 in the residence halls will be a great start to offering this type of inclusive learning environment option for students.

We need to continue to leverage our financial aid offers to attract top students. We may need to look at our recruitment cycle, timing of scholarship offers in relation to other universities, weekend recruitment efforts etc. to work on expanding our pool of qualified student applications. This will take the support of everyone and I’m excited to help in these efforts. Also, the students at UNI I’ve met are so impressive and I think they play a vital role in helping our student (and parent) recruitment efforts. Also key is the support and engagement of our alumni, guidance counselors and teachers throughout high schools.

We need to continue to invest in our academic and co-curricular programs. We need to build upon our successes, recognize our leadership role in education throughout the state and nation, and build upon those strengths. Status quo is not acceptable. We need to be more nimble, innovative and seek to embrace future opportunities.

As with other universities, I hope we can also work on increasing the affinity our students and alumni have for UNI. Hopefully, we can build upon our efforts to strengthen our connections with alumni, which will also help with our recruitment efforts. We need to work with our current students, faculty, staff and Alumni to embrace UNI and share that common view- of how dynamic and distinctive UNI is - and that our programs and learning environment provide students with the tools to succeed.

With UNI’s excellent faculty and staff, the university provides transformative learning experiences. We need everyone to understand how this translates into successful, innovative graduates that have a strong core of UNI alumni for continued and long-lasting support after graduation.

**Why is UNI a good fit for your skill set and aspirations?**

I’m honored, excited and humbled to join the UNI family. My array of past experiences at three regional comprehensive universities with faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and legislators, have
Interview with incoming UNI President Bill Ruud – Continued

helped me learn the importance of working collaboratively on-campus, finding common ground, building relationships etc. – and that I’m prepared to begin the leadership role at UNI. I know we can be collaboratively competitive with the Board of Regents, the legislature, the other Regents Universities, our community college partners, our private university partners, our communities, and friends to continue to make Iowa a leader in the higher education community.

What have you learned, at Shippensburg and elsewhere, that you believe will most help you succeed in your new position as president of UNI?

Relationship building, involving others, leadership, and listening. The importance of listening, seeking input, synthesizing information and building upon the strengths of the university and its community are critical to our success. I also want to have fun, learn and participate in as much as I can, and at the same time make the UNI community comfortable that there is strong leadership and advocacy on their behalf.

What role do you envision UNI’s faculty will play in setting the direction for this university and moving it forward?

I am pleased to join the UNI family and work with the faculty, students, staff, alumni and friends to move the university forward. The faculty will be key partners in the UNI shared governance model. They will be leaders in curriculum excellence and change, as well as strong contributors to our community as well. I will generally err on the side of providing as much information as I am able to help the decision making process go smoothly. That does not mean there will not be healthy discussion...to the contrary, in order to have excellence and move from good to great, we will discuss issues, agree, disagree and ultimately come to solutions that will benefit the students and the institution known as UNI. The faculty have excellent scholarly achievements, excel in teaching/learning and perform valuable service. We need to build on their achievements, on their scholarly excellence and provide faculty with the resources needed to continue pursuing their academic research, scholarly work, instructional development and service to the university and community.

Shared governance will be a priority as I meet with faculty throughout campus. I want to get to know faculty and their strengths, and I’ll work with Faculty Senate and the United Faculty as we move forward with common core goals.

We need to build on a shared vision with common goals, values and missions that become deeply shared and entrenched within the university. Soon, we will look at the 2010-15 strategic plan and work on a plan that extensively includes faculty input, involvement and leadership to develop our strategic plan for 2020 and beyond.
What are the major challenges facing UNI in the coming years? What should the university’s faculty and administration be doing now to meet those challenges?

In the short-term, we need to ensure good stewardship of our resources, balance the budget and determine the priorities of issues to address. This summer, I look forward to meeting with the campus community to listen and hear their views on the university’s strengths and areas of concern that need to be addressed. Together, we will look for opportunities to address the key issues and work to increase UNI’s prominence in Iowa and the Midwest.

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While UNI has several advantages in the competition to attract Iowa high school graduates – notably our size, small classes taught by regular faculty, and tuition rates that are lower than private schools – these may not be enough to fill our incoming freshman classes. Are there other competitive advantages that UNI has or should develop to boost enrollments?

Agreed – size of the institution, majority of classes sized right for the discipline, classes (a majority of which are taught by regular faculty), tuition and fees that are affordable for the quality and value of the education received. We must make sure we compete on the value of the great education we provide, the positive experience that our students receive, the relationships that we have with our students who become outstanding alumni when they graduate and help them become some of our best spokespeople, advocates and competitive advantages for UNI! We must also take UNI to the citizens of Iowa. They must know of the great institution that can provide great futures. I’m certain there are additional competitive advantages that we can assertively share with our Iowa citizens, and citizens from the surrounding states – Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas – and I’m eager to get on-campus and discuss this very question with faculty, staff and students. From my short-time on-campus, I’ve detected there is a real sense of providing a personalized learning experience for students. The UNI faculty and staff are genuine and committed to helping students excel in a competitive and robust learning environment, and I think we must make students, parents and families, as well as our non-traditional adult learners, aware of the advantage this provides students during college.

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