

UI College of Liberal Arts facing savings review this fall (Press-Citizen)

Sara Agnew, Iowa City Press-Citizen 11:07 p.m. CDT June 19, 2014

Faculty and staff from the University of Iowa's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will face more than new students this fall when they return for a new semester.

The college is the first academic area selected from the state's three public universities for closer review during the second stage of a multi-million-dollar efficiency study of the Iowa state Board of Regents system.

The review, in which work groups made up of CLAS faculty and staff will participate, is expected to begin in early September.

The announcement was made Wednesday during a town hall meeting on the UI campus where representatives from Deloitte Consulting told listeners the regents system could save between \$30 million and \$80 million if certain efficiencies and improvements were made at the state's three public universities.

Possible savings within UI's CLAS, however, were not included in the amounts quoted.

"The academic programs are the core to any university," said Gayla Kraetch, president of KH Consulting, which is subcontracting with Deloitte to conduct the academic review portion of the study. "It is a very complex area when you get into the academic areas."

Deloitte consultants are being paid more than \$3 million to review UI in Iowa City, the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls and Iowa State University in Ames. The Board of Regents — which oversees the state's public universities and two specialty schools — hired Deloitte in February at a cost of \$2.45 million to conduct the system's largest-ever efficiency study. Earlier this month, the board voted to spend up to another \$1 million for the second phase of the study, which is now underway.

Nic Arp, UI's director of strategic communications for CLAS, isn't surprised that his college was selected for deeper review.

"All undergraduates at UI do their foundational studies in our college, and about 70 percent to 75 percent go on to major in and receive their degree from our colleges," he said. "So it is natural for CLAS to be working with the efficiency consultants to continue our ongoing work."

Kraetch said the three areas designated as top priorities by the board's efficiency study task force for finding "high-impact efficiencies" across the states three universities' academic programs include:

- Collaborate to increase revenue through online and hybrid distance education degree and certificate programs, thereby expanding the universities' reach beyond the traditional student market.
- Develop strong enrollment management system-wide, such as optimal organization, faculty staffing and class size.
- Develop system-wide institutional research reporting and data sharing.

She said those will be the areas that work groups from within CLAS focus on beginning in early September. Each of the groups will include a KH consultant who will facilitate the meeting. The groups are expected to meet for two hours twice a week for a total of five meetings.

"The hope is to finish them by Thanksgiving," Kraetch said.

After that, the academic groups will present their findings to the board's efficiency study task force.

Ed Wasserman, UI professor of psychology and past president of UI Faculty Council, hopes the quality of education isn't lost in the quest to save money.

"I'd like to see as much effort put into matters of quality as into matters of efficiency," he said.

A summary of the first phase of the study was released June 11 and included eight general areas where Deloitte Consulting say it believes more efficiency and savings can be achieved. Among those areas were academic programs, use of space and student services. On Monday, a 97-page report further detailing those areas was released to the public. A regents task force selected 17 opportunities out of more 150 within the report to move forward on to save money and streamline services — 12 related to administrative improvements and five involving academics.

Virginia Fraser, Deloitte's project manager, said phase two of the study, which is expected to be completed later in the fall, will involve developing business cases for each of the 17 areas the board's task force selected for further review. Those cases will involve cost estimates, benefits and risks of implementing the proposed efficiency as well as a time line for implementation.

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