



Dear Colleagues,

I hope this autumn quarter has led you to fresh discoveries and unanticipated professional rewards. It has certainly done that for me. In my new capacity as provost, I am continuing to discover the many ways Ohio State supports and promotes our success. These discoveries, in turn, are among my most gratifying professional rewards. Every day I learn about a faculty member's election as fellow of an internationally respected association. Or I may read about a member of our staff who has been recognized for leadership within the university or the community.

Best of all, I regularly get word about the accomplishments of our students, who, as you know by now, are the best prepared in Ohio State history.

The good news does not stop there, however. Recent action by the Ohio General Assembly paves the way for a pipeline of increasingly well-prepared students statewide. Governor Strickland has said he wants Ohio's colleges to boost their enrollments by some 230,000 students over the next 10 years. To help reach that goal, the legislature voted last summer to freeze public college tuition for the next two years. It also committed an extra \$150 million to higher education over the next biennium. In discussing the increased funding, Eric Fingerhut, Ohio Board of Regents chancellor, has emphasized that the additional appropriation is not a reward for past performance. Rather, it is to be an investment in a reimagined higher education system of the future.

That new vision, the University System of Ohio, does not presuppose changes in the way higher education is governed, either at the state or the institutional level. It does, however, promise a new era of cooperation among the state's 13 universities and 23 community and technical colleges. It also calls on those institutions—including Ohio State—to differentiate their missions and build distinctive, focused areas of excellence.

No later than March 31, 2008, a 10-year master plan will be devised by Chancellor Fingerhut in cooperation with the member institutions of the University System. The chancellor has said the plan must address both affordability and quality, and it will set specific goals for improving performance by students and institutions. I will keep you posted about its development and implications for our institution.

In the meantime, let us all take heart in the unprecedented priority being accorded to higher education in Ohio. Healthier, more vibrant institutions will emerge as a result and, along with them, a more educated state with a stronger economy, better jobs, and a higher standard of living. That is real reason for optimism.

There are many other reasons for optimism as well, including a number of promising initiatives now underway to ensure support for academic goals. For example, we are reexamining the university's budget system to assess whether it is truly aligned with our aspirations. In addition, Ohio State's colleges are engaged in drafting or revising their strategic plans, and the structure of the arts and sciences colleges is being reviewed to determine these colleges' optimum configuration. I will discuss all of these initiatives in this issue of keyNotes. I would like to start, however, with an update on the university's just-completed reaccreditation—which gives us yet another reason for optimism.

Reaccreditation: Reaffirming Our Value(s)

In September, Ohio State was officially informed that it had received continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Though this was a surprise to no one, it was good news.

The reaccreditation process, which occurs every 10 years, required two years of preparation. The process consists, first, of a university-wide self-study and report of findings in five areas: mission/integrity; planning; student learning and effective teaching; acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge; and engagement and service. The self-study is followed by a site visit by an outside evaluation team and, finally, by commission review and recommendation.

Accordingly, after our self-study, which is available at oaa.osu.edu/reaccreditation/documents/OhioStateSelfStudyReport.pdf, a 10-member site review team visited our campus last April. At the end of its three days of meetings with faculty, staff, students, and administrators, the team gave us high marks in all five of the reaccreditation criteria.

Although the site team did not request follow-up reports or other remedial actions, it did provide us with a number of helpful recommendations. It advised, for example, that we do more to highlight our research collaborations, continue to ensure breadth within our general education curriculum, expand student learning outcomes assessment to the regional campuses, and broaden opportunities for staff career development. With the renovation of the Thompson Library now well underway, the team recommended additional support for collections and a multi-year plan for library staffing. It also asked that we consider performing a comprehensive review of instructional technology services on campus.

