

# THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON



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**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

September 11, 2012

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 August 8, 2012.

## **Presentation to the Board**

Provost Mike Sherman and Vice President of Strategic Engagement Jim Tressel gave a Student Success Update. They said more "college ready" students will attend UA this fall than last fall. The improvement, they said, is a direct result of the University's new "Inclusive Pathways" model for admissions. The model has been designed to help more students succeed at UA and as post-graduates.

Under the model, each prospective student has a pathway into the University.

- "College ready" students, who have an ACT of 21 or more, are admitted directly to their majors.
- "Emergent" students, with ACT scores of 17 to 20, are admitted as pre-majors and will receive intentional and intensive support to enhance their readiness.
- "Preparatory" students have ACT scores of 16 and below, and increasingly, they are being guided to Wayne College or other partner community colleges for the initial stage in their pathways to the University.

The percentage of incoming college-ready students is estimated to be 58 percent of the class this year, up from 53 percent last year. The percentage of preparatory students is expected to be 11 percent this year, down from 15 percent last year.

## **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-August2012.pdf>.

2. Cumulative Gift and Grant Income Report for July 2011-June 2012

For July 2011–June 2012, giving totaled of \$52.8 million, 13 percent more than the \$46.7 million received for FY2011 and 29 percent more than the five-year average of \$40.9 million. The number of gifts increased from 21,121 for July 2010–June 2011 to 21,907 for FY2012.

3. Ratification of FY2013 Miscellaneous Fees

At its meeting on June 13, 2012, the University’s Board of Trustees approved 35 pages of proposed changes in course and miscellaneous fees. A later review of materials showed that an additional seven pages of proposed fees changes were omitted inadvertently from Board and committee materials. As soon as the oversight was discovered, Board officers were notified and agreed to the administrations’ proposal that all proposed FY2013 miscellaneous fees be implemented, pending ratification of the omitted changes at the July 30 committee and August 8 Board meetings.

4. Purchase for More Than \$350,000

Trustees approved the award of a contract to Micros Systems, Inc. to provide a new point-of-sale system for use on campus at all Auxiliary Enterprises’ retail locations. The initial contract will be for the purchase, installation, and training on the new software and register terminals. The proposal submitted by Micros Systems, Incorporated was determined to be the lowest responsive and responsible proposal. The initial purchase of hardware, software and training will be approximately \$449,598, although the actual total cost will depend on the number of units installed and the number of training days needed, which may change slightly during the implementation process. The total cost is not expected to exceed \$500,000.

**Academic Issues & Student Success Committee**

1. Recognition of Omicron Delta Kappa Theta Circle 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Board formally acknowledged Omicron Delta Kappa Theta Circle’s celebration on October 5, 2012, “recognizing 90 years of achievement.” Of more than 315 Circles of Omicron Delta Kappa in the United States, the Theta Circle at The University of Akron is the eighth oldest, having received its charter on April 28, 1922.

2. Tentative Summer Graduation List and Statistics

Trustees approved a tentative list of candidates eligible to participate in Summer 2012 Commencement ceremonies. The tentative total of 1,105 degrees conferred included 44 doctoral, 411 master, 502 baccalaureate and 148 associate degrees.

3. Research Grants and Sponsored Programs Reports, July 2011- April 2012

For July 2011-May 2012, funding for externally funded research and other sponsored programs totaled \$55,152,388 for 440 projects. For July 2010-May 2011, funding was \$31,189,286 for 413 projects. For July 2011-May 2012, 14 new patents were issued, 33 patent applications were filed, and 58 disclosures were submitted—compared to 8, 34 and 71, respectively, for July 2010-May 2011.

## Notes

### 1. President's Report

Noting that, by necessity, discussions with the Board tend to be about matters of immediate concern as the result of the economy or other pressing matters, I told Trustees I wanted to focus my report on two broader issues of potential significance to this institution in the coming years. One is the effort in the United States and throughout the world to maintain the preeminence of the role of the research university. Second is the ongoing search for workable approaches capable of creating economies of scale and thereby reducing the rate of the cost growth that we have seen in higher education or in health care, both of which are said by many to be unsustainable.

I said that, recently, the National Academy of Sciences published a report titled [Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation's Prosperity and Security](#). I had awaited the report with some interest because I had been privileged to be invited to discuss my concerns before that committee a little over a year ago. Because so many of my colleagues tend to suggest that there are too many such universities and that only the large should prevail, I had taken that opportunity to voice my concern that such suggestions are protectionist in nature. I instead believe in a somewhat healthier competition that has characterized the diversity of higher education in the United States.

I said that many of the recommendations that were published by that committee involve matters of federal policy, practices, regulations and funding, but four are of direct interest to The University of Akron. I shared some of the context of those proposals, beginning with the following quote from the report:

“America is driven by innovation ... In the past half century, innovation itself has been increasingly driven by educated people and the knowledge they produce. Our nation's primary source of both new knowledge and graduates with advanced skills continues to be our research universities.”

