

Report of the Committee to Review the Office of the Provost
Executive Summary of Recommendations
April 2002

Recommendations:

1. In light of budget concerns, we concur in the decision not to fill the position of Vice Provost, vacated when Joe Knight and then interim Vice Provost Les Simms left Iowa. The Provost should clarify to the university community the new organizational structure that results from this change. In particular, the Provost should identify clearly, both within the Office of the Provost and to the broader university community, who on his staff will assume primary responsibility for the tasks that were assigned to the Vice-Provost (e.g., review of academic programs and accreditation).
2. Do not hire a permanent Associate Provost for Interdisciplinary Affairs. Within the next twelve months assess the progress that has been made in fostering support for interdisciplinary activities and determine whether the current temporary position of Special Assistant to the Provost for Interdisciplinary Activity” should be retained or eliminated. The committee warns against providing top-heavy support for interdisciplinary work and would prefer to see facilitation of faculty initiatives.
3. It is time to conduct an in-depth review of the Office of Associate Provost for Diversity, paying close attention to the jurisdiction of that office and whether it in fact serves all diversity groups within the University.
4. The President should work with the Office of the Provost to provide better coordinated communications about budget decisions that are perceived as threatening to academic programs.
5. Determine ways to streamline the increased demands on the Office of the Provost for reporting data to the Board of Regents and to Board staff.
6. Develop a process that would increase faculty participation in annual reviews of deans.
7. Improve communication and working relationships with faculty by spending more time in individual or small meetings with faculty that provide opportunities to engage substantively with the academic work and intellectual lives of faculty members.
8. Review office policies regarding access to the Provost to see if they are too restrictive.
9. When communicating the goals and activities of the Office, focus on the most important topics. State priorities and primary goals clearly.
10. Work more closely with faculty groups in addition to the Faculty Senate.

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I. Introduction.

The committee to review the Office of the Provost and Provost Jon Whitmore was appointed by President Mary Sue Coleman and Faculty Senate President Jon Carlson during the 1999-2000 academic year. The committee held an organizational meeting at the end of that academic year and began active review in the fall of 2000.

Committee members include: Professor Patricia Cain, Chair (Law), Professor Soura Dasgupta (Engineering), Associate Professor David Drake (Dentistry), Professor Linda Kerber (History), Associate Professor Salome Raheim (Social Work), Professor Matthew Rizzo (Medicine), and Barbara Spence (Microbiology).

The committee, sometimes as a whole and sometimes in subgroups, has interviewed all deans, vice-presidents, current associate provosts, and a number of past associate provosts. At the beginning of the process, the committee met separately with Provost Whitmore and with President Coleman.

We also interviewed and solicited comments from the various units that report to the Provost in addition to the academic colleges. These units include the Library, the Art Museum, the Center for Teaching, and the College of Continuing Education.

The committee solicited comments from the broader university community by placing two ads in FYI, one in December 2000 and one in January 2001. In addition, the chair sent an email to the Deans and DEO list asking that the request for comments be passed along to faculty and staff. In order to obtain comments from faculty members that were known to have interacted with the Provost's office, members of the committee met with the following groups:

1. Current Faculty Senate Officers
2. Prior Faculty Senate Officers
3. The Educational Policy Committee in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
4. Numerous Associate Deans in the various Colleges.
5. Persons who had served as chairs of dean search committees.

Including deans, central administrators, faculty and staff, the number of people consulted by the committee in the review process exceeds 100. Approximately half of the persons consulted had primary appointments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS). All other Colleges were well represented in the pool of commentators. No students were consulted. Nor did the committee meet directly with members of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa. However, President Coleman discussed the Provost's job performance with the President of the Board and reported that conversation to the committee.

In addition to seeking personal comments and evaluations, the committee read various documents to acquaint itself with the job of the Provost. The most important documents consulted were the two prior reviews of the Office of Academic Affairs (1981 and 1991); the Self-Study Report of the Office of the Provost (May 2000), and the Office of the Provost Strategic Plan 2000-2005.

