

## Questions for Interim Provost Molitor

### Centralized Advising

1. In the College of Engineering (COE), faculty, chairs, the co-op office and advisors currently work together to run the programs, create the professional identity, and improve the student experience for the same group of students. Centralizing advising will lower the quality of advising and further reduce our enrollment and retention. How can you maintain the flow of information and collective work towards improvement of our programs if academic advisors report to a central office disconnected from the daily and long-term challenges of running our programs?

2. The transition of Associate Director of Department Student Services (ADDSS) positions, to narrower Advisor roles will strip understaffed Departments of the much-needed professional staff support. Within the College of Engineering, for instance, ADDSS staff play vital roles beyond student advising, such as advising Department Chairs and Program Directors on curricular matters, managing student peer-mentoring groups, organizing/participating in recruitment events, supporting students emotionally, and (leveraging their personal connections with former students) connecting the Department with its alumni. Limiting their functions to advising could — by shifting these roles onto the shoulders of overworked and less-skilled-in-these-areas faculty — undermine student experience and affect recruitment and retention, especially with our already thin faculty/staff ranks. Do the benefits associated with this restructuring really outweigh the harm to they will cause to programs where the ADDSS is one of the lynchpins of the Department? If so, what are these benefits?

3. There is a rumor that the University has previously hired external consultants to study a proposal for centralizing advisors, and the consultants found that centralized advising would be a poor fit for our institution. Are these rumors true? If so, what is the motivation for discarding this recommendation?

4. From what I understand, the Administration's vision is for every Advisor to advise students across all of UToledo's programs on basic questions and refer more complex, program-specific queries to specialists. This could lead to students being bounced between staff and — since an advisor without program-specific expertise might “not know what they don't know” — could increase the risk of erroneous advice that could delay graduation and/or harm our students financially. This would not be a good look for an institution trying to stabilize its enrollment. Has this potential to harm our students (and,

ultimately, our institution's finances) been considered and adequately addressed by the Administration's plan?

5. Some in my College have heard that the advisor centralization is expected to reduce the number of advisors from approximately 50 to 40 through attrition. From the conversation I have had, the people we will likely lose are some of our best ones, e.g., a highly qualified Director of Student Services in a professional program with deep discipline-specific curriculum knowledge and strong departmental relationships will view the change in their job title to "Advisor" (and being torn from their home Department) as a demotion and seek opportunities elsewhere. This is especially true given that what the University or its students stand to gain from this move has not been clearly articulated to the University community. Has the Administration considered the potential for losing these top, front-line staff members in their decision to restructure advising?

6. Centralization of advisors raises many concerns. For example, many advisors are overworked, and it seems that Centralization will only add more work to them - are you planning to get more advisors to do centralization without damaging the advisory's core missions? Also, advisors need to specialize in a program to provide accurate advice to students and communicate meaningfully with faculty regarding exceptional cases of students - how can this specialization and communication be maintained?

7. Student service directors at COE are like nurses who directly interact and support students' need at frontlines. They are also involved in our recruitment, alumni relationship and other activities in addition to advising students. The centralized mentoring will not support retention and student learning and experience. Please leave the working system alone. Instead, please try to fix the broken leadership and administration problems as well as enrollment issues.

#### Program Prioritization

1. Does the administration plan to continue cutting humanities programs? Is it willing to consider rescinding the recent elimination of some degrees (e.g., in foreign languages)?

2. Which programs are the target of prioritization this AY?

3. Is the administration willing to consult the faculty and solicit their participation in decisions that result in major changes in academic programs?

4. Now that morale has been destroyed by a year's worth of constant handwringing about a \$17 million deficit and, mysteriously, a surplus of funding was put to use over the summer for the medical side of the house, what is the plan to invest in the academic side of the house?

5. What are your thoughts on departments as they currently stand? Possible combinations or reductions? If so, which ones are you thinking?

