

THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON



LUIS M. PROENZA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 1, 2013

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 March 20, 2013.

Presentation to the Board

Dr. Joseph P. Kennedy, Distinguished Professor of Polymer Science, shared his perspective on the linkage of research, innovation and entrepreneurship with respect to The University of Akron.

Finance & Administration Committee

1. Personnel Actions

The personnel transactions approved by Trustees as amended are posted online at <http://www.uakron.edu/bot/docs/personnel-reports/Personnel-transactions-March2013.pdf>.

2. InfoCision Stadium Development and Alumni Renovations Construction Contracts

This locally funded project consists of developing an existing 22,250-square-foot vacant shell space located on the second floor of the stadium for Alumni and Development offices. The project also includes a Dining Services kitchen of approximately 1,900 square feet at the north end of the second floor, a Visitor Center in the first-floor lobby area, a new pylon sign at Exchange St., and revised parking at Vine and South Union streets.

The administration recommended awarding construction contracts totaling \$3,196,539 to the following contractors: Coastal Quality Construction, Inc. for general trades - \$1,483,000; SA Comunale Company, Inc. for fire suppression - \$63,045; R.T. Hampton Plumbing & Heating for plumbing - \$214,975; Synergy, LLC for HVAC - \$814,800; and Speelman Electric, Inc. for electrical - \$620,719.

3. FY2014 School of Law Tuition

The Board ratified the administration's actions to—(1) increase the School of Law tuition rates by 6 percent, from \$672.20 to \$712.53 per credit hour, effective fall semester 2013, (2) reduce non-resident surcharge rates from \$439.45 per credit hour to \$50 per term, also effective fall semester 2013, and (3) freeze those rates for the fall 2013 entering class.

4. FY2014 Room and Board Rates

The administration proposed raising room rates by 5 percent, due in part to significant debt service costs. Under the proposal, the most-popular food-service plan price remained unchanged, new dining plans that offer upperclassmen more flexibility at a reduced cost per meal were introduced, other plans were discontinued, and others had prices adjusted.

5. Wayne College Science Lab Renovation

This state-funded project consists of renovating approximately 7,300 square feet of existing space at the Wayne College Main Classroom Building for use as laboratory space and associated offices and support spaces. The administration recommended awarding construction contracts totaling \$1,046,770 to the following contractors: Intec Building Systems for general trades - \$662,000; Schmid Mechanical Company for plumbing - \$129,800; Imperial Heating & Cooling, Inc. for HVAC - \$110,200; and Wood Electric, Inc. for electrical - \$144,770.

6. Cumulative Gift and Grant Income Report for July 2012-January 2013

The University of Akron recorded total giving of \$37,943,274 for July 2012-January 2013. That total compares to \$38,550,749 for July 2011-January 2012 (a decrease of 2 percent) and a year-to-date average of \$24,435,604 for the previous five years (an increase of 55 percent). During July 2012-January 2013, 14,500 gifts were received, as compared with 13,830 for the same period of the last fiscal year (an increase of 5 percent).

Academic Issues & Student Success Committee

1. Proposed Honorary Doctorate

On February 21, 2013, the faculty of the School of Law unanimously voted to recommend awarding an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to 2013 law commencement speaker Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

2. Research Services and Sponsored Programs Summary of Activity Report

For July 2012-January 2013, funding for externally funded research and other sponsored programs totaled \$22,421,002 for 351 awards, as compared with \$45,191,098 for 292 awards for the previous year. For July 2012-January 2013, 12 new patents were issued, 20 patent applications were filed, and 38 disclosures were submitted—compared to 6, 21 and 22, respectively, for July 2012-January 2013.

Notes

1. President's Report

After commenting on the success of the basketball teams, I said that, as a result of the loss of the federal stimulus funds in the state budget as well as some other factors, The University of Akron and other Ohio universities are financially challenged. I said the University of Toledo, for example, has a slightly larger fiscal gap to bridge. I had shared with Trustees a message that was sent to campus expressing the urgency of attending to those matters and outlining the three broad areas of strategic action that the administration is undertaking in enrollment, effectiveness and efficiency, and entrepreneurial opportunities. A subsequent message urged everyone to attend either one or both of two open campus forums on the budget, I said, adding that the forums were excellently attended with one having standing room only. I received good, thoughtful feedback, which continues. The information has been posted on the Web. Good progress also has been made in the 13 separate teams that are working on the effectiveness and efficiency initiatives. I thanked in that regard Lauri Thorpe and Jim Tressel on the enrollment initiatives; Ajay Mahajan, Wayne Watkins and others on the entrepreneurial initiatives; and the 13 chairs of the initiatives on effectiveness. I also highlighted the very good work of David Cummins, whose good humor and very solid and methodical presentation of the budget earned him a lot of kudos.

