July 15, 2019

To the Campus Community,

It is my pleasure to share with you this summary of accomplishments, key discussion topics and division updates following our Spring Board of Trustees meetings June 19-21, 2019.  Many of these topics also were addressed during the Spring All Employees Meeting on June 6, 2019.

With the annual Heritage Society Dinner and Alumni Weekend occurring concurrently with the Board meeting, Trustees took advantage of several opportunities to engage in meaningful ways with alumni and the campus community.  One of the highlights was presenting our 2019 Trustee Distinguished Service Award to Mr. John Kratz, ’63.  John (along with his recently deceased wife, Bev) has given so much of his time, heart, and resources to his beloved 'Berg over the years.

Three alumni were approved to serve on the Board – Mr. Dale Chorba, ’85; Dr. Karen Kovalow-St. John, ’79; and Mr. Paul Stallings, ’79 – whose terms officially begin this fall.  We were pleased to welcome all three of them to campus for the various festivities throughout the weekend.  I look forward to the contributions, expertise, leadership, vision, and energy each of them will bring to the Board and I appreciate their willingness to serve Heidelberg in this important role.

One of the most important topics that we discussed with the Board throughout the three days of meetings was our imperative to build sustainable student enrollment and balance our Operating Budget.  We had lots of conversation about our need to reprioritize our resources and programs to reposition Heidelberg to be stronger in the higher education marketplace.  The Board expressed strong support for our ongoing Operating Budget Strategic Prioritization process that is reviewing all revenue sources and operating costs to improve our delivery of a quality education to our students.  As shared through other communication to the campus recently, our mandate is to cap our FY 2019-2020 Operating Budget deficit at –$500,000.  Our budget must be balanced in FY 2021.  This work is progressing through the summer.  I have full confidence that we will achieve these financial goals and continue to strengthen Heidelberg for our students.

Institutional Accomplishments

* Our 2019 Commencement culminated in a projected 51-53% four-year graduation rate, pending final summer term courses.  This is the first time in the last 30 years that we have surpassed 50%!
* We have begun to implement our USDA Financial Capitalization Plan.  With the closing and signing of the loan documents in June, we look forward to getting started on France Hall, the Townhouse Apartments, and the Video Game Production Lab and eSports Gaming Room very soon.
* Construction has been completed and The HeidelBean! is now open for business.
* The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is forming this summer and will begin its important work in the fall.  Huge thanks go to Ms. Cherrelle Gardner, Dr. Courtney DeMayo Pugno, Ms. Rebecca Taylor, Dr. Ellen Nagy, Mr. Douglas Stoll and Dr. DoHee Kim-Appel for their work over the past year to formalize the committee.
* We have joined the CIC Online College Consortium to offer a menu of online courses to our students.
* The Sarah Street renovation project is progressing and should be completed in August.

 Key Discussion Topics and Update

The Operating Budget Strategic Prioritization process, and specifically the preliminary FY 2019-2020 Operating Budget, dominated discussion from **Administration and Business Affairs**.  Additionally, the Committee discussed the USDA loan and the interim financing process as well as construction management for USDA loan-funded capital projects.  Moving into FY 2020, we have eliminated seven faculty and Academic Affairs administrative positions vacated by retirements and departures.  This represents a savings of approximately $650,000 permanently.  We have a lot of difficult but achievable work ahead in the Strategic Budgeting Prioritization process to establish a balanced budget in FY 2021.

The **Enrollment Management** Team continues to work toward the 350 new and 35 transfer student goals in the fall.  We are gearing up to promote a sharper Heidelberg “value and affordability” message during the upcoming year.  The division launched a digital advertising campaign in March to build brand awareness and improve admissions yield.  Ideally, it will help us attract more female and non-athlete students by communicating our new academic offerings and complementary programs such as HYPE Career Ready® and the PlusOne Advantage® Tuition-Free Scholarship Program more effectively.  Director of Admission Tom Alexander has realigned the team to work more closely with the faculty in their academic areas to focus more on our stronger academic programs.

The **Academic Affairs** Leadership Team continues its work with Faculty to revamp and revitalize the General Education requirements by Fall 2020.  As part of the update on ASIIP initiatives, Gen Ed models under consideration were discussed.  The Committee also heard a review of key assessments in place for continual review of academic quality, discussed internships and strategies to increase these opportunities for our students, and received updates from the Strategic Retention Committee, the Owen Center, and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

In **Student Affairs**, work continues to strengthen and improve HYPE Career Ready®, New Student Orientation, Multicultural Student Affairs, and Athletics and student retention in collaboration with Academic Affairs.  With HYPE, the team is working on documentation of the critical student learning outcomes as well as additional funding for the program.  There was also Committee discussion about the new student housing that will be ready by Fall 2020.

**Human Resources** continues to work closely with Academic Dean Bryan Smith and our new Chemical/Lab Operations Specialist, Mr. Bob Fruth, to address all of our lab safety issues and implement the SafeX Chemical Hygiene Plan.  Chief Human Resources Officer & Title IX Coordinator Margaret Rudolph is awaiting U.S. Department of Education Title IX new final regulations, anticipated to be released sometime this summer.  The Board’s Governance Committee reviewed the Board By-Laws and recommended grammatical and verbiage updates to align with current practice and University documents.  Finally, we are exploring employee health insurance alternatives with a sub-committee of several Trustees with industry experience.

The Turf, Track & Field project funding is now complete, with naming rights awarded to the Hieronymus family.  A dedication ceremony will be planned this fall.  We also expect total cash giving to increase this year and the brand marketing of our best enrollment programs to keep improving.  That is the good news from **University Advancement & Marketing**.  At the same time, VP Phil Ness has reported mixed fund-raising results, with The Heidelberg Fund running behind last year’s total and below goal, and the erosion of alumni participation rates.  Also, the team is in training as they prepare to launch iModules, a new online presence for alumni that will streamline email communication and simplify online giving.

Finally, Chair Kathy Geier led the Board in expressing its tremendous appreciation, respect, and gratitude to Trustee and former Chair Sondra Libman, who has retired from the Board following 21 years of extraordinary service.  Several Trustees shared their warmest feelings about Sondra.  She has been outstanding in so many ways, both to me personally and to the alma mater that she loves so deeply.  I would not have made it 10 years without her excellent leadership and commitment to making Heidelberg successful, her incredible generosity, advising, and coaching, and especially her kindness and friendship.  Thank you, Sondra.  Your work was meaningful.  You made a difference.

In about six weeks, we will welcome the arrival of new students and our 170th academic year will be here.  I hope that all of you have opportunities to relax and recharge during the summer months as we get ready to embrace our institutional passion for student success, become better and better at enabling our students to graduate in four years, and measure the financial results most closely tied to our core student mission.

Keep up the great work for Heidelberg!  Together, we will meet the needs of our students and guide them forward successfully.

Sincerely,

Rob Huntington
President