On March 4-5, 2001, the committee met with the external consultant for the review, Provost Lee Huntsman of the University of Washington. Provost Huntsman was invited to participate in this process by President Coleman upon the recommendation of the review committee, and approval by the Faculty Senate. Provost Huntsman spent a day and a half in Iowa City, visiting with central administrators, faculty members, and staff in the Office of the Provost. We agreed that his role was not to conduct an independent review, but rather to advise the committee in its review by providing insight from the point of view of a Provost. Provost Huntsman was very helpful in providing the committee with perspective and expertise. Nothing in this report should be read to reflect his independent judgment regarding the Office of the Provost. The opinions expressed in this report are based on the information received by, and the judgments made by, this committee.

By the summer of 2001, the committee had completed the interview process and drafted a preliminary single report that included review information about the Office of the Provost and Provost Whitmore. The full committee met with President Coleman on September 6, 2001 to discuss that preliminary report. This final report is based on the primary findings and recommendations of that preliminary report.

II. Preliminary Observations

When we began our review of the Office of the Provost, we focused primarily on Provost Whitmore. The Operations Manual requires that this committee submit two separate reports, one on the office and one on the individual officer. It is very difficult to separate a review of the Office of the Provost from a review of the Provost himself. In this report, we include the more generalized observations about the operation of the office and the perceptions of the office as a whole.

Another difficulty in writing this final report is that the budgetary situation has changed dramatically from the time we began our review. The conclusions our committee reached and reported to President Coleman in September 2001 were based on facts as they existed then. Those conclusions form the core of this written report. However, as we were finalizing this report at the end of 2001, the amount of the state's financial contribution to the University was being dramatically cut. As of February 2002 such funding cuts totaled \$38 million. In addition, terrorist attacks against our country, which began on September 11, have fueled additional fears about state funding in the future. Thus, some of the recommendations included in the preliminary report that focus on cost-cutting are already being implemented. In the final revision of this report, we note in brackets some of those changes, including those that either have occurred or are in the process of being implemented.

III. Office of the Provost: Organization and Responsibility

As stated in the self-study:

The Provost's primary individual responsibilities are to act as the University's chief academic officer and to communicate on behalf of the University with the Board of Regents and with internal and external constituencies. As chief academic officer, the Provost is responsible for the supervision of all academic programs; a variety of faculty-related matters, including academic promotion and tenure decisions and faculty advocacy; student academic affairs; and strategic academic planning.

When we began our review, the Office of the Provost was staffed with 1 Vice-Provost, 6 Associate Provosts, and one Assistant Provost. The current structure of the Office, together with the names of the persons appointed to each office, is outlined below:

Provost: Jon Whitmore

Vice Provost (currently vacant)

Associate Provosts for Faculty: Lee Anna Clark

Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education: Lola Lopes

Associate Provost for Graduate Education: John Keller, interim

Associate Provost for Health Sciences: Kitty Buckwalter

Associate Provost for Diversity and Director of Opportunity at Iowa: Joe Coulter

Associate Provost and Dean of International Programs: Steven Hoch

Special Assistant for Interdisciplinary Activities: Christopher Squier

Assistant Provost and Director of Administration and Planning: Don Szeszycki

Additional staff include one Administrative Associate, and a number of secretaries and program assistants or associates. Most of the program assistants/associates are assigned to separate functions in the office (e.g., two staff the dual career network and at least three are part of the information and resource management staff). Only two associate provosts are assigned a program assistant, the AP for faculty and the AP for health sciences. All Associate Provosts have a Secretary IV working for them. These secretaries necessarily operate in part as secretaries and in part as administrative or program assistants because the office is thinly staffed and there are very few administrative or program assistants. There is a division of opinion among those who have worked with the Office regarding the current organizational structure. Some think that the structure is top heavy and that the tasks could be better accomplished by three or four associate provosts supported by sufficient staff, Some think the number of associate provosts is about right since the Provost is often unavailable and faculty can usually get sufficient access to an AP.

