

Response to the Clarion University Council of Trustees'
2014 Presidential Annual Review
by
Karen M. Whitney, President
July 10, 2014

Introduction

First, my thanks to The Presidential Leadership Review Committee and Trustees Chair Jim Kifer, Immediate Past Chair Trustee R. Lee James, Vice-Chair JD Dunbar (Chair of Review Committee), Secretary Milissa Bauer, and Trustees Syed Ali-Zaidi, Jeff Szumigale and Darren Young, for their many hours of service related to the review. Since joining Clarion University in July of 2010 I have come to find these regular reviews to be most thoughtful and very helpful as I work to continually improve my leadership and service to the university. I am humbled and appreciative of the confidence you have in me as evidenced by your recommendation to extend my contract through 2016.

To be sure the 2013-14 academic year will be known, as the review characterized, as a difficult year with "perilous economic shifts," underlined by a devastating decrease in funding and a period of enrollment decline. At the same time there continued to be many points of pride in the wake of a "watershed year of challenge, planning and change."

Actions Based On The Review

The Review offered several recommendations that I will incorporate into my next 500-Day Plan. Recommendations from the Review include: 1) Additional attention to communication; 2) Continued community engagement; 3) Conduct a review to clarify the priorities and goals of the Presidential Commissions; 4) Establish a more formal Employee-New Student Recruitment Partnership and; 5) Increase Alumni support of students.

Communication:

Regular and relevant communication is always an item of importance that requires a president's constant attention. This is particularly true when a university is operating during particularly difficult times. Specifically it was noted that there is a need for, "clarifying communication" regarding university policy and practices. In particular, it was suggested that there be clarifying information regarding, Responsibility Centered Management. In my next 500-Day Plan changes made to our RCM Guidelines will be clearly communicated. Changes will reflect recommendations by a campus-wide committee as well as those developed by Managers and the Leadership. Further updates on the status of the Workforce Plan will occur as well. These communications will occur in August/September.

Community Engagement:

It was noted in the Review that members of the Venango community leader groups would like to see the President more often. Since receiving this feedback I have developed a regular schedule

of attending meetings and events on and related to the Venango Campus and College. In addition, I have taken specific efforts to continue to advance civic engagement collaborations. A promising collaboration is a joint effort with the Clarion Borough called, "Blueprint Communities." The purpose of this initiative is to work to revitalize the Clarion Main Street from 2nd to 9th Avenues.

Presidential Commissions:

The review noted that employees who had served as Presidential Commission Chairs had commented that they were confused about their priorities and goals. Once being made aware of these comments, I met with the Commission Chairs in late Spring to talk about roles, purposes and priorities of the Commissions, particularly in light of a new University Diversity Strategic Plan that will be launched in the fall 2014 semester. I will be following up with the Commission Chairs and members this fall to continue to dialogue with an eye to developing an approach to the Presidential Commissions that will best ensure the successful completion of the University Diversity Strategic Plan.

Employee-Admissions Partnership:

The Review noted that representatives of APSCUF, Clarion Faculty Senate, and Venango Forum leadership had indicated an, "all time, pervasive morale low." The leadership of these groups extended their willingness to work with the President to increase student recruitment and to rebuild student enrollment. They requested, "robust and ongoing dialogue." There is great interest in developing a model that would team up faculty with admissions professionals in order to meet our desired recruitment growth. After a thorough review of our enrollment trends since 2008, a change in enrollment management leadership occurred this summer in order to better achieve our enrollment targets throughout the university. An interim Dean of Enrollment Management will join Clarion University prior to Fall 2014 and will work closely with the many constituents in order to increase all employee ownership of student recruitment and retention.

Alumni Support of Current and Prospective Students:

During the Review students suggested that they would very much value more engagement with alumni. They suggested that alumni be invited to become more involved in the lives of our prospective and current students. Since these recommendations were received I have begun discussions with the leadership of the Alumni Association to these points. It is anticipated that the Alumni Association will increase their efforts in student recruitment, career development/mentoring and job placement/networking. I will work with the Alumni Association, alumni programs, deans, and Career Services over this year to contribute to student success.

In conclusion, I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Clarion's many constituencies both on and off our campuses to advance the university's mission and goals. In doing so, I will strive to clearly communicate the challenges we collectively face while continuing to advance priorities related to student success, equity and diversity, civic engagement, engaged leadership, and financial sustainability.

c: Chancellor Frank Brogan