

Fall Faculty Meeting
August 31, 2015
3:30-5:00 pm
Lang Auditorium

As I have had the opportunity to meet with faculty, staff, and students over the last three months, I have been impressed, but not surprised, with the level of engagement that occurs at the University of Northern Iowa. As I was wandering through the Physics building, I talked with three students working on an internship and on undergraduate research projects; one was a rising sophomore. At a state function, I met one of our accounting majors, a rising junior, who was interning this summer at Summit Agricultural Group; he expressed how important the course work was that he had taken, but to see it in practice, to have to use his knowledge, brought it all to life. Most importantly, he said that his experience at UNI prepared him well for the application of his knowledge. Also this summer several of our students made the local news for an Honors project that became a civic engagement initiative to provide local and healthy food options to neighborhoods that didn't have access to fresh produce. Finally, last Friday as I met with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction I heard about the innovative teaching practices they were piloting, and assessing, then working with graduate and undergraduate students to develop for publication.

The list of ways in which the faculty and staff engage students at this institution is broad and deep and deserves national recognition and commendation. This is work that fulfills everything that we stand for in higher education: to prepare students to become professionals who are leaders in the workforce and active and engaged citizens responsive to the needs of the community. But we know that higher education is about more than that: it is also about assisting our students in their journey towards creating meaningful and purposeful lives, connected to their communities, always learning and exploring, curious about how they can make the world a better place to live.

So this is my challenge to our community: how can we make this engagement an intentional aspect of all of our students' lives? How do we create a seamless and integrated plan for the engagement of students in their process of becoming...of becoming professionals, citizens,

fully-realized humans, members of a variety of diverse communities, including the wider community of life that sustains us and nurtures us?

I've been asked to offer a vision today, my vision, for UNI. But I must admit that my vision flows out of what I see happening here, with a desire—and indeed a responsibility because the needs are so great in our time—to elevate that work by creating synergies and systems and collaborations and transparency. What we have before us is an opportunity to create a 21st century holistic and engaged learning experience that elevates high impact practices including undergraduate research, internships, and civic engagement; that focuses on undergraduate education that is innovative and transformative not only for the students but also for us; that offers a national model for teacher education that changes the conversation about our educational system from one of despair to one of hope; and that considers graduate education as a potential and maybe necessary next step in the learning experience. We must, in the conversation to come, celebrate excellence and quality and offer opportunities for continuous improvement, learning, and growth.

As Provost and Executive Vice President, I have developed three broad areas that I will concentrate my time and attention in this first year, with specific goals in these areas. This information will be posted on the Provost's website soon for your feedback and input; I will also welcome feedback from you at the end of the year regarding my performance on these goals.

The three areas of work, with some of my goals, include:

1st -- Organizational Structure

- We will look at the structure of the Academic Affairs Council and of the Provost's office. This will include engaging the request on the part of the Graduate Council to split the Dean of the Graduate College from the position of Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, as well as other elements.
- As I have attended College and Department meetings, I have been inviting the faculty and staff to consider engaging a conversation about the structure of the academic colleges, with the intention to make certain that we have the ability to communicate effectively and make

decisions in a collaborative and transparent manner. The ultimate structure of the colleges should support the work of the faculty in their teaching, scholarship, and service and bridge relations across colleges, divisions, and the community. As part of this work, we do need to reduce the number of Interim positions.

- We will complete a successful search for the Dean of the College of Education, and through the process of the search work to elevate the status of the Teacher Education at the University of Northern Iowa in the state, region, and nation.

2nd -- Strategic Planning

- We will work on the Academic Master Plan, which will provide a Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals for Academic Affairs. Please attend as this is one place where we will come together to develop a collectively owned vision and mission.
- We will also need to select a topic for our Quality Initiative project for our HLC accreditation; submit a proposal by Fall 2016.
- We will develop Strategic Initiatives for Teacher Education that will position our program for further national recognition.
- Finally, I will work with the Vice President for Administration and Financial Services, Michael Hager, to develop a budgeting model and practice that allows us to be proactive, mission-driven, and innovative and with the Vice President for Advancement, Lisa Baronio, to develop a fundraising program aligned with our academic goals.

3rd -- Community

- We will work to enhance the evaluation process, making certain that evaluations are about celebrating and acknowledging the outstanding work that happens on this campus and offering opportunities for continuous improvement. This will include evaluations of academic leadership.
- I will work with the Vice President for Student Affairs, Terry Hogan, on continuing the rich collaboration between our divisions to elevate student engagement and success.
- Finally, I look forward to working with the Faculty Senate and the United Faculty on a variety of projects that will deepen transparency, enhance our culture of collaboration, and

continue to improve morale. I also look forward to working with the Student Government to support and celebrate their work.

I feel greatly privileged and honored to join this community and feel a sense of great responsibility and urgency for the work we must do together. Our central task, given the pressures we face, must be to engage in a transformation of what we do and how we do it, but not a transformation of who we are. The University of Northern Iowa has a strong reputation for engaging students as they become professionals who lead in the workforce, active and engaged citizens who lead in their communities, and whole and thriving human beings who live lives with purpose and meaning.

My question for this community is this: How can we elevate this work so that engagement is woven into the fabric of what we do, so that students experience high impact practices not accidentally but intentionally, with one experience leading to another, allowing students the opportunity to integrate and synthesize their learning experiences.

I know that change is hard. I know I am asking much because I know how much is already happening. And I do know that we still have healing to do and trust to build. But if we can come together to collectively own a vision, we will be strong and our future will be bright. We will become the institution that others will turn to as a model for the creation of a community of learners intent upon engaging the world around us to make it a better place.

Thank you for coming today and for listening. Thank you for offering me the opportunity to serve you.