General Observations: Many people who contacted us commented on the fact that the office seemed well run and efficient. The fact that APs work long hours was a common observation. While there are differences of opinion about the quality of the job done by different APs during Whitmore's tenure, the general current consensus is that his APs are hard-working, conscientious, and respond quickly to faculty inquiries.

Concerns: Many faculty expressed concern about the lack of clarity regarding the role of the Vice-Provost. These same faculty were worried about the rumors they had heard that the Provost was about to create yet another new position in the form of an AP for Interdisciplinary Programs. Some in the university community believe that the office would be run more efficiently with fewer APs and yet they are hesitant to suggest that specific positions be cut. The committee spent a fair amount of time discussing whether or not the AP for Diversity was a necessary position. While we realize that the University only recently decided to elevate that position to the level of an AP and that there was strong support for that move within the broader university community, a number of our interviewees suggested that the job might be better accomplished if diversity concerns were not separated from other AP positions.

[**Update:** As a result of budgetary concerns, the Provost has decided not to appoint anyone to fill the now vacant office of Vice-Provost. The Provost is currently considering how he might combine the Vice Provost position with one or more of the currently filled Associate Provost positions to ensure that the important tasks of program and administrative reviews are completed in a timely manner. In addition, the Provost has added a temporary position to deal with interdisciplinary concerns and expresses no intent to convert that position into something more permanent. The temporary position is designated as “Special Assistant to the Provost for Interdisciplinary Activity” and is funded one-third time.]

Recommendations: Our original recommendation was that the Provost should reconsider the necessity of hiring a new Vice-Provost. We concur in the decision not to fill that position and advise the Provost to clarify to the university community the new organizational structure that results from this change. In particular, the Provost should identify clearly, both within the Office of the Provost and to the broader university community, who on his staff will assume primary responsibility for the tasks that were assigned to the Vice-Provost (e.g., review of academic programs and accreditation).

Our original recommendation was against hiring a permanent AP for Interdisciplinary Programs, although we understood that other committees had recommended such a post. While we agree that there must be better central coordination of interdisciplinary activities, we do not think hiring an additional AP to focus on this issue is a good use of resources. Interdisciplinary work is a tradition at Iowa. While we believe it would be helpful to have someone in the Office of the Provost available to coordinate interdisciplinary work, we do not think a full-time AP position is necessary to do this. Nor do we think it a good idea to assign “interdisciplinary” concerns to a specialized AP. Instead, we believe it would be better for the current APs to work on concerns about interdisciplinary affairs as part of their current portfolios. Our committee has not had an opportunity to review the work of the current “Special Assistant” to the Provost for interdisciplinary activity since the position was created after we finished our work. While this appointment may be a good move as a temporary matter, the committee advises the Office of the Provost to review this situation within the next 12 months to determine the best way to foster support for interdisciplinary activities.

Finally, based on questions raised by several members of the university community about the necessity of appointing a full time Associate Provost for Diversity, we recommend that the Provost conduct a thorough review of that AP position. One issue of particular concern is whether all diversity concerns (e.g., race, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation) are in fact within the jurisdiction of the AP for Diversity. Our sense is that the broader university community views the position as one that deals primarily with race and ethnic concerns. An additional concern is whether there is good coordination with other diversity groups within the administration and around campus. It appears to the committee that concerns about gender equity and sexual orientation are handled outside the jurisdiction of the AP for Diversity, and yet diversity at Iowa is generally thought to include those groups as well as race and ethnicity.

