

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON



LUIS M. PROENZA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 4, 2010

Members of the University Community

I am pleased, Dear Colleagues . . .

. . . to forward for your information a summary of actions approved by The University of Akron's Board of Trustees at its regular meeting on September 8, 2010.

Presentation to the Board

Associate Vice President Holly Harris Bane, Medina County University Center Director James Boyes and Midpoint Center Coordinator Lena Knight made a presentation on how the University is engaging communities via the Medina County University Center and Midpoint Center in Brunswick in conjunction with Lorain County Community College. Rhonda Birckbichler, Mary Beth Golan and Nancy Smith-Oblak —students from those sites—described their successful experiences there.

Finance, Fiscal Policy and Investment Committee

1. Quarterly Report—July 2009-June 2010

Trustees reviewed the final quarterly report of FY2010, covering July 2009-June 2010. In that period, revenue for the Akron campus was \$359.2 million or about 2.1 percent more than what was estimated in the budget. Expenditures totaled approximately \$300.8 million for FY2010, or about 3.8 percent less than what was budgeted. Wayne College revenue for FY2010 was \$13.5 million, or about 4.4 percent more than budgeted, and expenditures at Wayne totaled \$11.2 million, or about 12.8 percent less than budgeted. Investment income was approximately \$1.9 million under budget for the fiscal year.

2. Approved Purchases for More Than \$150,000

- OARnet was awarded a \$157,426 contract for a one-year University membership, July 2010-June 2011, for Internet access.
- Bruker BioSpin Corporation was awarded a \$347,799 contract for AN Advance III 300WB High Performance Digital Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectrometer for the Department of Polymer Science.
- Varian, Inc. was awarded a \$588,835 contract to upgrade the Department of Chemistry's 750MHz Nuclear Magnetic Resonance instrument.

3. Personnel Actions

The personnel transactions approved by Trustees as amended are posted online at <http://www.uakron.edu/president/docs/Personnel-transactions-September2010.pdf>.

Educational Policy/Student Affairs Committee

1. Research Grants and Sponsored Programs Report, July 2010

For July 2010, funding for externally funded research and other sponsored programs was \$2.9 million for 54 projects. For July 2009, funding was \$7.1 million for 63 projects. For July 2010, no patents were issued, four patent applications were filed, and five disclosures were submitted. For July 2009, no patents were issued, eight patent applications were filed, and four disclosures were submitted.

External Affairs Committee

1. Cumulative Gift and Grant Income Report, July 2010

For July 2010, total giving was \$2.2 million, 32 percent more than the \$1.6 million received for July 2009 and 30 percent more than the five-year average of \$1.7 million. The number of gifts increased, from 1,115 for July 2010 to 1,254 gifts for July 2009.

Notes

1. President's Report

After calling on the new executive director of University Park Alliance, Dr. Eric Johnson, and providing an opportunity for him to make a few remarks, I began my report under the ongoing theme of strategic planning, strategic doing, assessment and measurement, and continuous improvement as a cycle that is needed to sustain and build upon our momentum. I reminded the Board that the basis of our Vision 2020 Strategic Plan is our penultimate draft of six goals, and I noted that Vision 2020 refers both metaphorically to seeing well and to the year of the University's 150th anniversary — its sesquicentennial.

I reiterated the six goals of the penultimate draft, summarized as follows:

1. Commit to Student Success and Inclusive Excellence;
2. Develop Dynamic and Globally Relevant Programs;
3. Facilitate Faculty Development and Success by Expanding Clusters of Interdisciplinary Teaching and Research;
4. Build and Sustain Vital Relationships and Partnerships;
5. Promote a Vibrant and Engaging Landscape; and
6. Achieve Measurable Success Through Integrated Planning.

I again said that the numerous people throughout the University had refined vision and mission statements from the material that was developed during the year. I shared the latest versions, beginning with the most-recent draft statement of our mission — the purpose our existence as an institution — as follows:

“As a research-intensive institution committed to inclusive excellence, The University of Akron shall create a better common future for our students and society through rigorous, comprehensive and relevant educational activities that – leverage the region’s unique strengths; foster economic, social and cultural vitality; and pursue entrepreneurial and innovative solutions to the world’s major challenges.”

This draft echoes some strong points and themes that have emerged from our planning process, including – “globally competitive skills,” “strong collaborations,” and “creation, integration and dissemination of new knowledge.”

