Date:

To: Perry Brown, Provost
    Liz Putnam, President, Faculty Senate

From: Royce C. Engstrom, President

Subject: Academic Alignment and Innovation

I am requesting that the Provost, the Faculty Senate, and the Academic Deans work together to design and implement an Academic Alignment and Innovation Program (AAIP). The purpose of the AAIP is to examine our portfolio of academic programs, identifying both opportunities to strengthen existing programs and opportunities for new programs that are consistent with our mission and strategic plan, *Building a University for the Global Century*.

Specifically, please address the following areas:

1. Because our mission is grounded in the liberal arts, how do we ensure that the liberal arts are central to today’s higher education and how should we communicate the importance of the liberal arts to prospective students, parents, teachers, and the general public?

2. Design a process for identifying programs across campus that are challenged by low enrollment or perception of relevance. For those programs, what can we do to strengthen them and make them more attractive to today’s students? It is possible that you will identify programs that are no longer viable, but that is not the primary purpose of the project.

3. What existing undergraduate, graduate, or professional programs present distinctive opportunities for growth or strengthening because they are already in high student demand and have strong placement opportunities?

4. What programs are not yet present on campus, but should be, given our mission and the opportunities that those programs present?

5. What new or expanded opportunities exist for interdisciplinary, international, and on-line offerings?

I strongly recommend that the AAIP begin with a review of the excellent work done by the Work Group on Academic Programming last summer and fall. In particular, that Work Group recommended growth in the areas represented in point 5 above.

Please present a report of how you will conduct the work of the AAIP by the end of this spring semester along with a timeline for the work itself.

You may ask how can we undertake such an examination when our budget is under stress. I believe we must take a long view of our programming, planning for many years ahead and ensuring that we have an academic portfolio that is optimal for our institution during the next decade. Our decisions about finite resources will require a good understanding of our academic opportunities. Indeed, our enrollment will
depend upon an academic portfolio that is attractive, challenging, and of world-class quality.

I hope that you see this work as a way to strengthen the University, to provide an even more vibrant education to future students, and to grow the impact of our research and scholarship. I am happy to talk with you in more detail after you have had the chance to discuss this with your colleagues.

Thank you in advance for your work on this important project.