Remarks As Prepared for OVPR Town Hall
Dr. Brian Herman, Vice President for Research
McNamara, Al Johnson Great Room
Wednesday, June 10, 2015

INTRO:

• Welcome all, and thank you for attending the Town Hall in person or joining us online for this annual conversation about the important work we do here in OVPR.
• Today, I’m going to touch on some of the events of the past year and highlight the many accomplishments of the staff and units who support the research mission of this institution.
• The work all of us do every day, whether its grants administration, academic research, technology commercialization or protecting our human and animal research subjects, makes it possible for the University of Minnesota to remain in the top 10 public research institutions in the nation.
• Before we get started, I would like to welcome everyone who is new to attending our town hall. Could everyone who is new this year please stand up? And can Anujani Aluwihare, the new director of finance in OVPR, please stay standing. I’d like you all to know who she is.
• I would also like to announce several staff transitions within OVPR.

OFFICE TRANSITIONS:

• Claudia Neuhauser is currently serving as interim director of MSI
• Tim Tripp is now full time assistant director of UED
• After 20 years as director of RAR, Cyd Gillet will be retiring in August. Mark Suckow will join our staff as the new RAR director and institutional veterinarian at that time. Cory Goracke-Postle has taken over as director of IACUC.
• Searches in process as well: IonE, new director; OVPR communications director

BUDGET:

• As we look to the OVPR budget, the overall financial outlook for FY16 is positive.
• The budget entry is nearly complete and all units have met their deadlines for getting information entered. Thanks to all of you who worked so hard on the budget entry this year.
• OVPR received new funds for SPA and HRPP.
HIGHLIGHTS:
Employee Engagement Survey

• Now I'd like to briefly summarize the results of last year’s Employee Engagement Survey and outline an action plan for 2015 based on those results.

First let me start with what I think are the valued strengths in OVPR.

• Dedicated and committed to excellence – this came through loud and clear.
• Feel respected as individuals.
• Job provides opportunity to do interesting and challenging work – all positive for OVPR.
• Empowered to innovate and find more effective ways of doing things.

Here are some areas where I believe I have an opportunity to do better:

• Work Structure and Process: I need to work with the leadership team to create a more equitable distribution of workload within units.
• Clear and Promising Direction: I need to do better at instilling confidence in our leadership team among our staff.
• Effective Work Environment: I need to get better at identifying and eliminating barriers to getting work done efficiently.
• Development Opportunities: I need to increase opportunities for OVPR staff to achieve their career objectives.

Next Steps

• The results have been shared university-wide and within OVPR with managers, who were asked to share the results with you. Where needed, unit-specific plans will be put in place.
• Overall, I see several broad opportunity areas for OVPR to address:
• Efficiency and resources – I recognize that this is a big issue for many of you. Working with the leadership team, I will be looking closely at ways we can increase resources and efficiency within OVPR.
• Clear and promising direction – For me, this is critical, and it will be a top priority of mine in the coming year. As we have worked to develop the strategic plan for research over the past few years, I have felt strongly that our overarching vision should be one that reflected our collective thoughts, efforts and contributions.
That vision still remains at the center of our plan: “Bringing people together, in new ways, fostering discoveries and making our world a better place.”

I am optimistic that this vision remains the way to move forward together to advance the research enterprise. I will speak more at length about the progress on our strategic plan in a few moments.

Advancing Human Subjects Research

Over the past several months, faculty members, administrative leadership and clinical research experts from outside of the university have been working hard to develop a set of far-reaching reforms to advance our human subjects protection program to become a national model, both ethically and operationally.

A draft work plan was delivered to President Kaler on May 18 and made publically available for comment through June 1. Over 70 individual and multi-individual (grouped) comments were received and all were carefully considered. Those comments and the team’s responses are now posted on the implementation team’s website.

Many comments centered on questions about undue burden and proposed policy change regarding Conflict of Interest, suggestions for community engagement concerns about changes to scientific review, and questions about the applicability to the Social and Behavioral IRB. These are reflected in the final work plan.

The recommendations include plans to strengthen the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and protocol review processes; new ways of engaging with research subjects, their families, and community members; new processes for assessing and monitoring the ability of research subjects—particularly those with diminished decision making capacity – to consent; a more stringent structure for managing conflicts of interest.

Implementing the plan is estimated to cost $5.45 million in one-time expenditures (primarily to implement an electronic record system in the IRB) and $2.24 million in recurring expenditures (primarily staffing the new IRB structure and compensating members).