Further, I explained that the phrase, “educational experiences,” is used — rather than a reference to “academic” — to encompass the full range of education: formal academic activity in the classroom plus co-curricular, cultural, social and other experiential learning, which our institution is integrating into the total university experience.

Our mission statement, though a bit shorter than that of many other universities, still is somewhat lengthy. Thus, for the purposes of public communication, we also likely will use a phrase. Our trial phrase is, “Your success is our success!” This conveys our commitment to our students — if they succeed, the economy succeeds, the culture succeeds, we succeed — reflecting the positive feedback cycle that we have discussed many times.

I then turned to our latest vision statement, our statement of strategic intent, of what we will do and become to achieve future distinction:

“The University of Akron will be recognized as a leader in the development of globally competitive clusters of innovation and entrepreneurship, and for maximizing student success in a dynamic environment of inclusive excellence.”

After noting that here, again, there are some themes, I said that we also hope to shape a phrase that will convey this message along the lines of, “Your success and our success drive the economy!”

Refinement of this phrase will be forthcoming.

I then reported that we are moving forward with the six goals. During the last month, the Provost, vice presidents and the Council of Deans have gathered twice to begin determining how our colleges will align their strategies with these overall plans of the University, and how our support units will align themselves to achieve the academic educational mission of the University by developing appropriate strategies and action steps.

Provost Sherman commented that he thinks we are moving along quite successfully. The conversations from the perspective of enabling and accomplishing the academic agenda are becoming fine tuned, and the deans indicate their current strategic plans will require only some minor adjustments to align with the institutional strategy.

I said that we recognize that these efforts will help us to drive this momentum that we have built up. I am particularly pleased that what is being called the Akron model is something we are being asked to describe to national audiences. The highlights include the University Park Alliance; the Austen BioInnovation Institute; the Innovation Alliance with Lorain Community College, Stark State and others; the University of Akron Research Foundation, our emerging collaborative program with the Department of Defense and NACE International on corrosion engineering, and several other important innovative collaborations and interactions, through which we are giving meaning and real value to what we are calling the New Gold Standard of university performance.

We are showing the vital roles that metropolitan-sited institutions like The University of Akron can fill in this global, knowledge/conceptual economy. These roles are simple; we act increasingly as conveners, as developers and as anchors for clusters of innovation. Institutions like ours also generate knowledge and creative capital, train human capital, build social capital, attract financial capital and preserve natural capital.

I alerted the Board to upcoming presentations in which I will participate and expressed my appreciation to Trustees who have agreed to join me at those events as well as my hope that other members also would be able to do so:

- Vice Chair Pogue will join me in attending the annual meeting of the Council on Competitiveness, with which I have been working on implementation of the recently published report, “Collaborate: Leading Regional Innovation Clusters.”
- Trustee York will accompany me to a conference on Clusters of Economic Activities, to which I have been invited as the only university spokesperson. This event, which has three U.S. Secretaries participating, is being hosted by the Brookings Institution in conjunction with the White House, the Council on Competitiveness, the National Association of Development Organizations and the Center for American Progress.

In this region, we also continue to generate significant interest and support. For example, last month, the George Gund Foundation held its summer meeting of directors on our campus. Their discussion was guided by the Foundation’s executive director, David Abbott, and concluded with his observance that:

“As we spent the day thinking about the Fund’s efforts to strengthen the economic competitiveness of Northeast Ohio, it was really helpful to have you join us and speak to the role that universities are playing in driving innovation.”

Likewise, last week, we hosted an afternoon and evening visit by the editor of The Plain Dealer, Susan Goldberg, and two of her colleagues. I expressed my hope that the many new things they learned about our University would lead to a decision to tell that story. I acknowledged also the Akron Beacon Journal, thanking reporter Carol Biliczky for the paper’s coverage that morning about our enrollment.

I said that the University also recently received \$6 million in federal support for our Corrosion Engineering Education and Research program, and \$5 million for the Austen BioInnovation Institute, of which the University is a lead partner.