The report notes that our nation began investing in research universities as far back as the creation of the land-grant institution through the Morrill Act of 1862, and it has continued to do so over the last 150 years. Today, according the report, “our nation faces new challenges and a time of rapid economic, social and political transformation driven by exponential growth in knowledge and innovation ... In this environment, educated people, the knowledge they produce, and the innovation and entrepreneurial skills they possess ... are keys to our nation's future.” I said I was reminded in that regard about the public purpose of education that Trustee Bond had written about a few weeks prior.<sup>1</sup>

As we focus on the many immediate issues we face at The University of Akron, let us keep in mind that our long-term relevance, connectivity and productivity will depend greatly upon our value as a research university. To that end, I reviewed briefly a few of the recommendations from the NAS report.

The report calls for stronger partnerships with industry. It notes that “business and industry have largely dismantled (their own) large corporate research laboratories that drove American industrial

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<sup>1</sup> [Jane Bond: What happened to education as a public good?](#), Akron Beacon Journal, Sunday, July 1, 2012

leadership in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, (such as for example) Bell Labs, but they have not yet fully partnered with research universities to fill the gap at a time when the new knowledge and ideas emerging from university research are needed by society more than ever.”

On that issue, I said, the report makes three key points:

- “The relationship between business and higher education should become more peer-to-peer in nature, stressing collaboration in areas of joint interest rather than remaining in a traditional customer-supplier relationship ...”
- “Businesses and universities should work closely together to develop new graduate- degree programs that address strategic workforce gaps for science-based employers.”
- “Universities should improve management of intellectual property to improve technology transfer.”

I noted that we are fortunate to be on the leading edge of many of those ideas. Our Akron Model has, to a certain extent, defined a response to these kinds of issues. Where technology transfer is concerned, our i6 award and the work we have done on the Council of Competitiveness and PCAST have highlighted best practices in these areas. Relationships with companies such as Timken, Omnova and a number of others are a testament to our close, strategic collaboration with a number of important industrial-sector companies in Northeast Ohio.

I said that another issue addressed in the report is the reform of graduate education. The report suggests that, “Employers – business, government agencies and nonprofits – that hire master’s- and doctorate-level graduates should more deeply engage programs in research universities by providing internships, student projects, advice on curriculum development and real-time information on employment opportunities.”

Again, I noted our relationships with Timken and others. I also mentioned the Innovation through Convergence and Entrepreneurism program that is being promoted by the College of Engineering and the University of Akron Research Foundation. That program seeks to shorten the timeline for graduate students to become entrepreneurs in spin-out companies by more closely aligning their knowledge-creation experience with ways to put that knowledge to work , rather than waiting for their knowledge to incubate for years before they see the results of their innovation.

The last of the report’s recommendations I noted concerns improving university productivity. The report has several proposals in that area, including the adoption of modern instructional methods such as cyber learning. I said that those proposals related to the second broad issue of my remarks.

I reported that, in the last month or so, some of the nation’s best-known universities had partnered with firms like Coursera, or created their own firms, such as MITx, edX, Udacity and Udemy. These new firms offer massively open online courses, known by the acronym MOOCs. These online courses are free, I said, and whenever you pair that magical word with such prestigious names as Harvard, Stanford and MIT, you get a lot of interest. A single MOOC from one of those institutions may enroll hundreds of thousands of students from around the world.

At present, there are substantial challenges in the path of this approach. The most obvious, of

course, is credentialing. Another is how to garner an economy of scale, because it seems like academics are going into the classroom every morning and doing the equivalent of what some of us older people used to do when we made toothpaste from scratch. The world has moved forward in other ways, and there are ways to create economies of scale.

Noting that I think those are only temporary obstacles in light of current thinking on such concepts as an integrator or assessor university, I cited Thomas Friedman's recent observation that, "Big breakthroughs happen when what is suddenly possible meets what is desperately necessary,"<sup>2</sup> and Eli Noam's statement of more than 15 years ago, "Change the technology and economics, and the institutions must change, eventually."<sup>3</sup>

I said that the University is working to develop a proposal for an integrator/assessor university platform model with an eye toward those trends. The goal is to ultimately transform the cost structures of learning to a more sustainable level by reducing the need for all knowledge to be recreated by individual instructors each day for presentation in a physical classroom.

I added that I do not believe that universities as they exist currently will ever disappear; there always will be a place for the college experience with individual contact between students and professors. However, the world is changing. As Louis Collins foretold over a decade ago, perhaps we will have universities creating the equivalents of electronic Olympic teams or, conversely, electronic Olympic villages where people want to gather to advance their learning and do so in a variety of ways. I see universities as becoming enablers of knowledge acquisition and assessors of knowledge acquired rather than the all-inclusive providers of knowledge resources and credentialing that requires students to be physically present.

I quoted a recent article from *The Economist* in summary.

