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TO: Todd Huspeni, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee
FROM: Greg Summers, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
RE: Academic Affairs Committee Agenda for 2012-2013
DATE: September 24, 2012

It is customary for the Provost to share some brief remarks with the Academic Affairs Committee at the beginning of each academic year. First and foremost, I want to take this time to thank members of the Academic Affairs Committee, and its subcommittees, for the excellent work completed last year. In a year that brought significant political challenges in the state of Wisconsin, I was pleased with the excellent leadership provided by this committee and its subcommittees.

Last year, assisted by the good work of the General Education Policy Review Committee (GEPRC), you passed Step 6 of the new General Education Program (GEP), which established both Administrative and Assessment aspects of the new GEP. As with previous steps in this revision process, our colleagues across campus (including faculty, staff, and students) were engaged in a thorough process of feedback and revision. In the end, we managed to assemble a thoughtful and substantive document to help guide us forward with this new, shared GEP curriculum. This is an especially valuable accomplishment and it helps to set the stage for the implementation of our new GEP in the fall 2013.

Related to this, I'm pleased that we were able to create two half-time administrative positions to assist campus with our ongoing assessment efforts and our new General Education Program. Dr. Paula DeHart (School of Education) has been selected to serve as our Assessment Coordinator, and Dr. Nancy LoPatin-Lummis (Department of History) has been selected to serve as our Director of General Education (beginning in January 2013).

In addition to this, based on recommendations presented by the GEPRC and endorsed by the Academic Affairs Committee, last year a new standing committee of the Faculty Senate, the General Education Committee (GEC), was able to "grandfather" numerous courses into the new GEP, develop new forms for the GEP, and approve new application templates for the Communication in the Major and Capstone Experience in the Major requirements. I'm happy to report that the GEC continues to serve our campus in this important capacity.

In February 2012, UWSP hosted a three-person Focused Visit Site Team from the Higher Learning Commission. In preparation for (and during) this Focused Visit, the Academic Affairs Committee provided excellent leadership and illustrated the strong commitment we have to improving our general education requirements, adopting meaningful new approaches to assessment, and ensuring that our campus culture reflects a learning-centered approach to higher education.

And finally, I am pleased to report that we hired a new Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, Mr. Jim Barrett. Last year, I brought this idea to the Academic Affairs Committee, and you provided important feedback and suggestions for how this new position could be used to assist campus with our strategic initiatives and bottleneck issues. This new Enrollment Management Unit (which includes Admissions, Financial Aid, and Registration & Records) is moving forward with numerous new initiatives to help recruit prospective students from around the state and the country, offer the best financial aid packages we can, and coordinate our course offerings to improve scheduling and course availability.

In addition to these large-scale accomplishments, the Academic Affairs Committee worked in excellent ways on numerous other tasks. Taken as a whole, the last year was punctuated by significant progress that demonstrates the vibrant system of shared governance we have at UWSP. Congratulations for an accomplished and significant year!

It is also customary to share a vision of what challenges and opportunities face us in the coming year. So, as you establish your agenda for this coming academic year, please consider the following issues.

Mobile-Friendly Websites, *myFacultySenate*, & Tablet Program

This fall, many of UWSP's main websites were converted over to a new Sharepoint platform compatible with mobile devices. While many units around campus have been using Sharepoint, this new transition represents a significant effort to bring most of UWSP's websites under similar templates that are also accessible to mobile devices.

Among these new efforts, the Faculty Senate's website has been revised extensively, including the Academic Affairs Committee website. In addition to this, several faculty governance committees will begin using electronic workflows as we move forward with the new *myFacultySenate* (mFS) initiative. The aim of this project is to create a new approach to faculty governance workflow issues by utilizing Sharepoint's numerous capabilities. I commend the Constitution and Handbook Review Subcommittee (CHRS) that has been working on this project, along with the numerous technological experts who have been providing assistance. I invite members of the Academic Affairs Committee and its subcommittees to submit feedback about this new *myFacultySenate* project, and recommend ways that we can improve it.

Related to this, I have worked closely with Mr. Greg Diemer (Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs) and Mr. David Dumke (Director of Information Technology) to begin implementation of a comprehensive "tablet" program for faculty and instructional academic staff. This program will provide faculty and instructional academic staff members with an iPad (or equivalent tablet device) to enhance teaching, research, and service. Additional details about this new professional development opportunity are forthcoming. I encourage you to consider the various ways that we can make the best use of emerging technologies and support our campus as we embrace meaningful new approaches to our teaching, research, and service.

Partnership for Thriving Communities & Healthy Communities Initiative

In the coming year, the newly established Strategic Planning Committee will assume responsibility for shaping and beginning to implement the Partnership for Thriving Communities, and particularly the pilot programs of the Healthy Communities Initiative. The Academic Affairs Committee will need to play a vital consulting role in this process, especially where the strategic plan intersect the university's core academic mission.

