

**Opening Faculty Meeting  
Wichita State University**

**September 3, 2008**

**Remarks**

**Gary L. Miller  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research**

As always, it is a great pleasure to have a few minutes with you this afternoon. I want to extend a special welcome to the new faculty who are joining us this semester. We are extremely excited about what you bring to the university. I look forward to getting to know each of you better in the coming year.

I very much appreciated Larry Spurgeon's comments. It is essential as for us to continue to monitor the national higher education landscape and work to build models for national challenges.

You have just heard President Beggs give an update on the potential budget challenges that we may have and on the overall approach that we will take to meet those challenges. The President has made it clear that we do not consider this to be a crisis – although we know that budget cuts in the 7% range will be painful. Rather, we consider this to be a time of great challenge, one that will test our resolve to move forward vigorously with the urban serving research mission of Wichita State University.

I have been invited to address the Faculty Senate next week on the details of our planning process in the Division of Academic Affairs and Research. I do not want to dwell on those plans this afternoon preferring, instead, to spend most of my time talking about the exciting opportunities of the year ahead, and beyond.

But, let me make the following points about budget planning in the academic division. Some of these points you have just heard the President make as well.

*Budget planning*

1. We are in a budget planning mode only at this point since we do not yet know what the FY10 budget will be and are not likely to know until the first of the year at the earliest.
2. Since most of our budget is in personnel lines, at this stage, planning to reduce the FY10 budget consists primarily of identifying vacant lines and holding those lines open until we know more about the FY10 budget. The deans have developed such plans.

3. Identifying vacant lines and holding them open for potential reductions is NOT a strategic process. The strategy will involve how we fill newly available faculty and staff lines as they come open.
4. This will require that we affirm our priorities and assumptions and that we use those priorities and assumptions to re-staff toward the important strategic goals of the university.
5. I am working with the deans and Larry Spurgeon and, soon, the faculty senate leadership to define a process for implementing this strategic re-staffing. And, that is the process that I will talk to the senate in more detail about next week.

Working with the deans and the faculty leadership it is our goal to make this budget planning process an important and constructive strategic process for the university. I am very confident that we will do that.

Now I want to turn to more exciting things: The opportunities that await us this year.

### *Retrospective*

It is always a good idea to take time to reflect on the important things that we have accomplished together. Let me mention just a few – certainly not a complete list:

- Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation
- In addition to university reaccreditation, we have also recently received reaccreditation of the College of Engineering and the School of Business. And, each year, individual departments and academic programs meet the requirements of their national accrediting agencies.
- We have attracted new deans to the College of Education and the School of Business. Each of these new leaders is fully engaged in the urban serving research mission of the university.
- We opened two new engineering research buildings to support the College of Engineering and NIAR.
- We received substantial endowment support for the Speech and Hearing Clinic of the Communication Sciences Disorders department and for the Regional Institute for Aging.
- We received approval for important new undergraduate and graduate degree programs (bioengineering and Doctorate of Nursing Practice).
- We completed the reorganization of the Graduate School and the Office of Research Administration, bringing the research and graduate training programs together.

- We celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs.
- We continued to win state and federal support for the National Institute for Aviation Research.
- Our emerging research-based partnership with the Wichita Area Technical College is becoming recognized as one of the most unique, university-based workforce training programs in the country.
- We have started new urban leadership programs with USD 259.
- We opened the new South Campus in Derby and enrollment has already exceeded expectations.
- We have experienced enrollment increases in nearly every college including increases in international and out-of-state students.
- Our Advanced Education in General Dentistry program (AEGD) is underway and moving forward with considerable momentum.

### *Strategic Imperatives*

As we move forward this year we will continue to be guided by the congruent strategic missions of the Kansas Board of Regents and the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities.

Recall, the elements of these strategic visions are to:

- Increase access and success of students in higher education.
- Develop the human capital for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Nurture research that sustains the global economy and the economy of Kansas.
- Promote public health.
- Sustain communities
- Support education from pre-school through college.

The ideals of the liberal education continue to be the foundation to these elements.

We continue to work on a number of emerging initiatives that support this strategic framework:

Kansas Bioscience Authority Initiative: One of the most important of these is our partnership with the Via Christi Orthopedic Research Institute to develop the Center for Innovation in Biomaterials and Orthopedic Research (CIBOR).

As you know, we asked the Kansas Bioscience Authority for \$30 million to begin that Center which has the potential to create hundreds of jobs and have tens of millions of dollars of economic impact on the State of Kansas.

We are not sure what the outcome of that effort with the KBA will be. Unfortunately, there are forces aligned against this proposal that are not, in our view, in the best interest of bioscience research or the economy of Kansas. But, we remain confident that we have an exceptional plan and that we will, in the end, prevail.

Globalization – In my first address to this faculty I said:

*We have an obligation to develop a global focus at all levels of our academic programs. To extend the intellectual and practical global reach of our students serves both our urban mission and our obligation to prepare Kansas residents for productive lives in a fully connected world.*

Last year, I appointed a campus-wide task force to examine the university's position with respect to teaching and research and outreach in the global economy. That task force, which was lead by Marty Shawver and Ravi Pendse, completed its work this past summer. That work included retaining the services of a consulting group that is expert in assisting universities to understand their global position.

