

Board of Regents consultant: There could be job adjustments, consolidations (Gazette/KCRG)

UI staff express concerns during public forum

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

See newscast video at the following link – <http://www.kcrq.com/subject/news/regents-schools-could-cut-jobs-programs-consultant-suggests-20140618>

Potential cuts to jobs and programs were among the concerns expressed Wednesday during a public forum on the University of Iowa campus to discuss initial findings from a Board of Regents efficiency review.

One UI staff member asked officials conducting the “transparent inclusive efficiency review” — including representatives from Deloitte Consulting, which is being paid millions to lead the study — whether faculty should expect to see program and staff consolidations in the coming months.

Rick Ferraro, a director for Deloitte Consulting, responded by saying that level of detail has not been ironed out.

“But there’s always a possibility of that, to be perfectly honest,” said Ferraro, project manager of the review.

Ferraro stressed that a lot of work to increase efficiency and cut costs can happen before consolidation, but he cannot say with certainty that there will be no adjustments in jobs.

“That would be unrealistic,” he said.

The Board of Regents last year launched its “most comprehensive efficiency study conducted in 25 years” in hopes of finding ways for its three public universities to be more viable, productive and sustainable. It hired Deloitte at an initial cost of \$2.5 million to facilitate the three-phased study, and the board agreed earlier this month to pay up to another \$1 million so Deloitte can work longer than expected on phase two.

The study’s first phase wrapped up last week, and the Board of Regents released findings from the first 10 weeks of work. Deloitte originally identified 175 possible opportunities to cut costs,

generate revenue or simply become more effective, and an efficiency review task force has chosen the 17 “most promising” opportunities to pursue further in phase two.

After implementation, which officials expect could take months or even years, Deloitte said the identified opportunities could save the universities between \$30 million and \$80 million a year.

Representatives with the consultant talked in a broad sense about some of those opportunities during Wednesday’s forum and said they’ll conduct a deeper analysis of the possible benefits, risks and potential savings in the coming weeks and months.

A handful of silent protesters sat in on the Wednesday’s discussion, holding signs that urged the Board of Regents to “Dump Deloitte” and distributing fliers that called the study “undemocratic” and a “waste of taxpayer dollars.” Jeannette Gabriel, a UI graduate student and leader of the UI’s graduate student union, called Wednesday’s forum “insulting.”

She said leaders have not been transparent about details of the potential efficiencies, and she expects staff jobs and programs will have to be cut to achieve the level of savings they’re touting.

“The idea that they can roll into Iowa and talk about sponges and cleaning supplies is insulting,” she said. “The only way we can save this kind of money is by cutting staff.”

Gabriel said Deloitte’s first-phase findings seem generic and not directly tied to Iowa’s needs.

Ferraro disputed those accusations, saying it visited each campus twice, conducted about 400 interview sessions and focus groups, met with nearly 700 people and held public forums in reaching its first-phase findings.

Moving into the second phase of the study, Deloitte visited the University of Northern Iowa on Monday, the UI on Wednesday, and it will visit Iowa State University next week.

Although meetings for the Board of Regents’ efficiency review task force have not been open to the public, Regent Larry McKibben said there will be dedicated space for updates on its work at future board meetings.

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- See more at: <http://thegazette.com/subject/news/education/higher-education/university/board-of-regents-consultant-there-could-be-job-adjustments-consolidations-20140618#sthash.vQGnPL3y.dpuf>