



Iowa General Assembly
Joint Education Appropriations Subcommittee
Remarks by
President Benjamin J. Allen
March 3, 2009

Thank you for this opportunity today.

We are grateful for the support the University of Northern Iowa has received in the past from the General Assembly.

I appreciate the difficult choices the Legislature is making this session.

- I am aware that higher education is not the only state-funded enterprise requiring attention.
- However, our ability to provide quality academic programs and outreach services may have the greatest bearing on Iowa's long-term future.

I. UNI serves the state well

The University of Northern Iowa's staunch commitment to undergraduate education provides tremendous return on the state's investment,

- especially in the context of Iowa's 21st century workforce concerns.
- 92% of UNI's 12,900 students are Iowa residents upon enrollment.
- More than 75% of UNI's 2007-2008 graduates took their first jobs in Iowa after graduation, an injection of almost 1600 skilled young people into our workforce annually.

UNI's contribution to economic development in Iowa is also very significant, with our Business and Community Services division serving clients in all 99 of Iowa's counties.

The Institute for Decision Making, which is housed in the Business and Community Services division, helps grow and attract new jobs and investments all over the state.

Recently, the Institute for Decision Making provided strategic leadership for the Greater Dallas County Alliance, the Midwest Partnership Corporation,

- and helped merge multiple economic development entities to create the Charles City Area Development Corporation.

MyEntreNet, an on-line community for entrepreneurs run by the UNI Regional Business Center, has amassed more than 1400 registered users in Iowa.

- Last year, 51 startup companies were formed through the MyEntreNet incubator.

UNI is a model for community outreach.

- We're very proud that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has recognized UNI with a special designation in Community Engagement, Curricular Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships.
- Our Kaleidoscope children's theatre program will reach more than 40,000 school children this year through 195 school and community organizations—at a cost of only one dollar per child.

UNI's reputation for supplying excellent teachers to our state's classrooms is well-established.

- We have the largest teacher education program in the state.
- 23% of practicing educators in Iowa are UNI graduates,
- ...as are one-third of Iowa's superintendents and principals.
- One reason UNI produces excellent teachers is that our students are taught by regular faculty instead of graduate teaching assistants.
- UNI faculty are deeply committed to a student centered approach, and our relatively small class sizes provide the opportunity for individual attention to students.

Major challenges face all levels of education in the state.

- To achieve effective, 21st century solutions for Iowa's schools, UNI and the Department of Education have proposed creating a research and development school, with participation by Iowa State University and the University of Iowa.

UNI's priority to be the state leader in pre-K through 12 education is further demonstrated by the leadership and expertise we are contributing to the development of the Iowa Core Curriculum,

- which the 2008 Legislative session required to be implemented in July of 2012 for grades 9 through 12.
- Price Laboratory School is fully engaged in addressing content, instruction, and assessment for this statewide educational transformation and providing inservice to school districts across the state.

II. Our response to reversions

Our guiding principles in responding to FY09 budget reversions focused on protecting student financial aid, campus safety, and academic programs—with respect to both quality of those programs and student progress toward graduation.

The first reversion of 1%, or \$1 million, on November 20, 2008, we responded to by

- slowing progress on Information and Technology and Security Systems,
- delaying Library purchases, and
- delaying building maintenance projects.

In responding to the second reversion of \$1.5 million on December 12, 2008,

- we covered half the amount centrally with one-time funds, and assigned half to our divisions proportionate to their share of the general fund budget.
- We closed the search for a director of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and we suspended plans to reopen the center.
- We also delayed hiring a new Assistant Provost for Information Technology,
- delayed replacement of computers, vehicles and other equipment,
- delayed building repair and maintenance,
- and lengthened the implementation of a new Student Information System.

It is distressing that each time we respond to cuts, it becomes harder to protect the programs and services that represent the core values of excellence at UNI,

- including those guiding principles I outlined earlier, and in which students and parents of Iowa have invested their trust for 133 years.

III. Our approach to future cuts

Having said that, we are preparing for FY10 cuts of at least 11 percent, which is an aggregate of all of the proposed cuts and reductions facing UNI:

- the FY09 reversion of 2.5%,
- the Governor's recommendation for a 6.5% reduction in FY10,
- and the legislative budget target cutting an additional 2% from the Governor's recommendation for FY10.

We have instituted a hiring freeze and imposed carefully-monitored restrictions on travel.

Two task forces have been created, both of which I am chairing, to bring forth recommendations on cost-containment and revenue-enhancement strategies, respectively.

UNI has always been proactive in reducing utility costs; and we have saved millions of dollars by burning a combination of coal and coke in our boilers, co-generating more than 40% of our heating and cooling.

Moving forward, we want to be as strategic as possible in long-term cost-cutting; however, meeting FY10's aggressive goals may require a more tactical approach.

- Clearly, any stimulus money we receive—even though short term—would allow us to be much more strategic with budgetary decision making during the course of the next two fiscal years.

We have and will continue to take a close look at our auxiliary enterprises, such as intercollegiate athletics, the Student Health Center, the Wellness Recreation Center, Maucker Union and the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center.

Because the university is deeply engaged in assisting the state with cultural, social and economic development, we are concerned that our outreach programs will suffer.

Providing UNI students with a sound and broadly-based education remains the core function of UNI.

- Thus, maintaining our academic core will remain the center of our thinking as we address budget reductions.
- Those reductions are extremely daunting, especially when seen in the context of the reductions we have experienced over the past six or eight years.

We have a process in place that is examining all of the academic programs in the university, and there will be programmatic efficiencies resulting from that process.

- For example, low-enrolled course sections and programs will be eliminated.
- It is probable that we will offer fewer sections of many courses, and those sections will, as a result, be larger.

The primary focus of this review process is to improve what we are doing as educators at UNI.

- It will help us to identify our very best, signature, programs as well as those programs that would benefit from reorganization to improve their quality.

I reiterate that we are firmly committed to maintaining our academic quality,

- but we cannot pretend that cuts approaching 12 percent do not threaten to encroach upon principles and priorities we have vowed to protect for our students and the future of our state.
- Nearly 80% of the budget is personnel
 - it is inevitable that we will have a loss of human capital as a result.

We are compelled to express serious concern that students, and eventually the state, will be impacted by cuts that threaten to erode essential programs and services at UNI.

Our commitment to excellence in undergraduate education has made UNI one of the best public comprehensive universities in the Midwest.

I assure you that we will do everything possible to ensure that UNI emerges from this period of economic difficulty as a strong university, with its core values intact.

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