The task force prepared a comprehensive analysis of the situation on campus and made a nine important recommendations, a number of which were also made by the consulting team. The task force report and their recommendations can be viewed on the Provost's web page.

Over the next month or so, I will be hearing from various groups on campus about their impressions of the report and their thoughts on the recommendations. Toward the end of the semester, we will respond to the excellent work of the task force with a sharpened strategic vision for globalization based on their work.

Honors Education – Each year we get more and more high quality students enrolling at WSU as either freshmen or transfer students. Many of these students are with us only a short time before they transfer to one of the other four-year institutions in the state. The key to retaining these students is to develop vigorous academic programs that leverage their great curiosity and challenge these students to excel in ways that are often not available to them in conventional classroom settings.

We believe that a key to this is a new kind of honors program model.

Technology – We continue to make great strides in advancing the university technology infrastructure to support innovation, teaching and research.

The classroom technology upgrades continue. We have expanded the faculty laptop program. We have made significant investments in infrastructure and security.

We will continue to face enormous challenges in this area. Those of you who are aware of the provisions of the new Higher Education Act will appreciate the challenge we have going forward in preventing illegal music downloads.

We will also continue to take aggressive steps to secure servers and ensure the integrity of university and personal data.

Diversity Initiative – In a memo to you in December 2006, I wrote:

*I want to affirm my steadfast commitment to the development of a university culture that embraces diversity throughout its programs and processes. Perhaps more than any other enterprise in America, universities should reflect the great cultural, racial, and intellectual texture of the world in which we and our students and our graduates live and work. Our special opportunity as an urban serving university is to draw from the diversity of our urban community – particularly with respect to student recruitment – and give back to our community programs of learning, research and outreach that are grounded in a deep cultural awareness that comes from living with diversity and not just from the study of it.*

This past year, upon the urging of individuals throughout the university, we put in place a structure to wrap action around this vision.

We established the Wichita State University Tilford Group . The group is an outgrowth of the Michael Tilford Conference on Diversity and Multiculturalism, named in honor of the late Dean of the Graduate School.

Establishing Tilford groups at each Regent institution is a statewide effort under the auspices of the Kansas Board of Regents (through the Council of Chief Academic Officers) modeled after the Kansas State University Tilford Group, which was established in 1997.

Susan Kovar, former Dean of the Graduate School, is leading this effort, which is described on the Provost's web page.

The statewide Michael Tilford Conference on Diversity and Multiculturalism will be held on October 2-3 at WSU. I encourage you all to attend this conference and to get involved in this important university effort.

E-learning – The HLC visit and our analysis since revealed to us the great opportunity of e-learning as a way to reach underserved populations, to increase retention, and to add new dimensions to our teaching repertoire.

The e-learning taskforce led by Keith Pickus has completed its work and put forth a number of recommendations that are now being considered by the Faculty Senate and other groups.

We expect this to be a growth area and one that will integrate fully with our global and urban-serving missions.

Strategic enrollment—in an activity that has occurred mostly out of sight of the university, the division of academic affairs and research and the division of campus life and university relations have worked intensively over the past year to develop a comprehensive and strategic vision for enrollment at Wichita State University.

Keith Pickus and Christine Schneikart-Leubbe chaired the enrollment work group appointed by Dr. Kopita and me. This small group examined all aspects of our admissions and enrollment practices, looked at demographic trends and the relationship of admissions and retention to academic programs. The group hosted a consultant who showed us how we could implement a student-success, probabilistic model of enrollment that would give us more predictive power in enrollment management. Work on that huge project continues.

The work of this group has been extended into an activity that will be the primary undergraduate initiative of the coming year and one that the president, Dr. Kopita and I have commissioned and fully endorse as one of the most important activities for the future of WSU.

### *The Coming Year*

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on developing targeted degree programs, including at least one doctoral program. We will continue to find ways to strengthen our strong programs and grow the ones with great potential.

We will move forward always embracing the ideals of liberal learning as the foundation of our urban philosophy.

I want to end by describing for you a major initiative that will consume much of our time in the coming year and that will, hopefully, involve many, many of you.

Late last month, you received a memo from President Beggs announcing the Foundations of Excellence Program.

This year the university will participate with thirteen other universities in a structured and reflective analysis of the experience of our first time students – both traditional freshmen and transfer students.

The goal of this university-wide activity is to come to some understanding of what the experience of these students is and how our academic programs and service functions affect that experience.

The goal is to develop a model for how we can change in order to ensure the success of these students and, thus, realize significant increases in our retention rates for all students.

This is joint effort by the Division of Academic Affairs and Research and the Division of Campus Life and University Relations. Keith Pickus and Christine Schneikart-Luebbe are co-directing this effort. Each of the nine working groups that will be formed will be co-chaired by a person from each division. We have a national consultant who will guide us through this process.

Both the President and I are fully engaged in this process and enthusiastic about the outcome.

I want to thank Dr. Ron Kopita, my partner in this, for his full support of the activity.

I have often said that every great university has a great faculty. The extent that we prosper and move forward with innovative programs is almost entirely dependent on the innovative spirit in this room. While it may not always seem to be the case, it is the mission of the Provost's office to build environments to encourage the expression of that innovative spirit.

Thank you for your great work. I wish each of you a fantastic academic year.