#### Academic Quality/Integrity

1. Past administrations have failed to recognize/articulate the value of stabilizing/strengthening academic programs in budget management. Academic programs and their quality are the products we are selling to students and parents. Focusing exclusively on cutting cost and marketing/branding in budget management is shortsighted as it ignores the main reason why students go to universities. That is to get a high quality, marketable education. Efforts to enhance marketing/branding without a specific plan to strengthen academic programs seems pointless. At present, the administration appears to think that students/parents should pay a high price for an inferior product. What is your plan for strengthening academic programs?

2. According to the Interim President, the University has invested \$600,000 into the Art & Science Group's consulting engagement with us. Their report indicated we can transform our student recruitment and overall morale by (1) centering our identity around innovation and creativity (with the emphasis being on those specific words, rather than just offering "hands on" learning experiences), (2) promoting career-forward credentialing pathways, and (3) strengthening/emphasizing engagement with our surrounding communities. Their findings also indicated that, to achieve their full effect, these recommendations must be implemented both swiftly and boldly. Are we adopting these recommendations? If so, what specific steps are being taken at this time?

3. Has the Provost's office considered moving away from open-enrollment admissions, toward a higher-standard of admissions? If so, what has been discussed and considered?

4. When I have asked around campus about who is the Chief Academic Officer of The University of Toledo, the default answer I have received is that it's the Provost. With that being said, the first question is: How many academicians are currently working in the Provost's office? As a follow-up to that question, and in regard to restructuring the Provost's office, how will the Provost restructure the office to include more academicians that can better oversee our academic mission?

5. How many faculty members have been lost in the last five years, and how does this affect UToledo's academic mission?

6. What are your views on accountability for administrators for their actions. Will there be a process to hold them accountable?

a. Decline in enrollment—no consequences

- b. No endowments—Still will get performance bonus
- c. Admin without appropriate background experiences, prior poor evaluations, and/or education were asked to lead units—declined enrollment and bad reputation.
- d. Only faculty are evaluated every semester and year (and five years) not the staff, deans, and other administration. Our students are frustrated by the lack of communication (to their emails) and meaningful engagement from staff and administrators.
- i. Do you agree that there should be an annual evaluation of all staff and admin. and consequences?

7. Can you summarize the research support activities lost or had reduced capacity in the last five years, and how does this affect UToledo's research mission?

8. What is your view requiring all administrators teach one to two courses a semester. This will help a lot in recruiting, helping students get a better education, and also the admin. understanding students' problem before it is too late. More importantly will help cut some admin. costs.

9. We have no idea about what administrators do during the summer months. There are no classes/students/faculty. No reports are provided on what is being achieved during the summer months by having the administrators (at all levels) on campus. Maybe have a staggered workload to reduce admin. costs and provide for education/instruction of students should be considered.

#### Reorganization and Budget

1. In planning for the FY24 budget, academic affairs was required to address a budget reduction of over \$20 million, this past June when UT closed the FY24 budget there was a \$20 million surplus.

Is it effective budget planning to make such large budget cuts that impact the essential key mission of the institution, only to see the resulting budget to end up positive when those funds could have been used to support important academic programs and services for our students?

2. What are/have been the financial impacts of the reorganization of several different administrative offices that have been moved under the direct purview of the Provost's office? What do you expect to see happen differently under the administrative reorganization that has occurred?

3. The previous model of asking colleges to cut budgets significantly affected programs that had many faculty retire during the past three-four years. This was because the admin. closed those lines and met the required budget cuts. This has affected the quality of

instruction in some programs and students were/are agitated. Now recruiting is a problem because of the word out there is we are here for the “students’ money” and not for their education.

4. Mine is a request more than a question. I teach graduate students only and would appreciate, even if it is quick...this applies to undergrad only comment, if admin, to include Provost, President, Deans, and so on would clarify who they mean. It is difficult to know how graduate students are contributing or not to the financial strength or weakness of the university and how we as graduate faculty might help. We as grad faculty, or at least in my program, recruit, advise and so on...

#### Dean Searches

Which dean searches will be done this year? What is the anticipated time frame for the dean searches? What will be the composition of the committee?

#### Community Engagement

I don’t see any community engagements by the university like BGSU does. Can the buildings, instead of being destroyed, be repurposed into some community hubs/activity centers.