IV. The Role of the Office of the Provost in Budget Decisions.

The Office of the Provost is primarily responsible for realization of the academic mission. The Office accomplishes this task in a number of different ways. To a large extent responsibility for carrying out this mission on a day-to-day basis has been delegated to the deans of the various colleges. All deans expressed some gratitude for the Provost's decision to turn over to the Colleges the funds that were allocated to them, rather than holding some funds back or to micro-manage collegiate affairs. Some deans did indicate, however, that when they needed additional funds, they might approach the Vice President for Research or the Vice President for Finance and University Services. (See Part V.B. below for more details about how the deans interact with the Office of the Provost.)

Some members of the university community question whether the Office provides sufficient academic leadership in budgetary decision-making. One widely held belief is that the Office of the Provost has been given insufficient power to operate effectively within a central administration that denies the Provost's Office sufficient power over the budget. Many suggest a realignment of budgetary control so that the Office of the Provost will play a more active role in making budgetary allocations between academic and non-academic programs. Others believe that such a restructuring is not necessary provided other participants in the budgetary process (VP for Finance, VP for Research, and President) are sufficiently responsive to the academic decisions made by the Provost.

This committee's main task was to review the operation of the Provost's Office. Such a review necessarily involves how that office interacts with other central administrators. Responses to our initial inquiries indicate that those interactions are good. Nonetheless, there is a widespread belief amongst those outside these central offices that the Office of the Provost has insufficient power in making budgetary decisions that can ultimately affect academic programs. Whether or not the belief is accurate, we conclude that the perception itself presents a problem.

Recommendation: Make some visible changes that give the Office of the Provost more control over budget decisions or take other steps that more correctly communicate to the broader community the role of the Office of the Provost in making these decisions.

V. Constituencies.

A. The Board of Regents, State of Iowa

The Provost's Office is responsible for numerous reports and is often contacted by the Board Office to provide specific information on short notice. Based on President Coleman's report to us of her conversation with President Owen Newlin, we believe that the current Provost and his staff have provided requested information accurately and in a timely manner.

A number of different constituents with whom we discussed the work of the Provost's Office mentioned that the office staff appeared to be subjected to heavier reporting requirements than in the past. That perception appeared correct to us, but we found it difficult to quantify on the basis of any reliable indicators. The annual reporting requirements to the Board of Regents have not changed significantly over the past ten years. Nor has the length of the reports increased. However, upon consultation with staff in the Office of the Provost, we were able to identify a number of factors that have probably led to increased demand.

One key factor is the change in information technology. Ten years ago, staff in the Provost's Office would have to formally submit requests to Administrative Data Processing for mainframe downloads of basic University statistical information. Now staff in the office can access the data directly and can revise or expand data themselves in response to more informal inquiries.

Another factor is that the University's strategic plan, begun in the mid-1990s under a directive from the Board of Regents, continues to require large amounts of new effort from staff. Specifically, the Office of the Provost must prepare two annual reports, the University's report of specific strategic-plan indicators and the Regents-mandated strategic-plan indicators. Significant staff time is required for these reports.

In addition, requests from the Board staff for reports or information have become increasingly ad hoc, informal, and numerous. The Board staff is requesting more information, more frequently, and in greater detail. Inquiries from the State Legislature, through the Board Office, have also increased.

Recommendation: Determine ways to streamline reporting while continuing to respond effectively to Board and Board staff requests for data.

B. Deans of the Colleges

The Provost is ultimately responsible for the hiring of deans. This is not universally true of Provosts at other U.S. institutions. Thus, the hiring of deans is one area in which The University of Iowa Provost exercises considerable power.

Members of dean search committees report that the Provost gives them sufficient control over the process, rather than interfering. This approach allows for strong faculty participation in dean selection.

The deans themselves are generally favorable toward the current provost. Their attitudes, as interpreted by this committee, range from “quite happy” to “reasonably comfortable.” When academic questions arise involving such things as appointments and tenure, most deans report that the Office of the Provost responds promptly. At times, however, deans complain that the Office has not always provided sufficient leadership when help has been requested with a spousal hire in another college. Because these complaints involve decisions by departmental faculty and other deans, it is difficult to discern the exact role that the Office of the Provost played in these failed attempts at spousal hires. Perhaps more clarification at the outset would produce more realistic expectations.