The U’s Board of Regents will review a final plan for approval this week at its June 11-12 meeting.

I’d also like to say just a few words to recognize the OVPR staff who have contributed so much of their time and energy to this in the past few months. It has truly been a team effort and I deeply value and appreciate the integrity, hard work and abiding belief in our institution demonstrated during this challenging time.
• Acknowledge HRPP staff and Debbie Dykhuis. Their countless long hours managing the many requests for information and assistance throughout these reviews.

• Lisa Warren, for her tremendous leadership on the Implementation Team and throughout this entire effort.

• On behalf of all of OVPR, the Implementation Team, and the University leadership, thank you for your service.

**Enterprise System Upgrade Program (ESUP)**

• University-wide impact and involved many OVPR staff

• Finance, SPA, OVPR-IT and HR all put in many long hours managing and implementing various aspects of the upgrade.

• Overall, it has been a success, but I realize that the transition hasn’t been easy. HMRS has been the most challenging, and I know that’s been frustrating for a lot of you who work regularly with these systems.

• I am working with Lisa Warren to better understand these issues and to share them with Kathy Brown, the Vice President for Human Resources.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

• As I mentioned earlier, the strategic plan for research, Five Years Forward, was developed in order to set a clear and promising direction for the research enterprise.

• In addition to a central vision of bringing people together in new ways, we outlined four key areas of strategic focus to chart our course forward as well as a set of supporting goals that would help define our action steps along the way.

• In the past year, we have continued to make progress toward these goals.

• On March 2015, the executive steering committee reviewed 15 possible action items proposed by the four faculty-led teams charged with identifying opportunities that would address the broad cornerstones and supporting goals outlined in the strategic plan.

• Of those items proposed, the steering committee selected two for immediate action that will increase capacity to accelerate knowledge transfer and promote a culture of serendipity at the university. Several existing programs that advance our strategic priorities will continue to receive support.
Joint faculty-stakeholder appointments

- Promote innovation broadly across disciplines and engage external stakeholders, such as industries, government agencies, non-profits and community organizations.
- Appointments range from one to three years, will be open to all academic units, and will be designed to catalyze and sustain research between the university and external partners to accelerate transfer of knowledge for the public good.
- Have discussions regarding the appointments on Twin Cities campus starting fall 2015 followed by discussions on the system campuses starting spring 2016.
- Claudia Neuhauser, director of the University of Minnesota Informatics Institute, will lead the initiative.

“Connector” positions

- The university will identify, engage and empower “connectors” across the U of M to bring unrelated disciplines together in unpredictable, but uniquely effective ways.
- Connectors will identify U of M research interests that would benefit from multiple disciplines working together and will facilitate meetings between researchers across a diversity of academic units to promote a culture of serendipity.
- Carissa Slotterback, director of research engagement in OVPR, will lead the initiative, working closely with associate deans for research, centers and outreach offices.

Existing programs that support our strategic priorities

- MnDRIVE, enhancing research excellence, building capacity, partnering with industry in key areas of university strength.
- Corporate Engagement Workgroup, U-wide partnership focused on aligning university economic development efforts, and ongoing relationship building with industry members and state and regional economic development groups.
- Economic Road Show, meeting with business and community leaders across the state to learn about needs of local economics, opportunities for partnership.
- Discovery Capital, new policy, investments in entrepreneurship and startups
- Implementing these programs working closely with colleges and units across the university system and in alignment with other university strategic initiatives.
Unit participation

- Sara Waldemar has reached out to all of your units to identify those areas within your work plans that align with the strategic plan.
- Critical success factors – to be addressed as part of the work plan metrics.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS:

- There have been many successes across OVPR’s units, centers and institutes in the past year. While I can’t mention all of them, here are just a few of the highlights:

Center for Transportation Studies

- Partnered with Accessibility Observatory (CEGE) and MnDOT on a national study of accessibility as a performance measure for the U.S. transportation network. Seven states and the Federal Highway Administration have committed $1.2 million over the next five years for the initiative.

Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences

- Partnered with Mayo, UCSF, Harvard Duke and other leading universities on five-year NIH grant to explore family access to genomic data that will help guide national policy in this area.
- Convened a major national conference in November, including speakers from NIH, OHRP, SACHRP, and the genomics community.