In addition to the five required reaccreditation criteria, we had the further opportunity to identify a special emphasis area for a more customized and in-depth review. To build on our efforts to

revitalize graduate education, the special emphasis area that Ohio State selected was graduate and professional education. The site team's recommendations in this area included such measures as providing deans with incentives to make decisions at the college level, addressing master's degree expansion on a program-by-program basis with market as a major consideration, and deciding in the near future whether to let professionally accredited degree programs be independent of the Graduate School.

The very positive evaluation that we received as a result of the reaccreditation review suggests that Ohio State is focusing on the right goals and using its resources to achieve them. We are already beginning to implement the site team's recommendations to ensure that we continue to assure and advance quality—which is, after all, the intent of the reaccreditation process.

The reaccreditation was led by Vice Provost Randy Smith and Faculty Fellow Professor Stephanie Davidson, who worked closely with a university-wide steering committee. We are all in their debt.

Reassessing Processes, Reexamining Plans

A New Look at the Budget System

In July, Senior Vice President for Business and Finance Bill Shkurti and I formed a Budget System Advisory Committee to assess the university's budget system, which has now been in place for five years. The committee is composed of Malcolm Chisholm, Distinguished University Professor of chemistry; Michael DeWees, senior fiscal and resources officer in the Office of Research; Steve Gavazzi, professor of human development and family science; Donna Hobart, fiscal and budget executive director for the Fisher College of Business; Anita Hopper, chair of molecular genetics; Chip Souba, dean of the College of Medicine; and Craig Volden, associate professor of political science. Also on the committee are three *ex officio* members: Richard Gunther, a professor of political science who is also vice chair and chair-elect of Faculty Council; Mike Sherman, our vice provost for academic administration; and Lee Walker, director of the Office of Resource Planning. The committee is co-convened by Bud Baeslack, dean of the College of Engineering, and Allan Silverman, professor of philosophy. A number of these members—including the co-conveners—also serve on the Senate Fiscal Committee, ensuring the integral involvement of that body in this review.

The Advisory Committee has been charged to evaluate how effectively our budget system supports the goals of the Academic Plan, aligns resources and commitments with college and unit activities, and allocates central funds to promote academic excellence and academic support services. It has also been asked to determine whether the funding provided by the central tax is adequate to ensure the academic excellence of our institution. Based on its findings, the committee will recommend possible enhancements or adjustments to the budget system.

The committee is meeting on a regular basis and, in conducting its review, is studying a number of documents and earlier reports. These include action items recommended by the Budget Restructuring Review Committee, reports of the Senate Fiscal Committee regarding the budget system, and Current Funds Budget documents since 2003 showing how resources have been used to advance the goals of the Academic Plan.

Bill Shkurti and I have asked the committee to suggest possible enhancements or adjustments to the budget system by March 1, 2008. We anticipate that its recommendations will help us use resources more strategically and make the allocation of those resources more transparent to the university community.

College Strategic Planning

Some of Ohio State's 18 colleges already have well-articulated strategic plans. For other colleges, such plans are still emerging. Whatever their level of development, since September, all of Ohio State's colleges have been formalizing their long-term plans, so that a strategic plan for every college becomes public by the end of spring quarter 2008.

The process of strategic planning can be among the most energizing and community-building activities that an academic unit can undertake. It is a moment for faculty, staff, and students to think together about the unit's mission, priorities, and the steps and means to achieve them. The best strategic plan will be a road map

(continued on page 2)



keyNotes



Autumn 2007

The key in the *keyNotes* nameplate dates from the early days of the university. Though “R & E” originally referred to the key manufacturer, today those letters might stand for “research” and “education”—two keystones of Ohio State’s original mission. The key symbolizes the university’s foundational commitment to research and education. And it celebrates our rich tradition of opening doors, opening minds, and opening opportunities.

Key courtesy of the Department of Facilities Operations and Development, Key/Card Control Center.

oaa.osu.edu

Planning for the Future of the Arts and Sciences



Plans are also moving ahead to ensure that our arts and sciences colleges are structured to maximize their identity, progress, and visibility as the core of our institution.

