Remarks to BoR

Regents and guests, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to provide an Iowa State University faculty perspective on our compensation for FY2014. From the document I provided, you can see that the university is rebounding from the recession in replacing faculty lost, while at the same time experiencing unprecedented growth, especially in undergraduate student numbers. Three main things are on the minds of ISU faculty: how we maintain and enhance the quality of students’ educational experiences as the growth in student numbers outpaces growth in faculty numbers, how to maintain and enhance our capabilities and excellence as scholars in the face of certain near-term decline in federal research funding, and to help Iowa be the best it can be.

Faculty members are submitting greater numbers of research proposals. I see faculty embracing the need for more teamwork, forming larger and more agile collaborative groups in response to recent institutional excellence initiatives. I meet with a group of 6-8 faculty colleagues across 5-7 departments every Friday at 4pm to talk about our research: how to prevent diarrheal and inflammatory bowel diseases by understanding gut bacteria, diet, the intestine and the immune system. It’s especially exciting to help a new colleague who expert in engineering and intestinal stem cells, prepare his first ISU grants.

Faculty members are teaching more students, which requires hard work to find innovative ways to keep track of how we know that students are learning what we expect them to. A recent college learning outcomes assessment meeting showed how faculty embrace this challenge. Each department and program is taking a different, meaningful approach to students learning critical thinking.

Those of us who have Extension responsibilities and other community-minded faculty are helping Iowa businesses, communities and families to thrive. For example, helping communities to be more “walkable”, and understanding and preventing hunger helps Iowa to become the healthiest state.

The concept of “thriving”, proposed for student development by Laurie Schreiner and colleagues at Azusa Pacific University may also be applied to faculty—our intense engagement in our work, our determination to succeed, the value we place on diversity and on making a difference, our positive attitudes, and the deep connections we have with others, providing and receiving support. Our ability to thrive as faculty members is core to the university’s progress.

The faculty members of Iowa State University appreciate and need your continued support. We know that the work we do is of immense value to our students, our academic fields, and our state. The tangible support of your recommendation for faculty salary increases helps us and our state to thrive. Thank you.