Provost Whitmore delegates and stands behind deans’ decisions. Deans appreciate that. In addition, they appreciate the clarity of the Provost’s annual evaluation of deans and the process of making budgetary requests.

The fact that many deans are not only satisfied, but also happy, with the current Provost is a very important positive aspect of Provost Whitmore’s tenure. The committee’s consultant, Provost Huntsman, stressed the fact that keeping deans happy is often quite difficult and that Provost Whitmore has performed that part of his job quite well.

The current mode of delegation to the deans is consistent with Iowa’s history of strong deans and decentralization. However, many faculty members believe that such delegation may result in insufficient accountability and review of deans. A similar concern was expressed in the 1981 review of the Provost’s Office (at that time known as the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs).

Recommendations: The Office of the Provost should consider instituting a process that would make available current information about strengths and weaknesses of individual deans. While Section 28.6 of the Operations Manual contemplates the availability of faculty comments during the annual review process, virtually none of the faculty members we spoke with believed that there was any method whereby they could give comments to the Provost about their deans. At the same time, opening channels for faculty comment should be accomplished in a way that does not upset the current amount of positive support for deans.

In addition, the Office of the Provost might review past requests from deans for help in spousal hiring decisions to determine whether the current delegation to deans is working properly in the best interest of the university.

C. Central Administration

Members of the central administration, especially those who work closely with the Office of the Provost on budgetary matters, believe that the Office is doing a good job in protecting academic programs and concerns. The current consultation process between the Provost, Vice-President for Finance, and Vice-President for Research seems to be working well in the view of the participants.

Recommendations: None.

D. Faculty

The Office of the Provost communicates regularly with the Faculty Senate. Faculty Senate officers report that they are kept well-informed on current issues of concern within the University and that they have good two-way communication with the Office of the Provost.

Many faculty report that they have very few interactions with the Office of the Provost. A significant number of faculty report that they feel that access to the Provost is too restricted. The committee understands that the Provost himself has a very full schedule and is required to spend much time in committee meetings. But a substantial number of faculty members believe that the Provost could be a better academic leader if his office interacted with a broader range of faculty members. Faculty are skeptical of the Provost's strategies for communication, notably the "coffee and conversation" meetings at which random faculty gather to discuss topics of general interest to the University. Faculty who have participated in these gatherings complain that there is insufficient intellectual engagement and that the conversations seem unconnected to and without impact on the manner in which the Office of the Provost carries out academic planning. Often these meetings provide no more than a one-way report from the Provost's Office to faculty in attendance rather than a two-way dialogue.

Recommendations: Improve communication and working relationships with faculty by spending more time in individual or small meetings with faculty that provide opportunities to engage substantively with the academic work and intellectual lives of faculty members. Review office policies regarding access to the Provost to see if they are too restrictive.

E. Staff

At The University of Iowa, staff play an important role in accomplishing the academic and research missions. In the Office of the Provost, faculty hold the Provost, Vice-Provost and all Associate Provost positions. However, the Assistant Provost and Director of Administration and Planning is a staff person. Many of the units in the Provost's Office that provide academic services or programs to the University community consist entirely of staff positions. These units include the University Libraries, Museum of Art, Evaluation and Examination Services, Admissions, Office of the Registrar, Student Financial Aid, Dual Career Network and WISE. The Provost feels that staff in his office are "vital to our mission" and that they carry out much of the work and provide

continuity. The staff in his office respect the Provost and seem to enjoy working in the office.

Although staff issues such as recognition, reward and retention do not fall directly under the jurisdiction of the Provost, he recognizes their importance and provides some opportunities for professional development to members of his office.

Recommendations: None.

VI. Strengths and Accomplishments.

In addition to some of the general descriptions above, the committee notes the following specific recent accomplishments by the Office of the Provost.

