Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor
Division of Academic Affairs
Public Affairs Center, Room 528
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Springfield, Illinois 62703-5407

February 22, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

Last September I wrote to you about the need to apply our collective intelligence, dedication, and stamina to the task of achieving the financial sustainability that will be needed for us to realize our aspiration of becoming recognized as a leading public liberal arts university.

As we know all too well, our financial sustainability depends, in part, on the finances of the state of Illinois. But that’s not the whole story. Our financial sustainability also depends upon our success in recruiting students to and retaining them in our current programs, on identifying new curricular offerings to attract students who would otherwise not come to UIS, and on private fundraising.

Additionally, our financial sustainability depends in large measure on how effectively we use the professional time our faculty devote to classroom (on-ground or online), credit-bearing instruction -- what I’ve called "instructional resources." Delivery of instruction is our central mission. We depend on financial support both from the State of Illinois and from student and their families to achieve that mission. However, the state’s contribution to supporting the costs of higher education has declined markedly. The revenue generated by student tuition is now equal to the amount provided by the state of Illinois. Maximizing our tuition revenue is more important than ever and will continue to rise in importance as we move forward.

Discussions about the use of instructional resources have occurred and continue to occur in each college. As a result, decisions are being made by our deans, in consultation with department chairs and college executive committees, to minimize low enrollment sections, to modify course caps, and to modify curricula in an effort to make the most effective use of faculty resources and to maximize the availability of courses needed for timely degree completion.

Along with the college-based efforts, I have been meeting with a campus-wide committee, the Instructional Resources Management Task Force, whose members include faculty from each of the colleges, the chair of the Campus Planning and Budgeting Committee, a dean, the Associate Vice Chancellors, and the Associate Provost. The committee has heard from each of the deans, and it is clear that, when
it comes to maximizing the use of instructional resources, the ‘action’ is at the college and department levels. That is, the efficient use of resources depends upon a multitude of decisions made each semester about curricular requirements, how courses get scheduled, when courses should be cancelled, etc. Based on discussions with the deans, the Task Force has identified some lessons learned and distilled them into Guiding Principles for maximizing the effective use of instructional resources.

I am asking the deans to lead efforts to apply the recommendations, as appropriate, within their colleges.

Focusing our collective efforts on the most efficient use of our instructional resources is an essential component of financial sustainability for UIS and will benefit our students, who face the same economic challenges that we do as they strive to complete their degrees in the most cost-effective way possible.

I want to express my appreciation to the members of the Instructional Resources Management Task Force and to the deans for their assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Harry J. Berman
Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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