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### University Update - March 2019

Academic Affairs

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March 12, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Last week's Spring Break means we are halfway through the semester! Whether you were away from campus or catching up at the office, I hope it was a productive one as we look forward to finishing the academic year strong! I used the time to visit some of our alumni and donors. It is always an uplifting experience to talk to those who believe in the work we are doing.

### Budgeting

Our operating and capital budgets for next year are currently under development. Vice Presidents and Cabinet members have worked with the Budget Office to build the budget. The first draft of the budget will be reviewed by Cabinet on March 13<sup>th</sup>, the Budget Committee on March 28<sup>th</sup>, and at a Town Hall for those interested on April 8<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. in Roush Hall 114 before it is submitted to the Board for approval at the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Likewise, we have a draft priority list for capital projects that the Budget Committee is reviewing. There is also a Town Hall for all to give feedback on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Of note, in the draft capital budget is a significant contingency fund of about \$400,000. There are certainly lots of current needs, but we are holding back on this allocation in anticipation of some work on houses as we shuffle some of their purposes. Part of these house changes may include Otterbein leasing space that would allow us to move several offices out of houses that were never meant to be working spaces. This is all just a possibility at the moment.

We want to be transparent and believe how we spend our money should reflect our shared priorities, which includes funding the compensation plan. I would also note that the future budget process will likely be different as we link to our new strategic planning process.

### Strategic Planning

Speaking of which, we will end Otterbein's current strategic plan next year. We should all be proud of the many new programs, facilities, and other efforts that went from plan-to-reality in this period.

I will work with a small group of volunteers from the Planning Committee to lay out a process to build the new plan. This small group will not draft a plan, but just focus on process. I would imagine a series of working groups, campus meetings, retreats, etc. over the summer and fall to jump-start the actual plan creation.

I have offered some overarching thoughts on strategic planning as we start this process. First, the plan must link to the budget. To make plans without aligning resources is just a waste of time. Second, the

plan must make choices. There will be more good ideas than we can pursue. We will need to say “no” to some to ensure we make real progress on the prioritized projects. Finally, I would want to make sure any plan balances sustaining our current programs (academic, co-curricular, support, etc.) with the need for new innovation. To err on one side or the other would be a mistake.

#### Kilgore Property

As you may know, the Kilgore property (where the Austin E. Knowlton Equine Science Center is located) was once the site of a cap gun factory and World War II munitions plant. While the site poses no immediate danger (to people or horses) for recreational use, there is a 40-acre section that is contaminated by waste from the prior industrial use. We have been working with the Environmental Protection Agency on a clean-up plan.

The plan is coming together quickly and includes an estimated \$2.4 million of remediation and additional professional expenses, of which the EPA would pay half. Otterbein would pay the other half and associated legal fees. This would be neutral on our balance sheet, as we already record a \$1.8 million liability for the cleanup. It would, however, affect our cash reserves.

#### Grant Work

We have retained the services of McAllister and Quinn to support efforts to get large grants. They have a record of success at other institutions in attracting large six-figure or seven-figure grants. Examples from other institutions include public/private partnerships, NSF grants, TRIO programs, and others that have a complexity that their expertise can help us navigate. Diane Nance and Bridgette Cahalin in the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs will continue their work, plus support this new initiative, so I’m very thankful to them!

#### United Methodist Church

Last, but certainly not least, the results of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church have been weighing on my mind. You have seen our statement – the Church’s unfortunate decision to take an exclusionary and discriminatory path does not and will not affect Otterbein’s continued commitment to inclusivity and social justice.

Chaplain Dr. Judy Guion-Utsler will share more specifics at a Town Hall on a date to be announced soon. What should Otterbein do now? Leave our affiliation with the Church or stay and try to be an agent of change from within? Hope that the many churches who share our values eventually organize and allow us to affiliate with a new form of the Methodism? Join with other UMC-affiliated universities to coordinate our efforts? This will be an important topic as we head towards our April Board meeting.

Regardless of our specific response, I believe we can all relish in the opportunity to stand proud for what Otterbein has always been – a college of opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

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

John Comerford, Ph.D.  
President