1. Support for Libraries. A quality library system is vital to the success of a top-tier academic and research institution. The Office of the Provost has made a major commitment to the University Libraries. In its strategic plan, the Office states that the Library is one of four academic areas where an emphasis on innovation and an effort to build on its strengths will occur. Recent accomplishments include the appointment of Nancy Baker as University Librarian. In addition, a portion of this years tuition increase is being used specifically to upgrade library furnishings and connectivity, to expand hours and to hire additional staff to raise the quality of available services. The implementation of “InfoHawk,” the web-based catalog system for accessing information from University Libraries, is another recent achievement. This system replaced the on line catalog system and converted the old card catalog data into a digital format. Funding has been requested for the “Partnership to Improve Instructional Quality” initiative. This revitalization plan will sustain library collections, support the Digital Library initiative, and provide increased funding for instructional equipment and space. Comments from library staff and faculty were extremely positive regarding the Provost’s support of the library system.
2. Efficient administration. The current Office of the Provost is extremely well organized and runs efficiently with very little staff, given the enormity of the tasks assigned to the Office. The office’s response time on requests for information from various constituencies appears to be very good.
3. College of Public Health. The Office of the Provost supported the establishment of the College of Public Health and was helpful in the accreditation process. The Office continues to be viewed as helpful and responsive to the needs of the College of Public Health.
4. Attention to Tenure Cases. The workload of the Provost’s Office has increased immensely over the past few decades. Our outside consultant, in explaining these changes, suggested that a provost in a major research institution today was akin to the CEO of a vast business enterprise. Provosts must be extremely well organized and must prioritize effectively to get the job done on a daily business. Provost Huntsman was quite

surprised to learn that Jon Whitmore was continuing the Iowa tradition under which the Provost himself reads every tenure file, approximately 100 such files each year. Huntsman opined that time constraints would prevent many modern provosts from including tenure files as a top priority. Needless to say, the faculty at The University of Iowa welcome the fact that Provost Whitmore remains committed to giving tenure files his personal attention. We are quite pleased that he considers that part of his role central to the accomplishment of the academic mission.

5. Undergraduate Education. The Office of the Provost has rearranged the responsibilities within the office so that there is now one Associate Provost whose primary obligation is to focus on undergraduate education. This organizational change appears to have produced some clear benefits. The AP in charge of undergraduate education also has the benefit of recommendations made by a Task Force on Persistence to Graduation. A number of these recommendations, directed at improving retention and graduation rates have been implemented. Some departments have developed “Supplemental Instruction” (SI) courses for new students who are retention risks. In addition, to help with retention, the Office of the Provost is overseeing the opening of new Living Learning Centers (one opened in fall 2001 and another is scheduled for next fall). Another concern has been the four-year graduation rate. Since adopting the “Four Year Plan,” the four-year graduation rate has improved by at least 3%. The rate for the most recent cohort was 37.29%, which compares favorably to the rate of 29.6%, which was reported as the average rate in a recent study of 53 Research I, AAU, and land-grant institutions.

6. New Promotion and Tenure Procedures. The Office of the Provost has supervised the Colleges as they revised their promotion and tenure procedures to conform to a more uniform university-wide procedure. While some constituencies amongst the faculty and at least one dean have strong reservations about the new procedures, the general consensus is that at least some of the changes were necessary and that the Provost’s Office was diligent in seeing that these changes were made by all Colleges in as timely and uniformly a manner as possible.

VII. Perceived Weaknesses and Problem Areas.

The committee received many individual complaints from faculty members about certain initiatives of the Office of the Provost. Some of these complaints relate to matters that occurred early in the Provost Whitmore’s tenure -- e.g. the decision to restructure the International Writing Program. Some people have expressed the belief that early mistakes can be explained by the fact that the Provost was new to Iowa and had not been sufficiently prepared by his staff and others to understand the histories and sensibilities of these programs. Others believe that some early missteps have not been fully resolved. This fact may explain some of the continuing anxiety and distrust that some faculty feel toward the Office of the Provost, as well as toward the central administration generally.