I thanked Rex Ramsier for his role in attending to all aspects of the HLC accreditation self-study and visit. The site visit team equally expressed great affection and respect for his role. Noting that the process has changed, I told the Board that the University is simply in a holding pattern waiting for the visit team's report, which would come in a matter of five to six weeks.

I reported that the University recently hosted a senior visit day that attracted more than 400 prospective high school seniors plus their parents to campus. I am very encouraged each time that invited students usually are accompanied by their parents, because that really means that they care and that they understand the value that a higher education can add. Attendance was a 52-percent increase over last year's event and included students from nine states other than Ohio and, within Ohio, students from as far south as Cincinnati and surrounding areas and more students from the Columbus area. As a result of that weekend, the University has received 83 additional confirmations for new students. I congratulate Jim Tressel and his team on that outstanding event.

I told Trustees that the Ohio Department of Education ranked the Akron Early College High School, which is based within Summit College, first among Akron's nine city schools in academic performance. The high school received its third-consecutive Excellent rating and achieved a score of 111.5 out of 120 on a performance index scale.

I said the University continues to receive some positive attention in national news, including the two following items:

- On February 28, the 101 inventors who were inducted as the 2012 National Academy of Inventors Charter Fellows were read into the Congressional record, including four University of Akron faculty researchers—Dr. Stephen Z. D. Cheng, dean of the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering; Dr. Alan Gent, Dr. Joseph Kennedy and Dr. George Newkome. The University of Akron had the largest representation of any Ohio university, public or private.

- In the report of the MIT Task Force on Innovation and Production, the full version of which will be released later this year, The University of Akron figures in two of the three examples that they chose to highlight. The report featured the broad administrative approach to National Additive Manufacturing, a consortium based in Youngstown that includes The University of Akron, and it featured the University's partnership with the Timken Corporation. The report came after an extensive visit by that study team to the University and to Timken last year. The significance of the truly unique partnership is that Timken has proprietary technology that potentially has many other uses. Timken brought that technology into The University of Akron and retains the proprietary right of other evolutions with their field of use, but now, through this joint venture, that technology can go into aerospace, into automotive, into biomedical, and other non-compete applications. The opportunity to take a technology that would otherwise be stranded within a single company and move it into an economic opportunity is what makes the partnership innovative.

I had the privilege of attending a National Academy Forum at which the MIT folks talked about the UA-Timken partnership being the "poster child" for their report.

Next, I offered congratulations to the University's basketball teams and encouraged others to do the same to another MAC champion from the University, the 15 young men and women who comprise The University of Akron Rifle Team, which won top honors in the Mid-American Conference and has a number of individual honors in the post season. I congratulate all of them and their coach Newt Engle, who has quietly built what may be Akron's least-known but equally deserving sports dynasty.

I acknowledged the untimely and singular loss of our good friend Gary Taylor after a tragic illness. Mr. Taylor, who passed away on March 2, and his wife Karen established the Taylor Institute of Direct Marketing in the College of Business Administration, and their company was the largest contributor to the fund that helped to build InfoCision Stadium. I offered the family our condolences.

Finally, I called Trustees' attention to two forthcoming University events and encouraged them to attend:

- On April 3, the University would host a day-long conference with the Boston Foundation, one of the nation's oldest and largest community foundations. Two of the foundation's executive administrators would participate, as well representatives from a number of Northeast Ohio organizations, in a discussion of the Understanding Boston: Boston Indicators Project. It enables them to have a sense of how the community is progressing toward some key goals, and Northeast Ohio could benefit from doing likewise, with a portion of the project that would be led specifically by The University of Akron.
- On April 12 and 13, the University would hold the sixth-annual Black Male Summit. It is a conference that focuses on the needs and achievements of black male students. In 2012, more than 1,000 participants from several states attended. Registration for 2013 was looking even better. I congratulate Associate Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity Lee Gill for doing a splendid job.

