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University Update - April 2019

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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April 16, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I am still coming down from our wonderful historic weekend! I was honored by the inaugural events. The main point of concern for me over the weekend – throwing out the first pitch at the baseball game – seemed to go fine! The Gala was even more impressive. It really was Otterbein's best on display.

Of course, these things take a huge amount of work and planning. I'd like to thank Kristi Robbins, Mike McGreevey, and Matthew D'Oyly, for spearheading the inaugural festivities along with the inauguration committee, which included Kaitlyn Brooks, Steve Crawford, Gina Calcamuggio, Willie Franklin, Jackie Haverkamp, Selena LaBair, Meredith Marshall, Colette Masterson, Roberto Ponce, Kate Reagan, Donna Rhodeback, and Dana Viglietta. The whole Advancement and Theater departments were engaged in the Gala, so a huge thanks to them as well!

April is a busy time on campus, so there are plenty of updates which I will try to keep brief. Feel free to follow-up if you want details.

Enrollment

Signs for the fall are encouraging. Let's hope I didn't just jinx us. Confirmations are up by 16% and stand at 375 new students as of April 12. Adult and transfer students are up by 5%, though it is very early for that group. Traditional transfers are up more than 100% (+11) and Adults are down 9 (-32%). Continuing student registrations are up slightly.

The new student numbers are probably related to timing with Easter, so we will not stay that far ahead of last year's as we get closer to the May 1 priority deadline. It seems our new initiatives are also working, with confirmations from Pell eligible students (served by the Opportunity Scholarship) up by 31%. Likewise, we think the Tuition Transparency program is helping to drive a 17% increase in confirmation for middle and high income students.

Annual Fund

Our budget relies on at least \$800,000 of unrestricted giving through the Annual Fund. We have raised about \$520,000, which is about 20% off last year's pace. We have seen a great deal of turnover in the Advancement Office and there may be some campaign-fatigue coming out of the successful Stand Campaign. Regardless, our staff is working hard to meet the goal by June 30 and every gift counts (including yours!).

Budget Development

As we shared at a recent town hall, the FY20 is coming together and will be presented to the Board at the end of the month. It maintains the same bottom-line deficit in our multi-year plan (\$2.4 million, down from \$4.2 million projected in FY19) and accounts for an increase in tuition discount and savings from health insurance costs, debt service (no new debt from Campus Center), and workers' compensation insurance. It also fully funds the second year of equity adjustments in our compensation plan.

Compensation Study Appeals Process

Speaking of our compensation plan, I am pleased to share that the staff paygrade assignment appeals process has been completed. Of the original 267 positions that were reviewed and assigned to paygrades through the compensation study, we received 38 appeals. There were 20 appeals granted with 6 resulting in pay increases. Human Resources is working with Cabinet to schedule meetings with individuals who submitted appeals to share their individual results within the next few weeks.

Income Share Agreements

At the same town hall noted above, Jefferson Blackburn-Smith shared some conceptual ideas about Income Share Agreements. These are gaining in popularity in higher education, but are not yet offered by any institutions in Ohio. They would provide students with funding now in exchange for a fixed percentage of their income for up to ten years after graduation. It acts like a student loan in many respects, but is not a loan. The percentage means there is no expectation of dollar-for-dollar repayment. Those in lower paying jobs pay less than those in higher paying jobs.

It is attractive to some because it is the institution putting "skin in the game" for student outcomes. We only get paid if they get a job! It is also attractive for students who are unable to take traditional loans.

We are considering trying this in a limited way for students with religious prohibitions against debt, DACA students who do not qualify for federal loans, and students looking to support a study abroad or Five Cards experience. We also need to be cautious because we forgo revenue now in exchange for payment later. We are considering \$250,000, which would fund up to 50 students.

We are just exploring this interesting new concept, so feedback is welcome.

Professional Development Non-credit Programs

We have been working to offer more programs that are short-term and professional-development oriented. These are often non-credit bearing and directed at working adults who want some additional education in certain areas. While not credit-bearing, the Curriculum Committee has reviewed and approved such courses. We will launch the first of these programs in the fall. We hope to be the out-sourced professional development partner for many mid-to-large corporations, giving us a steady stream of participants.

An opportunity has arisen to partner with Alloy, which is a consulting company working with Fortune-1000 companies. Alloy staff have been a part of MBA classes and appreciate Otterbein's brand for quality programs. We are discussing partnering to offer Otterbein professional-development programs in many of their client companies. This could be an exciting way to launch Otterbein as a leader in a truly new educational space.

This is another initiative in its early stages, so look for additional information from Budget and Curriculum Committees.

Student Affairs

With Bob Gatti's retirement as Vice President and Dean for Student Affairs effective June 30, I have been spending time with the Student Affairs Directors thinking about the future. We are very fortunate to have an outstanding Student Affairs staff and program. While we will miss Bob, I know this group will continue their amazing work for our students.

I have decided to fill the role on an interim basis for next academic year and anticipate a winter/spring national search for a permanent VP. Dawn Stewart will be Interim Vice President for Student Affairs effective July 1. She has the respect and admiration of everyone in Student Affairs and I know she will do an outstanding job. Dawn will remain Athletic Director during this period and many in the Athletics Department will be stepping up to help out, especially Connie Richardson who will be assuming greater administrative duties.

Julie Saker, who has been our outstanding Associate Dean of Students, will become Interim Dean of Students and further support Dawn and others by taking greater responsibilities for student life matters.

Being "down a person," especially a legend like Bob Gatti, will be a challenge for everyone in Student Affairs next year. I am grateful to Dawn, Julie, Connie and everyone for their willingness to step into new roles and ensure our students receive the same outstanding support they always have.

Senior Vice President

Finally, I have asked Wendy Sherman Heckler to assume the title of Provost and Senior Vice President. I strongly believe that the Provost's position is my key partner in strategic leadership of the institution. I know Wendy is liked and respected across campus and will be able to lead us well from this new role. While this does not change any reporting relationships, you will see Wendy take leadership in cross-functional issues and step in for me when I am traveling or otherwise unavailable. I am thankful we have someone like Wendy to take this on. Please congratulate her if you see her!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Comerford", written in a cursive style.

John Comerford, Ph.D.
President