***Ad Hoc* SCH Committee**

I am pleased to learn that the Academic Affairs Committee is already proceeding with establishing an *ad hoc* committee to study existing SCH targets (as they appear in the *UWSP Handbook*) and to make recommendations for any changes that might be needed. I encourage you to examine this topic thoroughly and comprehensively, taking into consideration the full range of issues related to SCH targets, including budgeting and staffing considerations, enrollment management issues, and what's considered sound pedagogy for the disciplines involved. If at any time you would like any input from my office, please let me know. I would be happy to provide whatever assistance I can.

***Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee for Online/Distance Education**

This coming year, I've asked Dean Cirimo to lead an *ad hoc* advisory committee on online and distance education, and I have encouraged him to provide me with regular reports on his progress. I've also asked Dean Cirimo to provide regular updates to the Academic Affairs Committee.

While not known for our extensive online or distance education offerings, UWSP already has numerous individual courses and several degree programs that are offered through either online or distance delivery methods. These innovative courses and degree programs are a valuable aspect of our overall presence as an institution of higher education both in the region and in the country. More and more, our students (including non-traditional, adult learners in Wisconsin and out-of-state students) are seeking ways to complete some of their coursework at UWSP using online or distance delivery methods.

The goal of this advisory committee is *not* to push our campus in any specific direction. In other words, the work of this committee is not to push UWSP toward offering more of our courses and degree programs through online or distance

delivery methods. Rather, the work of this committee is to lay out a vision to ensure that when we do offer courses and degree programs using online and/or distance delivery formats that we do so with integrity and credibility. Indeed, the goal is to be intentional about our online and distance delivery efforts and to take active steps to ensure the highest quality possible for UWSP courses and degree programs, making use of the most appropriate (and most successful) strategies to engage students in deep and meaningful educational experiences. The recommendations emerging from this *ad hoc* advisory committee may include issues related to both the University Technology Committee as well as the Academic Affairs Committee, which is why I asked Dean Cirmo to provide you with regular updates.

Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement (CAESE) & Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning

Last year, when faced with a significant budget lapse and with the retirement of Interim Director Patricia Ploetz in February, I made the difficult decision not to hire a replacement and to withhold future funding from the Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement (CAESE). While it was not ideal to defund our teaching center, I recognized that we had other pressing needs (e.g., adding new faculty positions in each college, supporting our ongoing assessment efforts, and implementing our new General Education Program).

That being said, I know that a teaching center, of some kind, can and should play an important role on our campus to support pedagogical innovation, professional development, and cross-disciplinary collaborations. For example, such a teaching center might support our newest colleagues who are fresh out of graduate school and who might benefit from some structured guidance with respect to course design and effective teaching methods. Or, such a teaching center might be a place for experienced faculty to collaborate with others and learn new approaches to teaching familiar topics. Or, such a teaching center might be a place to help support new campus-wide initiatives, such as our new First Year Seminars.

But before returning funds to support a teaching center, we should ensure that, in whatever form a teaching center at UWSP might take, it should reflect our values as professional educators and support faculty and instructional staff in the ways most relevant to the needs of our campus. In other words, we should ensure that our teaching center reflects what is most central to the priorities and challenges we face as professional educators.

To this end, I will be asking the CAESE Advisory Board to re-create itself and to take on the task of crafting a comprehensive strategic plan for teaching and learning at UWSP. This will not be a strategic plan for a teaching center *per se*. Rather, I will encourage this group to be both inclusive and transparent in their approach, and to assemble a framework that captures the shared values on campus related to teaching and learning. This framework should include discussion of how these values are reflected in our standards for retention, tenure, and promotion. Within this strategic plan for teaching and learning, and based on the shared values that emerge from their work, I will ask them to provide recommendations for what a teaching center might look like (how it might be staffed, what programs it would offer, etc.). In this way, I hope that we first identify our teaching and learning needs, and then proceed with planning a new teaching center that reflects our common values. In addition to providing me with regular updates regarding the progress of their work, I will also ask this group to provide regular updates to the Academic Affairs Committee.

In conclusion, I want to thank you again for your willingness to consider these and other issues during the upcoming academic year. Your work represents a very important component of UWSP: our campus community relies on exactly this kind of service each and every year to ensure continued academic success and quality academic programs for our students. Given the many significant issues before the Academic Affairs Committee this year, your efforts seem especially likely to shape the future direction of our academic programs, and the identity, of UWSP. Please know that the full support of the Office of Academic Affairs is ready to assist you in any way possible, and that we look forward to working together on behalf of UWSP and our students.