2. Provost's Report

Dr. Sherman thanked Vice Provost Ramsier for his outstanding leadership during the HLC visit, and he recognized the attention to the importance of that visit by the entire campus community. The interaction with the visitation team was quite outstanding, he said, and “we look forward to their report through which we will enhance the standard of academic excellence at The University of Akron.” He said he anticipated receiving the preliminary report within the 4-6 weeks, after which the University would be able to respond from a factual perspective. The committee that will have the final determination is not expected to act on that report until August, so October is likely when the final report will be received, he said.

Dr. Sherman said the Akron Experience, which has been discussed extensively during the last several years, is a combination of experiences in the classroom and out of the classroom that are holistic, inclusive and intended to create a special and distinctive personal and professional experience for each student. He said that, more recently, the University has focused efforts on degree completion and adding value. He said Dr. Proenza has encouraged seeking student input in many and various ways. Noting that he had met with Student Trustees at the beginning of the year and asked how they might like to be involved in enhancing the student experience, Dr. Sherman said interactions with approximately 200 students resulted in an enlightening and outstanding experience that really helped to develop the strategies articulated in his The Future State of Academic Affairs statement. He said he would briefly review each of those five strategies, which are intended to address our challenges and create opportunities.

The first strategy is to increase the value of education to our students, he said. The articulation of the Pathways to Student Academic Success strategy through the special provision of guidance and advice for preparatory students, emergent students and college-ready students will lead to a graduation rate of 60 percent or better, he said, adding, “Is there any better way to add value to the education of our students than completion?”

Dr. Sherman said the second strategy is investing in faculty and restraining the cost to students. He said the University hires a large number of faculty each year, and new hires now are being asked to have experiences in online education and with alternative educational approaches, including experience in assessing prior learning. The University also is seeking a higher degree of research productivity and focusing on enhancing the diversity of faculty and staff, he said. Noting the significant investment of resources in scholarships, which were redesigned through the advice of Vice President Tressel through the Scannell & Kurz report, Dr. Sherman mentioned the import of Board action taken several years ago to add scholarship funds to areas in the scholarship matrix that were devoid of necessary resources, all to reduce and to restrain the cost of education to University of Akron students.

He said the third strategy is to streamline pathways to degree completion. He said the University has totally revised academic program guides, the “roadmaps” to degree completion. The administration is working on intersecting that “roadmap” with the Degree Audit Reporting System, which will allow students to map out their first two years, or even their entire four years at The University of Akron, he said. Doing so will enable the University to provide with certainty the courses the students need in their degree program when they need them, so they can finish on time as expected or appropriately extend their experience as they have so determined, Dr. Sherman said.

Fourth, he said, the University needs to improve its educational processes to be more responsive to students. Dr. Sherman said the intent of general-educational redesign is to make the first two years of general education as universal across all programs of study as possible so that, as students change their majors, they do not lose time and can progress through their degree completion on time as expected. He said he also anticipates recommendations for the general-education reform to reduce the credit hours to completion to 120.

Dr. Sherman said the fifth strategy is to better prepare graduates for career success. He said the value proposition for students graduating from The University of Akron is the objective for 80-percent job placement or professional-program placement within six months of graduation. Acknowledging that the College of Engineering does a tremendous job and the professional colleges do a great job in that area, Dr. Sherman said the University needs to expand the hiring of engineers into companies to finance majors, communications majors, philosophy majors and others. He said the University's receipt of a \$1-million grant from the Board of Regents will expand internship and co-op placements by at least 250 students.

In previous years, enrollment was assured mostly because there were large and sufficient numbers of graduates from high schools, Dr. Sherman said. Now, he said, the University must increase its share of high school graduates, increase its market share of new traditional students, and increase access through the availability of online learning, evening and weekend courses, as President Proenza has discussed, by credentialing prior learning regardless of where that learning has occurred.

Dr. Sherman assured the Board that, "the campus is realizing there is and there must be universal accountability for student attraction, matriculation, retention, persistence, completion, placement and, just as important, post-graduation success. We are making these adjustments to our academic programs because student success is our success, and when our students are successful, we are successful."

3. Next Regular Meeting

The Board's next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 8, 2013 in the Student Union, Board Room 339, with an executive session to begin at 7:30 or 8 a.m. and the public session to begin no earlier than 9 a.m.

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