Remarks to the Iowa Board of Regent on the FY2011 Proposed Budget

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Because of effective cuts to their salaries resulting from furloughs, cuts to their retirement benefits, and increases in the cost of medical insurance, it has been a depressingly and demoralizing year for ISU’s faculty personally. Cuts to the university budget, including the 10% reversion last fall, have also taken a professional toll on the faculty. Course loads and class sizes have increased because faculty who have retired or resigned have not been replaced while the number of students on campus increased. Some departments and academic programs are being downsized, merged and, in some cases, possibly eliminated. University support for graduate students, especially teaching assistants, has declined. Support for routine faculty work-related activities has significantly decreased as departmental operating budgets were slashed, and faculty are increasingly operating without such basics as phone and copy services. Faculty development programs have been eliminated or slashed. Needless to say, faculty morale is very low. Nevertheless, faculty productivity has increased both in teaching and research. External research funding this year is at an all time high.

Like other Iowans, faculty accepted the need to share in the burden of getting through the Great Recession. They feel fortunate that they are not as badly off as some of their colleagues in other states. Now that the recession appears to over, however, they are looking forward to better, or at least more normal times, both personally and professionally. To this end, the faculty expect that three things will happen:

1) The restoration of the university’s 2:1 match to TIAA-CREF benefits. This is viewed as essential if we are to stay competitive in hiring new faculty and to retain existing faculty.

2) No more furloughs or other de facto pay cuts.

3) At least a modest increase in salaries that will enable us to keep up with inflation. Salaries at ISU continue to be among the lowest in our peer group. This year the salary gap between ISU and the peer university with the highest salary increased for all faculty ranks. The largest gap is for full professors whose average ISU salaries are $18,400 lower, an increase of $1,400 over last year. Unless ISU does something to improve the salaries of its full professors, many of them will be hired away by other institutions.