

Deloitte takes on UNI efficiencies



COURTNEY COLLINS / Courier Staff Photographer
University of Northern Iowa President, Bill Ruud, left, introduces Bruce Rastetter, president of the Iowa Board of Regents, on Monday in Cedar Falls.

1 hour ago • By [Christinia Crippes](#)

CEDAR FALLS | University of Northern Iowa faculty, students and staff had an opportunity Monday afternoon to voice questions and concerns about consulting firm Deloitte's ongoing efficiency study of Iowa's three public universities.

By the time Deloitte's work is complete, the Board of Regents hopes that only one question remains: What took them so long to find cost savings?

"I think, putting my political glasses on, if we let all Iowans know what's going on here, and we let parents and the families of students and the alums of the universities ... if we do the right job of being transparent and open, the decisions will come to the regents and people will say, 'Why haven't you done this sooner?'" Regent Larry McKibben, who is leading the efficiency study committee, said at an editorial board meeting at The Courier.

McKibben, regents President Bruce Rastetter and consultants from Deloitte fielded questions about the "Rising to the Next TIER" -- transparent, inclusive efficiency review -- on the UNI campus Monday afternoon.

Deloitte's staff will remain at the campus throughout the week answering questions and getting further input about the university's operations and policies.

Once the firm leaves campus, UNI stakeholders can continue to get answers through the regents and UNI websites under the heading of "Rising to the Next TIER."

Though McKibben is confident the transparent nature of the review will lead to positive transformations across the campuses, there may be growing pains along the way.

There was uncomfortable laughter during the forum in the Maucker Union Ballroom when Deloitte was asked for examples of programs that were cut during its reviews of other state university systems across the nation.

Groans, and more uncomfortable laughter, followed when Deloitte Director Rick Ferraro said he couldn't recall any specific instances from memory.

"It's not as simple as that; it just is never that simple," Ferraro said.

Deloitte staff and the regents made clear that any savings will be reinvested at the institution that found the savings.

Rastetter said one of the challenges is to make sure the three universities are not "look-alike" institutions that are duplicating programs and services unnecessarily.

He said, however, that doesn't mean just because two campuses have a certain program that one will be cut.

He said regents have asked Deloitte for recommendations to consider when addressing whether to add duplicative programs at the institutions.

Rastetter added regents hope the study helps the public better understand the cost of each program and the benefit of each program. The regents also hope the study ensures each institution is fulfilling its strategic mission.

The regents said each proposal put forth by Deloitte to find savings will be posted on the regents website. The public will be given adequate time to review and comment on the proposed savings before any actions are taken.

McKibben said it will be six to eight months before Iowans will have a clear picture of what Deloitte proposes. The regents will then seek further public input.

“We don’t come with any preconceived notions here,” said McKibben, adding that he views this as an opportunity to continue to be a lifetime learner.

The \$2.5 million study will complete its first two phases by this fall. The Regents will vote on potential savings after seeking input from the public and the universities. Rastetter said they are not targeting a specific savings amount, but other systems have found a six- to 10-time return on the initial investment.

Though the panel faced some questions on funding equity for UNI, Rastetter said that is not under the purview of the Deloitte study.

He said regents formed a separate committee to look into the state’s funding formula for the public institutions. Regents expect to approve a proposal for the Legislature to take up during the 2015 session.

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