Since 2003, Ohio State’s five arts and sciences colleges have been organized as a federation. This administrative structure provided that each of these units—the Colleges of the Arts, Biological Sciences, Humanities, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences—would retain its own dean, with an executive dean in the leadership role. This system was established with the expectation that it would build strength both within and across the five colleges while achieving administrative savings.

Now that the federation is in its fifth year, the time has come to assess whether that structure best serves its constituent colleges and the university. A committee being chaired by Vice Provosts Martha Garland and Randy Smith has been charged with that review. In addition to Martha and Randy, the committee is composed of a faculty representative from

each of the arts and sciences colleges, three senior staff members, and a representative external to the arts and sciences. The members include Professors Ralph Boerner (biological sciences), Lisa Florman (arts), Anne McCoy (mathematical and physical sciences), Ted McDaniel (arts, humanities), Jim Phelan (humanities), and Gifford Weary (social and behavioral sciences); staff members John Heimaster (mathematical and physical sciences), Pat Riechel (arts), and Linda Seitz (arts and sciences development); and external member Professor Sandy Stroot (education and human ecology).

I have asked these colleagues to assess progress to date toward the goals established for the federation in the May 2003 white paper promulgated by then-provost Ed Ray and former President Karen Holbrook. I have also charged the committee with commenting on the arts and sciences’ structure and making suggestions for its enhancement.

I look forward to receiving the committee’s recommendations at the end of winter quarter 2008.

that emerges after colleagues have thought carefully about what their unit is to achieve during the life of the plan, after all viewpoints have been respectfully heard and considered, and after a common vision is achieved.

A good strategic plan, of course, is simultaneously visionary and tactical. Its purpose is to provide clear guidelines for aligning the goals of the university, its colleges, and their departments. This means that college strategic plans and those of their academic units must be fully compatible. And all of these plans must be similarly compatible with and supportive of the university’s Academic Plan.

Such planning often requires tough decisions. As a unit’s goals and their implementation steps are formalized into a strategic plan, it is sometimes necessary to refocus energies and efforts and redirect human and financial resources. The success of any strategic plan, however, will be determined in large measure by the deliberate and selective placement of such resources.

Strategic plans are not an end in themselves. Nor is their implementation a static process. There will always be events that alter the efficacy of specific tactics. To ensure continuity in objectives, there will be an ongoing need to review and examine alternatives. Our strategic plans, bolstered by continuing discussion of them, will guarantee that the university moves forward, if by many routes, toward the overarching vision of the Academic Plan—that Ohio State be the leading public research university in the nation.

Let me close this issue of keyNotes with news of another reason for optimism. For the second year in a row, Ohio State has been identified as the leading producer of African American baccalaureate degrees in the CIC. In other statistics, in the May issue of Diversity: Issues in Higher Education, among all universities awarding baccalaureate degrees, Ohio State ranked 29th in the nation. Twelve of the institutions with higher rankings were historically black colleges and universities. This means Ohio State ranked 17th among traditionally white institutions. Of that group, four were predominantly or exclusively online institutions.

In addition, we continue to make steady progress in attracting and retaining minority students. Today, students of color make up approximately 16 percent of the Ohio State student body, and the retention gap between minority and non-minority students has nearly closed. In 2007, just over 89 percent of African American and Hispanic students returned to Ohio State for their second year of study, as compared to 91.5 percent first-year retention among non-minorities.

Another demographic pattern that we are tracking these days is the economic diversity of our students. This year, almost 23 percent of incoming freshmen are first-generation scholars, or those who have the opportunity to be the first in their family to graduate from college.

I look forward to keeping you apprised throughout the year of these kinds of successes as well as the many activities of the Office of Academic Affairs. Meanwhile, I send you warmest wishes for the balance of the quarter and the upcoming holidays.

Sincerely,
Joseph A. Alutto
Executive Vice President and Provost