As you are aware, President Helldobler asked the Faculty Senate to provide recommended academic department reorganization criteria as augments to the ones already established. That process has been completed and the final criteria that will inform recommendations to the Dean, the Provost, and ultimately the President are these:

1. 5 or fewer full time faculty members
2. Fewer than 50 undergraduate majors
3. Fewer than 10 graduates per year
4. Number of minors
5. UCC student credit hour generation
6. Number of graduate majors
7. Financial contribution to the university

Data for the first 6 items can be obtained from University Factbooks and/or reach out to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Data and/or referral advice on the 7th item can be obtained from Meg Guenthner in Academic Affairs. To ensure that the process meets the timeline for reorganization implementation (Summer 2020), informed by the appropriate shared governance engagement on the final decision on departments reorganized, Deans are to provide me their recommendations by Monday, December 2, 2019. That timeline should enable discussion at the Faculty Senate meeting on January 28, 2020 and a final decision by President Helldobler shortly thereafter. For the remainder of the Spring term, the focus will be on the mechanics and processes for those reorganizations.

Whereas the above exercise is a structural one with resource stewardship intent, the broader goal is creative thinking around the nature of our programs and the communities and stakeholders we serve. As I have been sharing at all-college and department meetings, there
are two ways institutions differentiate themselves in the competitive higher education marketspace – by what they offer and how they offer it. In summary, institutions experiencing growth seek to align themselves internally to the needs of society externally, and in the context of declining traditional-aged students.

Having participated in a program prioritization process at my previous institution, I am intimately familiar with the anxieties that such an exercise can create. Yet, I am also familiar with the benefits that accrue. To that end, I offer the following principled thoughts:

- Whereas formalized criteria identify departmental candidates, this cannot be an exercise they are forced to do in isolation. We are a community with a common purpose who happen to have organizational constructs called departments and colleges. Dialogue should be both within and across colleges; in the latter case, Deans are positioned to assist.

- All departments regardless of size should engage in internal dialogue (a suggested set of questions that can inform are attached to this message) and invite conversation with other departments as potential synergies exist (list of programs here), some that may be with those who meet the reorganization criteria, but some that do not. What emerges could be a recommendation on reorganization that is broader than this exercise might have imagined, but might also emerge as a new way of differentiating what we offer or how we offer it in a partnered way across departments and/or colleges.

- Pursue this with an open mind. Every department has strengths and challenges. Stay focused on how to best meet the educational needs of students in an environment where faculty and staff find meaning and purpose that is rewarding and that transcend personality differences.

- The reorganization exercise is not designed to eliminate degree offerings, nor is it seeking to eliminate positions. Please let that place of comfort free you to ask tough questions and a willingness to think creatively. A next phase of this exercise can be actual curricular change and pursuing it.

- The opportunities of interdisciplinarity are strong. Furthermore, such thinking may be valuable across colleges, including with introspection on shared ownership rather than framed through the lens of a singular college. By way of example, here is a link to a short video on what Arizona State University has done. I do not share this with the inference that we should do or be what they are, but the principles that undergird are worth considering. Another source of provocative insight on the pace of change is here.

As I inferred at the onset, these are challenging times for higher education. Those institutions that concluded that there was more to fear by staying the same than by changing what they do and/or how they do it, have been ones for which positive outcomes have emerged. I look
forward to working with you through the reorganization process with both care and forthrightness. Together we can establish ways in which WP can be a leader through its departments and programs.

Sincerely,

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