

## 10

We simply must be a more flexible, nimble, quicker and agile university to be competitive with our peer institutions. We can accomplish this by refining a variety of university processes to become more nimble and responsive to the needs of our campus community and of the world around us.

This last action states explicitly what I think has been implicit throughout the previous nine action items, and that is the need to evolve and adapt more quickly as a university to a dynamic world. To be sure, this university will always value the deliberate, thorough and thoughtful analysis of ideas and data that only dedicated scholarship and research can produce – whether it takes weeks, months or years. This is one of the indispensable functions of a public research university. But there are areas of the university where we simply can't be flatfooted, outdated, and doctrinaire. That's a formula for being left behind, either by other more nimble universities or the private sector, who may well decide they can do things better themselves. What follows is a partial list of things we should be examining to become more flexible, nimble, quicker and agile as a university.

So let's start at the top: I think we should examine our administrative structure and leadership team to ensure we are positioned well for the future. We did this a few years ago when we split the vice provost for research and economic development position into two separate positions: vice chancellor for research and innovation and vice chancellor for economic development, which in turn led to building up the staffs of both offices to better serve our students and faculty. These changes were made to increase the impact on their respective areas. But that doesn't mean we should consider this process complete. We should continuously be reviewing our administrative structure and leadership team to ensure maximum impact and increased efficiency.

I think we should also begin a campuswide discussion on how we measure faculty impact as well as the expectations we have for tenure and promotion and annual

salary increments. Some of this was addressed in action item seven, but the details remain to be ironed out. I would like to progress this conversation to create a more formal framework for tenure and promotion that better rewards impacts, including exceptional teaching, commercialization of research, relevant but non-academic work experience, and other areas discussed in this series. It's time to move this conversation from the hypothetical to the actual.

I would also like us to significantly strengthen our staff performance evaluation system. There are still some gaps in the evaluation process between classified and non-classified staff, who have not historically been evaluated by the same measures across the university. In recent years the office of human resources has assisted many departments in implementing a standardized process, though all are not on the same page yet. That said, much of this should be addressed with the implementation of Workday this summer, which will provide consistent evaluation tools for all staff. There is also a need for the continued enhancement of supervisor training regarding employee feedback and performance evaluations, particularly the areas of poor performance or conduct. A consistent complaint I hear from our staff is that evaluations are not always thorough and sometimes do not fairly assess relative contributions made by individual staff members. Additional training and resources will need to be developed to support our supervisors and improve our evaluation process.

It bears mentioning that we've also been alarmed by high turnover in some positions. We need to have competitive wages. In order to be a more responsive workplace, we've conducted an ongoing evaluation of

our labor market rates to remain competitive. We are now working on a plan that we hope to unveil soon and begin to implement on July 1. A part of that plan is a commitment to providing a living wage, as best we can, for our employees. Our ultimate goal is to raise the minimum yearly salary for all full-time appointed U of A employees to \$30,000.

I would also like to see us examine our curriculum approval process to shorten the time that program development takes. Some of you have heard me talk about “university time,” which tends to take much longer than standard time. Sometimes that’s a good thing, especially when it ensures time and space for deeply considered research, scholarship and creative activity. But it can also put us at a disadvantage when private sector partners come to us asking if we can help meet current workforce educational needs. They can’t wait two years for us to get back to them with needed courses or programs – that’s an eternity in the business world. So we need to ask ourselves: where are the longest delays and what are the obstacles to shortening them? I’d like to see us put our heads together to figure out how we can expedite this process.

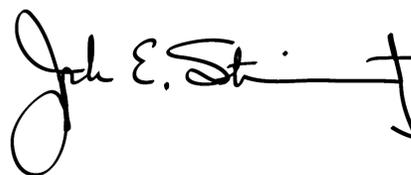
I would also like us to examine every level of administration and identify practices, policies and oversight that are unnecessary or redundant. This will require input from the entire campus. In the coming weeks, you will hear more about a project to survey the campus to help us gain a better understanding of how we expend our effort on administrative functions. Aside from the usual concerns about being efficient and cost effective, it bears saying that there is always something we can and should be doing better. If we can divert people and resources away from things that are duplicative, wasteful, and inefficient, we can redirect those people and resources toward things that are more efficient, necessary, and impactful. We need to constantly ask ourselves if there are better ways to do things and if processes and procedures we follow are truly necessary and not just a product of a bureaucracy that has grown over the years.

Finally, as I’ve indicated in past action items, I would like see us develop more public-private partnerships that could decrease the costs of services and activities. This could be mean partnering on research space, as we do with J.B. Hunt, or partnering with Entegriety on solar

power that is used by the university. Previously, I indicated a desire to open a satellite campus in Bentonville (tentatively called the Collaborative at the University of Arkansas). One thing we are examining is whether any of our corporate partners could provide space for this enterprise – making it that much easier for them to access classes. There are many areas where our interests coincide with those of private sector partners, and we should always be on the lookout for ways to pool resources and lower costs for the benefit of both.

Again, these are only some of the areas where I think we can make progress. There are a variety of university processes where we need to be more nimble and responsive if we want to be remain relevant and impactful and we need to develop goals and metrics against which we can measure our progress. As we close in on our sesquicentennial, it’s clear that our core mission of teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement remains unchanged. But the means by which we accomplish this must evolve and adapt to our circumstances. Just because structurally we are a large, bureaucratic organization, that doesn’t mean we must always behave like one—we need to bust silos and other artificial barriers that impede our success. Really, my overarching goal is to inculcate an institutional attitude in which we constantly seek to expedite and streamline processes, seize opportunities, and respond to the needs of our state with alacrity and foresight. A grand goal for us should be to become the university that is nationally known for getting things done in the most timely, efficient manner possible, something universities are not generally known for.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joe Steinmetz,  
Chancellor, University of Arkansas