September 14, 2012

Charge to the Diversity Task Force

The university has developed significantly over the last 25 years, enhancing its educational, research, and community service programs. The recent and dramatic reduction in financial support from the state creates a new set of challenges and opportunities for the university. The purpose of the strategic planning process is to consider how we can build upon our current strengths, seize emerging opportunities, and meet our challenges. In doing this, we will continue our development as a leading public research university and accomplish our educational, research, and community service missions.

The planning process will rely heavily on the work of a steering committee and five task forces with their associated working groups. Each of the five task forces and their associated working groups will be responsible for a specific area. The five areas are: Student Success and Academic Excellence, Research and Creative Endeavors, Community Engagement, Diversity, and Internationalization.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the overall planning process, including the preparation of the final version of the plan. The Steering Committee will be responsible for integrating the recommendations of the task forces, creating an integrated financial plan to address the university’s financial challenges, prioritizing recommended initiatives, and considering ways to fund prioritized initiatives.

Each task force will be responsible for identifying goals and initiatives we should undertake in the referenced area, determining the resource requirements of the goals and initiatives, and setting priorities among the recommended goals and initiatives.

For the Diversity task force, we would like you to consider the following questions as well as others that may arise during your deliberations:
1. The university prides itself on our diversity and the role our diversity plays in accomplishing our educational, research, and community service missions. Given our current initiatives and our data on student, faculty, and staff diversity, evaluate the state of the university's diversity initiatives. Should we consider pursuing different and/or additional initiatives? Are there groups that face special challenges in our community? How can we build on our current traditions and initiatives to address these challenges?

2. Many of our academic programs play a special role in fostering diversity. This occurs through support for students, faculty, staff, and community members who have historically been under-represented in higher education. How can we support the educational and research missions of academic programs that foster diversity on our campus?

3. One of the most significant benefits of diversity to our campus is the opportunity for individuals to interact with individuals from different backgrounds. Are there initiatives we can undertake to enhance opportunities for interaction and integration?

4. Despite significant progress, historically under-represented groups remain significantly under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. We have a number of programs that support diversity in STEM fields. How can we enhance the impact of these programs? Should we expand these programs?

5. There is broad interest, on and off campus, in our diversity initiatives. How can we clearly and effectively communicate about our diversity initiatives so that members of our community are informed of our programs and their impact?

Task force reports are due to the Steering Committee no later than February 1st. Reports should be between 1 and 5 pages and should include general information about the area of the task force, identified goals (if relevant), and recommended initiatives. The resource requirements of all recommended initiatives should also be included. Relevant background information and the detailed rationale for recommended initiatives should be included in appendices. The final task force report will integrate the task force recommendations and integrated financial plans as described above.

To facilitate the engagement of the campus community, the Steering Committee and each task force should hold an open forum to solicit comments and opinions from the university community. Members of the community should also be invited to communicate suggestions, in writing, to the committee and task force chairs. All written reports and recommendations should be presented in draft form on the strategic planning process website, and members of the community should be invited to comment prior to the completion of any report.
Thank you for your contributions to the planning process. The planning process represents an important opportunity to reflect on the present state of the university and to consider how we can make choices—identifying goals and planning initiatives—that will help us meet our challenges, seize opportunities, and fulfill our mission.

With best regards,

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