One possible lesson to be learned from these experiences is the importance of having sufficient staff continuity within the Office of the Provost. In this section, we comment

on three issues that have arisen more recently, and which are perceived as current problems.

1. Communication. The committee recognizes the inherent difficulties in communicating with members in such a large institution as The University of Iowa. The task is made more difficult by the fact that the institution is de-centralized. The Office of the Provost recognizes this problem and has adopted a communication plan to deal with the problem. Based on the comments we have received, we conclude that the current methods are not working as well as they might.

Recommendation: In communicating about the goals and activities of the Office, focus on the most important topics and ignore the rest. For example, the 2000-01 printout of the Goals and Initiatives of the Office of the Provost lists 65 goals and initiatives. We believe a statement focusing on three to five primary goals would communicate more clearly what the primary concerns are and what the Office of the Provost is doing about them

2. Writing Initiative. The establishment of a university-wide Writing Initiative housed in the Office of the Provost has generated mixed reviews. Response from the College of Business was strongly favorable as was that from the College of Law. Despite the enthusiasm of some department chairs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), the primary message from CLAS faculty was one of dismay and criticism of a number of elements of the Initiative. One particular concern was that the structure of the program, perhaps inadvertently but nevertheless unfortunately, has pitted collectivities against individuals, because the College, individual departments, and individual faculty members apply simultaneously to the Provost's Committee. These CLAS faculty members believe that the project was initiated precipitously; that the advice of members of the Departments of English and of Rhetoric and of the College of Education who have extensive experience teaching writing was not sought; and then, when advice from these quarters was offered, it was not taken and the reasons for rejecting the advice were insufficiently explained.

Recommendation: The Office of the Provost should institute better communication with faculty at the beginning of such initiatives, especially with the Educational Policy Committee in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, when the initiative has such broad effect in the College.

3. The Interdisciplinary Initiative. There is a widespread skepticism amongst the faculty about the supposedly new commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and research. Iowa has a history of interdisciplinary work and, while some faculty like the idea of additional institutional commitment, they also feel that the current initiative is too much of a top-down phenomenon. This view is prevalent despite the creation of "swarm" groups in 1998-99, which was intended to provide a method for "grassroots" faculty participation in the process of creating this initiative. Numerous faculty members expressed concern that the Office of the Provost was about to add a new associate provost for interdisciplinary affairs. Even though a faculty committee recommended the creation of

such a position, a wide array of faculty are critical of the notion of spending more money on an administrator rather than on particular interdisciplinary programs.

[Update: The Provost has decided to create an interim position, one-third time, for the purpose of advising the Provost on interdisciplinary activity. To help fund this position, the Associate Provost for Health Sciences position has been reduced to two-thirds time.]

Recommendation: Broadening the interdisciplinary experience at Iowa will best be accomplished by putting faculty from different disciplines together to work on specific projects that are of genuine interest to the faculty members or by organizing “occasions” for such exchanges and partnerships. Interdisciplinary projects should be created by the faculty who participate in them rather than by administrators in the Office of the Provost. The Office should facilitate such projects by working to remove some of the current barriers to effective interdisciplinary work (e.g., joint appointments).

VIII. Final Summary.

The current Provost runs an efficient and respected office. He is appreciated and liked by his staff, including the merit staff. Most of the deans are satisfied with the balance of support, independence, and accountability that the Office of the Provost provides them. Central administrators who work closely with the Provost have high regard for his accomplishments and for his abilities. By comparison with other constituencies, the faculty is more dissatisfied and critical of the Office. Our process did not call for a broad survey of all constituencies, however, and it may be that the result of asking for general comments was to generate more comments from those who are dissatisfied. We believe, however, that this dissatisfaction should not be ignored. This report includes some modest recommendations. Additional recommendations are contained in the confidential review of Provost Whitmore.

Respectfully submitted,

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