

September 5, 2008

Dear Colleagues:

Greetings and best wishes for the new academic year! I am pleased and excited to be here, and I look forward to meeting and working with you.

As part of my introduction to WSU, I have spent most of my first four weeks on extended visits to colleges. To date, I have visited seven colleges and the Libraries. I will complete my college visits in September. I appreciate the warm welcome that I have received, the knowledge that I have gained about the mission and accomplishments of each unit, and the opportunity that I have had to open a dialogue about significant University issues. I believe strongly in the values of transparency, openness, and self-governance, and I hope this will soon become evident to all of you.

The current state of the economy suggests that we may well face budgetary challenges over the next few years. Nevertheless, internal reallocations resulting from savings generated by the Academic Affairs Program Prioritization process (A2P2) will allow us to undertake a number of important initiatives. And, as we go about the process of defining these initiatives, I want you to know that I will be mindful of the fact that universities consist of both people and programs. I will make every effort to take better care of the people here, while working to develop new and innovative programs. I hope to work with all of you to foster an environment in which every faculty member and every undergraduate, graduate and professional student can succeed.

As a first step toward accomplishing this goal, I am pleased to announce the following policies, funded in part by reallocations from the A2P2 process, are effective immediately:

Cougar Gold Scholar Awards (for which you will also receive a can of cheese) **and Global Scholar Awards:** The Cougar Gold Scholar Awards give outstanding scholars at the associate professor or early professor rank the opportunity for creative work at the highest levels. Recipients of these awards receive a reassignment of half of their usual duties of teaching, advising, administration, to intensive scholarship, for each of three years. The Global Scholar Award provides a fifty percent reassignment of teaching, advising and administrative duties to intensive scholarship for two years. In this case, the recipient receives the reassignment to reexamine and reorient his or her teaching and research in relation to significant global trends. Two Cougar Gold Scholars and one Global Scholar will be selected each year. Applications for these awards require the submission of a competitive proposal by October 31. To apply see <http://provost.wsu.edu/manuals-forms/>.

Professional Leave: While our current policy is quite good, some faculty are discouraged from taking professional leave by language in our policy that implies that faculty members must leave campus during this period of time. Leaving campus for a semester or year is difficult for many families, and does not serve the research needs of many faculty members in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Therefore, this requirement is being eliminated. At the same time, proposals for professional leaves will become more competitive and require a more complete proposal than required in the past. Please see the Provost's Guidelines for Professional and Retraining Leaves at <http://provost.wsu.edu/manuals-forms/ProfessionalLeave08-20-083.pdf>.

During the course of this academic year, I plan to work with the collegiate deans and Faculty Senate to improve our policy on stopping the tenure clock. The academic world has changed radically since tenure was first introduced a century ago, and recent studies have shown that current tenure practices present significant barriers to the recruitment and retention of women. At my request, Vice Provost McSweeney has undertaken a cohort analysis of faculty at the rank of associate professor. Although we currently have only a preliminary analysis, our data suggest that too few faculty are being promoted to the rank of professor in a timely manner, and that female associate professors are both slower to be promoted and leave the University at a higher rate than their male colleagues. Higher education research suggests that female faculty members perform considerably more departmental and collegiate service, delaying their promotion and distinctly disadvantaging them. Thus, we must develop policies that ensure that service responsibilities are more equitably distributed. Finally, we need to provide all probationary tenure-track faculty members with a semester free from teaching so as to better position them for promotion and tenure. I am hopeful that funds generated by the A2P2 process will give us the flexibility to afford this.

A2P2 consumed considerable energy last year, and we must follow up on its recommendations. At my suggestion, President Floyd and the deans have agreed that the funds recouped by the Office of the Provost last year, approximately \$1.8 million, will be given back to the colleges to fund two or three transformative research initiatives. I have already committed about \$550K for global animal health, but I will use the remainder of the funds to support two additional initiatives. This will be done through a university-wide competitive process, and a request for proposals will be forthcoming in the next few days. I will require that colleges reallocate their own resources in support of their proposals and that they use A2P2 programmatic recommendations to inform their internal reallocations.

While much of our energy in the coming years will be focused on raising the University's research profile and strengthening our graduate and professional programs, we must continue to improve the quality of our undergraduate experience. We have already had considerable success in this area, as reflected by the increasing number of students that apply and enroll at WSU and by the improving academic qualifications of our students. Nevertheless, conversations I have had across campus have convinced me that WSU needs to begin a dialogue about the critical intellectual skills our students must develop. As we move our students from opinion-based thinkers to evidence-based thinkers, we need to reconceptualize the academic experiences our students should have to develop the critical thinking, moral, and civic capacities that we value. Such a dialogue is a necessary precursor to specific changes in the curriculum. I have had initial conversations with

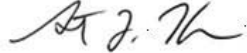
Faculty Senate leaders about this subject, and I plan on expanding this discussion to a wider audience in the immediate future.

I was particularly impressed by the efforts of the faculty and staff to meet the demand for classes this semester as we enroll the largest and most qualified freshman class in University history. Those involved with course management tell me it was the most collaborative effort that they have ever seen.

Finally, I would like to display copies of recent faculty publications (or high resolution posters which we will make of these publications) both in my office and around campus. Please bring any publications that you wish to have displayed to 436 French Administration.

I look forward to working with you and wish you all the very best as we embark on a new academic year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.L. Hoch", written in a cursive style.

Steven L. Hoch
Provost and Executive Vice President