

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Chicago • Springfield • Urbana-Champaign

Office of the President
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September 22, 2006

Members, University Senates Conference

Dear Colleagues,

The University of Illinois is mission driven. As a public university with a strong land-grant heritage, we have an obligation to provide broad access to our educational resources. Today, that access is urgently needed. The economic and social future of the country is at risk because there is a large and growing gap between the percentage of Americans who finish high school and those who get a college degree. Last month, the Department of Education Commission on the Future of Higher Education issued its report addressing the crucial issues confronting colleges and universities: student access to college, cost and affordability, the quality and value of higher education, and institutional accountability. This report has articulated important and urgent challenges for American higher education, which the Global Campus initiative can help address in substantive and meaningful ways. Now is the time for the University of Illinois to step forward as a leader.

We thank you for engaging us in fruitful discussions about the Global Campus as the vision for this new entity evolved during the past academic year. Your advice and constructive suggestions helped shape the plan described in the Final Report of the Global Campus Task Force. We also appreciate this opportunity to respond to your letter of September 6 in which you raise concerns about the Global Campus academic plan, the involvement of tenure system faculty, and shared governance.

Academic Plan: It is essential that the Global Campus academic plan meet our high standards of excellence. As you know from our ongoing discussions, the Global Campus will focus primarily on developing and offering baccalaureate degree completion programs (last 60-80 credit hours), master's degrees, and certificate programs that can lead to a master's degree. These programs will be offered primarily, but not solely, via the Internet. One of us (Chet) is now consulting with deans and provosts on the Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign campuses to determine what potential programs they would like to consider developing in collaboration with the Global Campus. This is just the first step in the selection process that includes conducting a detailed market analysis for each candidate program and then developing a business plan to demonstrate its financial viability. So far we have identified about a dozen academic programs that the

campuses are interested in exploring but have only completed discussions with about a third of our deans.

The academic plan will evolve in two stages. Initially, all programs will be developed in collaboration with the Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign campuses. U of I tenure system faculty would design the programs, work with Global Campus course designers to develop the online courses, establish the admissions requirements for the students and establish the credentials of the instructors who teach the courses. U of I tenure system faculty would also provide program oversight, including periodic program evaluation, and be encouraged to teach Global Campus courses. In fact, we would like to develop financial incentives that would make it attractive for U of I faculty to participate.

All programs developed in partnership with the campuses must receive the approval of the campus provost and are subject to the high campus academic standards and senate approval processes. While the Global Campus will enroll the students and collect the tuition, the students will be regarded as campus students and the campus will award their degrees. If the program is a new one, not currently offered by the campus, the Board of Trustees and IBHE must also approve the program before it can be offered. In other words, all existing campus, University, and IBHE governance procedures apply.

In addition, it is planned for the Global Campus to establish a nine-member Academic Council with tenure system faculty representation from the three campuses to address a variety of academic and student issues and provide advice to the Global Campus leadership. We welcome nominations from the University Senates Conference, as well as from the provosts. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin assembling a precursor to the Council to provide advice as the startup team continues its work throughout the fall semester. Your early attention to such nominations would be especially helpful.

Involvement of Tenure System Faculty: The involvement of U of I tenure system faculty is a key aspect of the Global Campus, which would substantially differentiate it from competitors. Indeed, we expect many U of I tenure system faculty will teach Global Campus courses. At the same time, it is anticipated that practitioner instructors, who are hired part time, also will teach. The goal is for class size to be kept small (less than 25 students per class, with an average class size of 20 or less) to promote student-student and student-instructor interaction. All instructors would be required to complete an online teaching certification course before they can teach, they will be mentored by experienced online instructors, and their teaching effectiveness will be evaluated on a regular basis. U of I tenure system faculty from the partnering academic units will provide regular and ongoing oversight.

During this initial stage, the Global Campus will be providing resources and services to campus academic units to assist them with online course design, program delivery, and marketing. The Global Campus leadership will also begin working with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association to achieve regional accreditation. When accreditation occurs, the Global Campus will begin to offer programs and grant degrees under its own auspices (subject to applicable University

policies). It is anticipated that development of new programs would occur only if the Global Campus is unable to enlist the collaboration of one of the campus units in developing and supporting the program. Furthermore, the Global Campus will maintain existing program partnerships with campuses as long as the programs are financially viable and the partnering units are willing to provide oversight.

In this mature phase, the Global Campus will employ full-time core faculty to develop programs and address major teaching responsibilities. The Task Force envisioned awarding multi-year contracts to the core faculty, without tenure. However, this issue would benefit from further discussion. If there are sound academic reasons for providing a tenure track for some core faculty and acceptable requirements can be developed that are compatible with the Global Campus mission and University tenure guidelines, we should consider this option.

Shared Governance: Ultimately, a solid and effective shared governance plan will be required for the Global Campus to maintain its high standards of excellence and to achieve independent accreditation. This governance system (which could augment or replace the Academic Council) must meet the HLC standards for online institutions and be compatible with U of I policies. Designing the governance structure is a complicated issue because the Global Campus will continue partnering with the Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign campuses on many academic programs after it is independently accredited.

Ongoing Consultation: Following the release of the Task Force Report in July, we received many comments from the University community, as well as external stakeholders. We are pleased that all three of the campus senates have arranged opportunities for us to discuss the Global Campus more broadly with the faculty this fall. These senate organized forums will provide additional opportunities for us to clarify the vision for the Global Campus, to answer questions from our faculty, and to engage the faculty in the continued planning and implementation of the Global Campus. Your help in arranging these forums is appreciated.


Several key academic issues require early attention and formal faculty input. First, should some of the Global Campus core faculty be eligible for tenure? If so, how could tenure requirements be developed so they are consistent with University tenure guidelines, yet also recognize the unique mission of the Global Campus, which is focused primarily on education not research? Second, how can the Global Campus leaders work productively with the University Senates Conference and existing senates to design a governance process that ensures academic quality, is compatible with University policies and adheres to the standards mandated by the Higher Learning Commission for online institutions? We seek your advice on how we can work together to answer these important questions.

These two issues must be resolved before the Global Campus receives accreditation. They will be key factors in securing the formal support from the campus senates, the USC, and the chancellors for the Global Campus to award degrees under its own auspices as an

accredited institution within the University of Illinois System. However, resolution of these issues need not delay the first stage startup activities described earlier in this letter, which need to occur in order to fully plan and develop the academic programs and other features of the Global Campus. Fortunately, we have time to do a thorough job and get it right for the University of Illinois. We suggest setting a two-year goal of resolving these issues by December 2008.

We thank you for your advice and appreciate your commitment to making the Global Campus a success. We look forward to continued discussions with you as the initiative progresses.

Sincerely,



B. Joseph White
President



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