"Four-year (residential) colleges cannot keep on raising their fees faster than the public's capacity to pay for them, especially when online degrees are so much cheaper. Universities that fail to prepare for the hurricane ahead are likely to be flattened by it."<sup>4</sup>

I then recognized the following recent accomplishments and honors and offered congratulations:

- In fiscal 2011-2012, The University of Akron reported to the National Science Foundation total research expenditures in excess of \$65 million, its largest amount ever.
- Men's Soccer Head Coach Caleb Porter was named to the Greater Akron Chamber's 2012 list of "30 for the Future."
- Eight of the University's athletics programs have earned perfect scores on the NCAA Academic Progress Rate, and 15 of 19 programs have exceeded the NCAA national multi-year average.
- The University's Diversity Council, headed by Associate Vice President for Inclusion and Equity and Chief Diversity Officer Lee Gill, was ranked among the nation's top 25 by the Association of Diversity Councils for the second consecutive year.

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<sup>2</sup> "[Come the Revolution](#)," Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, May 15, 2012

<sup>3</sup> "Electronics and the Dim Future of the University," Eli M. Noam, *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, October 13, 1995

<sup>4</sup> "The college-cost calamity," *The Economist*, August 4, 2012

- The Plain Dealer interviewed Dr. William Guegold, our resident expert on Olympic music, for a story that appeared on August 6. The article included a photograph of Dr. Guegold wearing his Olympic medal.

Finally, I noted that in three days, the Summer Commencement Ceremonies would be held at The University of Akron's E.J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall, and more than 1,100 degrees would be conferred at the morning and afternoon ceremonies. He encouraged Trustees to attend one or both ceremonies.

## 2. Provost's Report

Dr. Sherman reported that the Pathways Model is the key to our success, and we are now seeing the results of implementing that model:

- College-ready students have increased from 53 to 58 percent of our incoming class in just one year.
- As planned, our preparatory students, those with ACT scores of less than 17, have decreased from 15 to 11 percent.

Moving forward, he said, these changes will greatly improve our persistence and graduation rates, outcomes that will increase the reputation of The University of Akron.

Dr. Sherman added that important to enrollment and persistence is the Enroll Now initiative that began seven weeks prior. All across campus, from admissions to orientation to college efforts, many have been working hard to increase enrollment and persistence for fall and beyond.

He noted the following results for week seven:

- Nearly 3,000 more continuing students who are academically eligible have been enrolled.
- Holds were lifted for 100 students as a result of the generous gift of \$60,000 from James and Vanita Oelschlager. They have a passion for supporting students who have unique challenges, and we thank them for stepping up to support our students.
- Freshman confirmations have increased by 500.
- A transfer scholarship increased enrollment by 400 students, an increase in yield from 55 percent to 73 percent.

Dr. Sherman said that we are following through with the support of our students by investing in faculty. This fall, we will welcome 55 new full-time faculty, including 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 30 assistant professors, 9 college lecturers/instructors and 11 visiting faculty members. He said there are two new department chairs from outside the University who will bring experience and drive that will help their departments reach new heights of success:

- James Thomson, who served for 26 years at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, most recently as vice president in its research department, will lead the Department of Finance.
- Brian Davis comes from the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron to lead the Department of Biomedical Engineering. He was the vice president and director of the Medical Device Development Center at ABIA.

Dr. Sherman said that we have decided to impact the world by stimulating and enabling interdisciplinary research. He said our commitment to funding our Achieving Distinction program at \$2 million per year for the next 10 years will greatly enhance the reputation of the University with collaborative approaches to problem solving across the colleges and disciplines resulting in research breakthroughs. He said we have received 27 high-quality proposals from all across campus in the areas of the Human Condition, Innovative Technologies, Health Care and Medicine, and Regional Solutions. He said he looks forward to sharing more with the Board about this exciting program in the near future.

Dr. Sherman said that we have committed as a university to an 80-percent career/graduate school placement rate within six months of graduation. That will be the hallmark of value of a UA degree that, combined with the Akron Experience, will distinguish our graduates from all others. He said the colleges all have outlined the ways in which they will support this goal, including:

- New professional development workshops for students.
- Increased avenues to internships and co-ops to give students a head start to achieving a career-related goal and employment.
- Intensive advising to more rapidly connect students to their major and to then stay on track to graduation.

Dr. Sherman reported that the five teams writing our self-study document for the Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation visit are submitting drafts. The next step in our self-study process is to compile the drafts into one cohesive document for sharing with our campus community, the general public and the Board of Trustees. The feedback received will guide the final document for submission to the Higher Learning Commission in December, which will be followed by our site visit in March.

Dr. Sherman said he looked forward to an exciting year ahead. He said that the deans of the colleges and our academic units have aligned goals this summer that will result in a successful 2012-2013 academic year, a year that will keep us on track toward our aspirational goals of Vision 2020. Our student success Pathways and our innovative Achieving Distinction initiative will benefit our region and beyond. We also are expanding our evening and weekend programs, as well as online programs, to offer more alternative learning for our students. And importantly, we are diligently measuring this program with a comprehensive set of Vision 2020 metrics that this Board will receive in the near future, he said.

In closing, Dr. Sherman said that, while we have faced challenges, the Board has supported us in creating great opportunities, and we will be successful in achieving our goals and our aspirations.

### 3. Next Regular Meeting

The Board's next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, September 19, 2012 in the Student Union, Board Room 339, with an executive session to begin at 8 a.m. and the public session to begin no earlier than 10 a.m.

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