

**“Creating a Culture of Learning: Elevating Engagement at UNI”**

**Fall 2015 Faculty Workshop**

**Thursday, August 20, 9:00 am**

**Maucker Union Ballroom**

It is a great privilege and honor to join the faculty and staff at the University of Northern Iowa. In the three months that I have been here, even before the students arrived for the fall semester, I have already experienced the high level of engagement with and commitment to our students that makes UNI unique.

In some way, each of us individually and all of us collectively are called to this work of teaching. For most of us, hopefully for all of us, it has become a vocation, a true calling where we see our work as centrally about creating opportunities for students to learn. We can't learn for them and if we just lecture at them many of them won't learn in deep and lasting ways; while they might gain information, they won't be transformed—they won't gain the wisdom that is needed in how to use this knowledge.

To create a culture of learning is our job. We must model curiosity and create a community of inquiry in our classrooms. We must advance rigorous curriculum and expect that our students can achieve at the levels that we know are necessary and important in this time. Our job is to provide them with the scaffolding they need to be successful.

So...with this honor and privilege comes great responsibility. What we do in higher education matters. We create the opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, the skills, and the dispositions necessary for them to be successful professionals, and, largely through the application of this knowledge in internships and research and service learning, they gain the wisdom they need to know how to use that knowledge and skills.

But what we do also matters to the communities we serve—local, state, national, and even international communities. And, if we develop a broader awareness of our interrelationship with the biotic community that sustains and nourishes us, our students learn to become members of the wider community of life. We must model and provide opportunities for students to become active and engaged citizens, to do the work of making our communities better places to live and work. This is also an essential part of the work of higher education; it is not secondary.

Finally, it matters to the individuals themselves, to those young adults trying to find their way in the world, to find work that can become a vocation and to find a way to create a life full of meaning and purpose. How do we measure this, the casual conversation in the office or the spark that happens in a classroom or a lab that sets someone on the path towards realizing a potential they may not have known they had?

The challenge I offer the faculty and staff at the University of Northern Iowa this fall is to create a seamless and integrated plan for the engagement of students in the eternal act of becoming: professionals, citizen leaders, and fully realized human beings.

As Provost, in order to further the creation of this community of learning, I will work in three broad areas this year.

First, in Strategic Planning so that we have a shared, collectively owned vision of where we want to go in the next five years, with clear goals to get us there. The work of developing the Academic Master Plan is of the utmost importance this fall; I strongly encourage you to attend one of the Open Forums as the Academic Master Plan will determine what programs and projects we will advance and how we will allocate our budget.

Second, in Organizational Structure, I will invite the faculty and staff into conversations about how we are organized with an eye towards creating systems and processes for enacting our Master Plan. I want us to create a process for the flow and exchange of information so that we can be proactive in creating our future.

Third, in Community, we will work to develop a data-informed, collaborative and inclusive, transparent decision-making culture so that the vision we collectively develop will be one that we also enact together. Explain each.

I plan to offer further details about these goals in the Fall Faculty Meeting on August 31. I would strongly encourage you to attend this meeting and attend one of the Academic Master Plan Open Forums.

This is an exciting time in Higher Education, and an even more exciting time at the University of Northern Iowa for I believe that, here, we can together create a vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education and put that vision into practice. We can become what everyone else will use as a model for best practice.

I look forward to getting to know all of you, of working together with you to create this vibrant and rich, innovative and transformative learning community.