Finally, I shared some recent highlights:

- Our Early College High School, a collaboration between Akron Public Schools and Summit College, is the top-performing high school in Akron and second-highest in Summit County. The program enrolls a significant number of students with family incomes below the poverty line and allows them to earn an associate degree or two years of college credits free of charge, while also completing their high school requirements. These students are the first generation of their families to go to college, and half are from minority groups. The fact that this group is performing best among all of the Akron Public Schools is very significant, and for that, Early College High School earned the designation of Excellent on its 2009-2010 report card from the state.
- We welcomed new students to the campus in a variety of ways; among them was the New Student Convocation on Coleman Common in which Dr. Sherman, Dr. Fey and I participated. It was a tremendous occasion. I noted that a wonderful additional benefit of such events is that the students are joined often by their parents and sometimes even by their grandparents and siblings.
- We posted a significant increase in the number of students we serve. Enrollment in both credit-hour production and student headcount increased by 5 percent over last fall, bringing our total student body to 29,251 as the official 14-day census for the state. Of special note is the 6 percent increase in the number of freshmen. This fall, we have 4,796 new freshmen, the largest freshman class in our 140-year history.

I concluded by informing Trustees that our annual Student Appreciation Day event was taking place on campus that day and indicated my hope, as they leave the meeting, that they would have opportunities to converse with students and see some of those activities. I expressed how honored we are that our students have entrusted us with their higher education and that they continue to make The University of Akron the preferred choice in our region.

2. Provost's Report

Dr. Sherman began his report by thanking and congratulating faculty and staff colleagues for getting the school year off to such a great start. We started with a location for every class that was offered, and we located instructors and assigned responsibility to teach nearly 8,000 distinct course offerings this semester. Move-in was efficient and effective, prompting many complimentary letters and notes from parents and students. One in particular said, "It was an experience like none other," indicating that previous move-ins at other universities were not nearly as fast and efficient. Given that perspective and the consistency of such observations of efficiency for move-in day, Dr. Fey will nominate our University to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators for the 2010 Excellence in Service Award. Dr. Sherman said he looks forward to helping to work on that nomination to recognize the institution-wide support and contribution to such a critical activity.

In the context of the three Rs—revenue, retention and reorganization—Dr. Sherman offered updates on the three working groups discussed previously, particularly from the perspective of ensuring productivity, connectivity and relevance.

Institutional Effectiveness and Talent Development Working Group: A. G. Monaco, Jim Sage and others, along with the deans and the faculty, are evaluating the position approval and hiring processes to have the fewest approval steps while assuring accountability for the need for the position and available funds. The group is working with the Office of Business and Finance to implement an approach to budgeting that is cognizant of and distinguishes continuing funds from one-time funds. Dr. Sherman said that they are analyzing the delivery and quality of instruction from full-time, tenure-track faculty and part-time faculty to optimize delivery of the highest quality academic programs.

Student Success Working Group: Dr. Sherman said that our focus is, and must be, on retention and graduation. That focus is being supported by adviser-based innovation, and enhancement of our advising services. Through an all-call advisers' workshop on student success, advisers will be asked to devise and describe effective and efficient advising. Dr. Fey is arranging a visit to campus by Dr. Cathy Small of Northern Arizona University. Dr. Small is a faculty member who took a year's leave of absence and enrolled in that university as a freshman, actually experiencing being a student there. She is the author of "My Freshman Year" and will keynote an interaction with us during a University-wide retention symposium that will provide a better understanding about how to support our students and thereby increase retention and graduation rates.

Dr. Sherman also reported that the group is collaborating with the Department of Statistics on analyzing nearly 40 factors to determine their contribution to the variances in student success, so that we know how to focus our energies. We also are benchmarking against research-based touch points known to be important to student success to determine what activities and initiatives we have in place, what needs to be put in place, and what can be put into place at what expense and in what time frame, all while creating the best possible co-curricular experience. In total, we are working to create what Dr. Sherman would like to call a Transformational Student Experience.

Working Group for the Environment for Teaching, Learning and Research: Dr. Sherman said that the deans are developing a template to describe research spaces and to consider additional assignments of faculty and deactivation/reactivation of laboratories. In the spring, we will model an

exception-free schedule that will illustrate how our facilities can be used more effectively and efficiently, across more days of the week and more hours of the day. We also are taking a very focused and determinate look at the role of E. J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall as an integral component of initiatives and offerings that support our academic and co-curricular experiences.

In closing, Dr. Sherman restated what I had described earlier, that we are working toward a paradigm shift, discussing activities, roles and responsibilities from the perspective that the academic units accomplish the academic agenda and the academic support units enable the accomplishment of that academic agenda.

3. Next Regular Meeting

The Board's next regularly scheduled meeting will occur on Wednesday, October 6, 2010, in the Student Union, Board Room 339, with an executive session to begin at 7:30 a.m. and the public session to begin no earlier than 10 a.m.

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