Information Technology (OVPR-IT)

- Worked with the U’s central Office of Information Technology to prepare OVPR systems for the PeopleSoft Upgrade, including analyzing data changes, recoding interfaces and multiple rounds of testing which alone required over 1,300 hours of effort as well as 150 hours of coordination and management with other teams involved on the PeopleSoft Upgrade project.
- Worked with Sponsored Projects Administration to develop a new online subaward tracking tool that increases efficiency in tracking 6,000 subaward invoices per year and meets new federal requirements for payment processing time.
• Worked with Research Advancement on a new internal grants management system that improves usability, eliminates data entry duplication, enhances management functionality and streamlines on-going maintenance.

Minnesota Population Center
• Steve Ruggles, MPC director, along with MPC staff organized and hosted this year’s highly successful conference for the Population Association of America in San Diego. PAA is the leading organization for demographic research and Ruggles is currently president of PAA.
• MPC is the world’s largest distributor of population data, exporting over two terabytes of data a week to some 70,000 researchers around the world.
• MPC is now the largest research center at the University in respect to sponsored research. If MPC was a department, it would rank fifth in sponsored research out of 877 departments at the U—just after Physics and Astronomy, and ahead of Chemistry and Materials Science.

Minnesota Supercomputing Institute
• Launched a new world-class supercomputer, Mesabi, that is already running at over 90 percent capacity. Mesabi is among the top 10 fastest university-owned supercomputers in the U.S. and is more than six times faster than the previous MSI supercomputer.

Office for Technology Commercialization
• Secured $100 million exclusive license to Intrexon/Ziopharm (with MDAnderson Cancer Center) for “Sleeping Beauty” – a novel gene delivery technology that has shown promise in targeting both hematologic and solid tumor malignancies.
• Awarded $6 million (with U of M match) for MN-REACH, a three year NIH competitive grant for translational research focused on commercializing life sciences technologies. The first round of pre-proposal submissions is currently underway.

Research Advancement
• Continued to lead MnDRIVE initiative, which has already supported more than 120 projects, produced 21 potential patents and forged more than 75 external partnerships.
• Hosted the first two Convergence Colloquia on Smart Cities and Aging. The Convergence Colloquia is a new series of multi-disciplinary gatherings that advance cutting-edge research to develop innovative solutions and build long term partnerships. Serendipity Grants have also been awarded to support follow-on collaborative research activities. Four more Colloquia will
be hosted in Fall 2015 focused on alternative energy, health equity, water supply and sustainable food systems.

**Research Education and Oversight**

- Implemented major revitalization of the Certified Approver Community of practice discussion group. In the past year, more than 241 questions and replies have been posted to the site with 2,550 views of the discussions.
- Successfully trained 389 students and staff in the CITI Responsible Conduct of Research training since implementing a new notification system. All required participants are in compliance.

**Sponsored Projects Administration**

- In partnership with the Controller's Office, implemented Uniform Guidance, the largest regulatory change related to federal awards in 50 years. The intensive, year-long effort included: analyzing approximately 700 pages of new regulations and updating 81 research policies, 176 training courses and job aids and more than 300 notice of award terms and conditions.
- Successfully negotiated a $50 million cooperative agreement with US AID.

**University Economic Development**

- Successfully completed seven stops around greater Minnesota as part of the Economic Development Road Show.
- Made significant advances in implementing the Corporate Engagement Work group (CEW), a university-wide partnership to promote strategic engagement with industry partners.

**University of Minnesota Informatics Institute**

- UMII hired four analysts and a data wrangler to provide data analytics services at critical University research centers to support genomics, proteomics and imaging.
- The analytics team is developing new ways to accelerate data analysis and provide consistent and reproducible analysis to advance research in multiple disciplines across the university. MSI is an important partner in many of these efforts.
University of Minnesota Press

- Received a $720,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to launch Manifold Scholarship—a platform for iterative, networked monographs—in partnership with the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Manifold Scholarship will enable publishers to develop, alongside the print edition of a book, an alternate form of publication that is networked and iterative, and served on an interactive, open-source platform.

- *The Essential Ellen Willis*, a collection of essays by the late cultural critic Ellen Willis, was selected to win the 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism. The NBCC award is the first in the Press’s history and one of the highest honors in the literary community.

CLOSING REMARKS:

- Thank you all for coming here today and helping to celebrate our individual and shared successes over the past year.
- I am energized and inspired by your dedication and hard work, both as individuals and as members of this team.
- Henry Ford said “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”
- I think this aptly describes our path forward. I am excited to see what else we can accomplish working together.