



West Virginia University

Office of the Provost

June 25, 2007

To: Deans

Fr: Gerald E. Lang  
Larry Hornak

**Re: Response to Goal Three Reports**

Thank you, on behalf of the Implementation Team, for the comprehensive reports we received relative to Goal Three. Your reports illustrate the impressive efforts made by administrators, faculty, and staff to improve the educational environment at WVU. Your reports also offer a number of innovative ideas that we would like to share.

### **Infrastructure and Technology**

Several general concerns were evident in your discussions of infrastructure and technology, as well as a number of promising suggestions. Overall, there is a recognition of the need to invest in more computer laboratories and to increase the capacity of wireless access for students and faculty, including the use of specialized software and remote database access. Many colleges and schools also described their intention to enhance productivity by enabling collaboration with other institutions, off-site interviews of potential staff and students, and/or observations of student and faculty activities through the use of remote conferencing software.

### **E-Learning**

Students expect e-learning opportunities, both online courses and activities that supplement the traditional classroom; by meeting these expectations units can greatly enhance learning and attract additional student audiences. Most units continue to develop online courses, and a few are creating online programs. Many are exploring the use of online or hybrid courses to meet high enrollments in introductory level courses. Though some upper-level courses are offered online or are supplemented with e-learning technologies, there continues to be an implied conviction that direct, face-to-face contact remains essential for upper-level undergraduate and graduate studies. In response to the memo, the colleges and schools also expressed frustration with rapidly changing technologies and conflicting programs, emphasizing the need to prioritize training for selected software and consistent e-learning platforms.

The Task Force on Technology-Based Learning and Academic Programs has been charged with examining the competitive context for technology-based learning and academic programs; inventorying current courses and programs along with the characteristics of their participants; analyzing institutional resources required to support technology-based learning; and

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recommending best practices to increase the availability and effectiveness of online offerings. The report of this task force will help to address the infrastructure and technology issues raised in the responses to Goal Three.

### **Innovative Intellectual Opportunities**

An emphasis on innovative intellectual opportunities encourages interdisciplinary studies, progressive teaching techniques, and lifelong learning. A number of interdisciplinary partnerships are being forged, both within and between the colleges and schools, especially in the medical, engineering, and scientific disciplines. Several units offered suggestions to support increased collaboration for teaching, research, and service across disciplinary boundaries:

- Interdisciplinary initiatives such as WVNano support faculty collaboration across units. The Davis College and Extension Service have a long history of such partnerships.
- Recent faculty programs brought together members from diverse disciplines to explore ideas for collaboration, to develop research and writing teams, and to promote interdisciplinary professional development.
- Reducing potential barriers, such as course distribution requirements and student credit hour allocation, tuition and fee structures and disbursements, promotion and tenure guidelines, and standardized course evaluations, could foster increased collaboration.

Colleges and schools are also working to increase collaborative learning through innovative teaching. Many units provide students with the opportunity for interdisciplinary work, especially in capstone courses. Capstone projects often require students to utilize skills and knowledge from cognate disciplines, and some capstone projects require students from different majors to collaborate on a multidisciplinary project. Fostering students' writing ability and technological literacy also remains a high priority in many units. Students may struggle to complete programs because they do not enter WVU with the communication and research skills necessary for success. Several colleges and schools are developing partnerships to provide skills centers or courses that will increase students' written and oral communications skills and their ability to use appropriate technologies for research.

The Implementation Team piloted the Graduating Senior Survey during the Spring 2007 semester in order to begin quantifying student participation in innovative academic opportunities including undergraduate research, internships and practicums, and service learning. The survey also collects data about student activities while at WVU and post graduation plans for employment or education. Data from the Senior Survey should enable us to gauge the impact of student engagement on their future education or work careers.

### **Incentives for Exceptional Teaching**

Most incentives for exceptional teaching rely on the existing structure of the promotion and tenure system. To augment promotion and tenure incentives, many units also provide awards for exceptional teaching; many of these awards consider student feedback and peer observations along with documentation of teaching, research, and/or service. A description of exceptional

teaching strengthens can guide decisions related to teaching awards and promotion and tenure by emphasizing the university's mission and vision.

- The School of Nursing report lists the prime requisites for teaching as “intellectual competence, integrity, independence, a spirit of scholarly inquiry, a dedication to improving methods of presenting material, the ability to transfer knowledge, respect for differences and diversity, and the ability to stimulate and cultivate the intellectual interest and enthusiasm of students.”
- The School of Applied Social Sciences in the Eberly College distinguishes between Priority One goals, which include the traditional academic responsibilities of teaching, research, and service, and Priority Two goals, which include objectives such as innovation, continuing education, finding external support, mentoring other faculty, serving on thesis and dissertation committees, developing web-based courses, and advising.

### **Looking Ahead: Deans Retreat, September 24**

The reports provided by each unit continue to be a valuable guide for the work of the Implementation Team. We wish first to commend the colleges and schools for the work they are doing to form interdisciplinary partnerships, to encourage innovative teaching and learning, and to identify and address their technological and infrastructure needs. The diversity of the units' approaches to the objectives of Goal Three demonstrates that each unit continues to draw upon its distinctive strengths. After discussing the Goal Three reports, the Implementation Team found it challenging to identify a course of action appropriate for the central university. The Fall 2007 Deans Retreat and responses to the Goals Four and Five memo will provide an opportunity to continue the process of identifying needs, developing strategies, and implementing initiatives.

At the Deans Retreat on Monday, September 24, we will continue to address methods for collaboration in order to support Goals Three, Four, and Five. By focusing on the five goals of the 2010 Plan, together we are building the foundation for academic excellence.

cc: Implementation Team