

Provost's Letter Releasing Reports September 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Last winter, I charged several faculty-led efforts to look into important topics facing our campus. I'd like to thank the members of all of these groups for their hard work and willingness to grapple with challenging topics, and for producing reports with clear, specific recommendations.

The purpose of this letter is to point you to the completed reports and advise you of next steps related to this work.

The recommendations of these committees are being considered within the context of, and as one part of, a continued commitment to broader priorities -- innovative education, cutting-edge research, diversity, and affordability and access -- as outlined in my May 2013 letter to campus.

Committee Reports

The **Being a Faculty Member in the 21st Century** Committee considered both the pressures and opportunities facing faculty at the University of Michigan in a time of significant change in U.S. higher education. The Committee was asked:

1. To identify the characteristics of faculty jobs that are most important to ensuring that UM faculty are successful and satisfied with their work;
2. To identify, in as much specificity as possible, external pressures on faculty jobs arising from limited resources for higher education, from increased compliance demands, or from other forces; and
3. In light of (1) and (2), to think creatively, and develop recommended approaches that can be taken at the University of Michigan to ensure that while we respond to the changing environment, our faculty continue to thrive and are able to provide a world-class education, conduct cutting-edge research, and participate effectively in service and, where appropriate, clinical activity.

The Being a Faculty Member in the 21st Century Committee Report:

The Provost's **Task Teams on Engaged Learning and Digital Instruction** consisted of nearly 80 members of the UM community organized into eight task teams. The teams were independently asked to consider two related questions:

1. How do we transform our educational experience to one in which every student has multiple richly educational engaged learning experiences, and in which digital instruction is used to best effect?
2. How will we take this to scale, appropriately encompassing the entire UM student population, taking best advantage of the fact that we are a research university, and keeping cost efficiency in mind?

As a result of the Teams' discussions and reports, a Synthesis Report was compiled by James Holloway, Vice Provost for Global and Engaged Education and James Hilton, Vice Provost for Digital Education and Innovation.

The Synthesis Report of the Task Teams on Engaged Learning and Digital Instruction:

The committee on **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** was charged with identifying and recommending three to five short-term and three to five medium-term high priority actions to build a climate of inclusion as well as address pipeline issues that impact enrollment.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Report can be found here:

A **fourth committee** will examine financial issues facing the University of Michigan. The formation of that committee was deferred until this fall so that the other committees' work could inform its deliberations. Working with the leadership of SACUA, I have decided to make use of the 2014-2015 Provost's advisory Committee on Budgetary Affairs (PACBA), a SACUA-charged committee, to address the financial questions.

I encourage you to read the committee reports, and I invite your comments. You can send comments to my office at facultyfeedback@umich.edu.

Next Steps

Given the recent appointment of Professor Rob Sellers to the position of Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion, and Academic Affairs and the recent arrival of President Schlissel, who comes with a strong commitment to diversity, we are still in the process of reviewing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee report and considering its insights and recommendations. The university's leadership is working together with our campus community to develop a set of broadly-based campus initiatives over the next several months, and the committee's work will inform that discussion.

The majority of the recommendations from the other two committees (Being a Faculty Member in the 21st Century and Task Teams on Engaged Learning and Digital Instruction) are related to teaching and learning or administrative efficiencies and workload. In order to move forward with these committees' recommendations, we compiled, categorized, and prioritized the recommendations into the following themes: research and scholarship, teaching and learning, recruitment of graduate students, and administrative load for faculty.

The lists linked [here](#) [**Next Steps & Status, Sept. 2014 & Fall 2015**] enumerate recommendations (*and recent status of many items*) from these two committees that we will pursue in the current academic year [AY 2014-2015]. Following each recommendation (in brackets) is the name of the office responsible for addressing the recommendation. These plans may be modified based on the input received from the broader faculty, but the lists provide a starting point for the work ahead.

Sincerely,

Martha E. Pollack

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs