

## **Provost's Report to the Faculty August 2015**

A year ago I wrote the first of these annual reports to the faculty from the provost. Much has happened over the past year, and I want to share some of what has been accomplished over the past year in this report. My biggest concern with a report such as this is that I will inevitably not include some important work that has been done at Valpo. Such an oversight is inevitable simply because of all the wonderful work that occurs at Valpo each year. Even if I could personally recall each and every accomplishment, a report that included all of that work would simply be too long for any of us to read. So, please do accept my apology if I missed an accomplishment of which you are aware, and please feel free to contact me with information about that accomplishment. Even if something does not get mentioned in this annual report, it should still be included in the records that we keep in the Office of the Provost.

The Provost's Report this year will be similar to last year's version in that I will follow the Strategic Plan for most of the report, touching on accomplishments that tie directly to the Strategic Plan. A key difference will be an additional section in which I will provide some information about the recent reductions that were made in the areas that report through the provost. These recent budget reductions were part of the larger reductions that were announced by the President in various settings this past spring.

On a more personal note, I also want to relay how much I have enjoyed meeting so many of you over this past year. Valparaiso University is a community blessed by outstanding faculty, staff, and students. I have consistently been impressed by the quality of the people that I have met at Valpo. You are so very good at what you do, and you care so deeply about our students and the university. I apologize that I still have not yet met all of you personally, but I hope to continue to rectify that reality as we move into this second year of my time at Valpo. While people often ask me what the most challenging part of my job is (The answer is easy for me: Not being able to teach our students on a regular basis), I am not asked as often about the best part of my job. This answer is also easy: meeting, talking to, interacting with, and learning from all of you in so many different contexts and settings. Thank you for all of the great work that you do for Valpo and for our students. I deeply appreciate all that you do. Valpo is the strong institution that it is because of your wonderful contributions.

### **Budget Reductions**

Last spring, President Heckler announced a planned cut of \$2.5 million from the university budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Toward the end of May, the Office of the Provost received more detailed information about the target for reductions in the areas that report through the provost. In particular, we learned that the reductions needed to be based on salaries and benefits alone. This approach was based on the reality that program budgets had already been significantly reduced in many areas during the budget building process for FY 2015-2016. Given the fraction of overall university salaries and benefits that are apportioned to units that report through the Office of the Provost, I was asked to reduce our salary and benefits budget by just over \$1,300,000. Given this target, I worked closely with Bonnie Hunter for the Student Affairs area, Brian Johnson for the Chapel and Campus Ministries, the eight deans, and the

associate and assistant provosts in order to identify areas where salary reductions would need to occur. I was deeply impressed by the thoughtful, professional, and appropriate approach used by each of the individuals identified above. Faced with a difficult challenge, they performed admirably.

Based on the strong work by the individuals identified above, we were able to achieve our target for the reductions. I will not attempt to describe the approach used in each of these different areas. In order for each dean, vice president, and director to act appropriately, they could not all act the same. I am confident that they will, or have, shared more details about the process in each of their areas, as appropriate and necessary.

A few comments about the general outcome are in order. Taking all of the areas that report to the provost together, the number of staff positions impacted by the reductions was slightly larger than the number of faculty positions. The fact that we attempted to minimize the impact of these reductions on the faculty is indicated in the reality that approximately 2/3 of the total salaries in the provost's areas are apportioned to faculty, and only 1/3 of the funds are for staff and administration. Hence, the staff/administration carried a proportionally larger fraction of the overall reductions, that is, over one half of the reductions instead of 1/3. For example, the reductions made in the Office of the Provost area itself were just over double the target for that area, taking pressure off of the faculty salaries and benefits. The Office of the Provost reductions were equivalent to over two full-time staff positions, and came entirely from staff/administrative areas. Obviously, the reductions from other reporting areas across campus exclusively impacted staff/administration positions as all faculty fall within the provost's area.

Finally, it should be noted that even as the reductions were being made, we also made strategic investments in faculty positions across campus. In order to support growth in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, particularly in the area of the Physician Assistant program, a faculty position was added there. Additionally, faculty members were added in Chemistry, Biology, and Psychology as a part of the overall expansion in Public Health and Physician Assistant, but also to help address overall load concerns. A faculty position was also added to support the new major in Chinese. So, in many respects, these reductions also reflect strategic re-allocation of funds into areas of growth and strategic opportunity.

Please do let me know if you have any questions about this process and the outcome. And, again, thank you for your strong work in challenging circumstances. Now for the rest of the report, which will be based on accomplishments associated with the Strategic Plan, especially Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan. Given the sweeping, ongoing process of revising Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan, this update is particularly important.

### **Strategic Plan Update**

**Objective 1.1: Valparaiso University will strategically identify a small number of existing academic programs that show promise, based on enrollment comparisons with peer-group institutions, for attracting additional students with increased investment and/or program adjustments. Examples might include Digital Media, Spanish, and Kinesiology.**

Significant growth and progress continued in a number of academic program areas over the past year. Perhaps, the most notable and noticeable is the growth in the graduate Information Technology, IT, program. The dean and associate dean of the Graduate School and Continuing Education and the chair of the Computer and Information Science Department saw an opportunity to grow the IT program significantly. Working with individuals from the Business and Finance area, these individuals put together a comprehensive plan for measured and sustainable growth in the IT program. The plan sought to clearly identify the staffing and resources necessary to grow this program in a sustainable manner. This plan was carefully reviewed by a number of groups before being reviewed and approved by the President's Council. The plan was implemented starting in the spring semester, 2015, and we are already seeing a significant growth in the number of IT students on our campus. The greatest challenge encountered with this program expansion is identifying, hiring, and retaining qualified faculty members to teach in this area. The added scrutiny with regard to faculty qualifications that we are receiving from the Higher Learning Commission is emphasizing our need to ensure that we are compliant with all state, federal, and HLC regulations. We will continue to actively seek qualified faculty members to support this growing program. And, again, the focus continues to be on sustainable growth: sustainable for individual faculty members and for the university as a whole.

While not existing programs, other areas of growth indirectly related to this objective include the Physician Assistant program and the Chinese language program. We are enrolling our first class of 38 PA students this fall, and we have hired a tenure-track faculty member to lead our Chinese language program.

Another area of activity in regard to this objective has been the work in the Graduate School to review existing programs and ensure that they are robust, vibrant programs that align with all regulations and guidelines, both internal and external. Of particular importance, given our upcoming visit from the HLC for our 2017-2018 re-affirmation of accreditation cycle, is ensuring that we have appropriate learning outcomes, assessment plans, and assessment results for each of our programs, including those in the Graduate School. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we are off to a strong start.

Finally, it should be noted that serious and thoughtful work is occurring on two possible new academic programs, which are, again, indirectly related to this objective. These programs are Music Therapy and Data Science. Faculty members from the Music and Mathematics and Statistics Departments are taking the lead in exploring these programs and, based on supportive feedback and data, then moving forward with the program development process. The Office of the Provost is seeking to make the new program development process more straightforward and transparent so as to remove barriers from creative and innovative program development. We are seeking to build and implement a system that encourages and supports innovative program development, and we plan to provide more details in this regard in the near future.

**Objective 1.2: Valparaiso University, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, will become a center for rigorous interdisciplinary innovation, grounded in its persistently strong disciplinary concentrations.**

An important event occurred this past March in support of developing and implementing strong interdisciplinary programs. The Deans and Chairs Workshop featured a speaker from the Educational Advisory Board, or EAB, a consulting firm with which Valpo works, who addressed the group about the development of interdisciplinary academic programs. Particular areas of interest were programs on the graduate level and programs with a professional emphasis. A number of important ideas were introduced, including approaches such as stackable certificates. The idea would be to offer a series of certificates that are tied clearly to specific competencies and outcomes. These certificates could be taken individually or they could be stacked together in a way that would lead to a graduate degree. As more and more students, even traditionally-aged students, seek certificates, badges and the like that do not fit into traditional degree categories, we must consider these options for our students. One of the results of the workshop last March was to seek to think of this reality of 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education as an opportunity, rather than a threat. We look forward to the creative ideas that will grow, at least in part, from this workshop.

**Objective 1.3: Valparaiso University will graduate students who can investigate and interpret information and who can communicate effectively in relevant media, and through current technologies.**

During the past year, significant progress was made in a number of areas associated with this objective. The process to design, develop and implement Writing Intensive Courses, WICs, has been completed successfully. WICs will be offered starting during the 2015-2016 academic year, and a full complement of WICs will be in place for the 2016-2017 academic year. This accomplishment represents the work of so many faculty and staff members across campus who have invested deeply in improving the writing instruction, and, hence, the writing of our students. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these courses on our students as we seek to graduate students who, fundamentally, are well-prepared in the area of written communication. The professional development for instructors of WIC courses is ongoing.

In a related accomplishment, the professional development related to writing instruction for faculty members teaching in the first-year experience has now been embedded in our faculty development programs, and is an ongoing activity. The participation and completion rates in the writing development seminars of faculty members teaching in the first-year experience have increased, and will continue to improve as these efforts are sustained in an ongoing manner.

Library faculty members have contributed to this objective in two powerful ways. First, library faculty formed an internal working group to map information literacy across the university curriculum, as guided by the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education and the Association of College and Research Libraries' Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. This work has been successfully concluded. Additionally, library faculty members refined the curriculum for integrating information literacy instruction theory and methods throughout the WIC faculty development seminars. Information literacy faculty collaborated with the writing director on delivering WIC development throughout the year and have been working individually with WIC faculty members in order to integrate information literacy instruction within all

appropriate general education courses. These contributions by the library faculty represent significant enhancements of our general education program and are greatly appreciated.

**Objective 1.4: Valparaiso University will graduate students who have participated in a cross-cultural learning experience.**

Valpo has made strong progress in the area of cross-cultural and international learning experiences. With the hiring of a tenure-track faculty member in Chinese, we are well positioned to launch a full major in Chinese language. This program will complement our other strong programs in the languages and that are related to Asia. Valparaiso has reviewed the recommendations of the Task Force on Study Abroad, as well as the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE) Task Force regarding study abroad. The purpose of both of these groups was to identify means of reducing and/or eliminating both real and perceived barriers to long-term and short-term study abroad. Our desired outcomes of the work of these groups include an increase in the number of study abroad options, and the development of study-away options within the USA that could provide cross-cultural experiences leading to cross-cultural competence for our students. These domestic, study-away opportunities are particularly relevant for students who would not take advantage of international study abroad based on some combination of factors. The recommendations and proposals provided by these two task forces have now been integrated into the ongoing work of the study-abroad office. While all of the recommendations have not yet been achieved, the insight provided through these task forces is clearly helping to guide the ongoing work of the study-abroad area. Among other “take aways” from the work of these groups is the clear message that the efficacy and value of long-term study abroad, study abroad lasting a semester or more, can never be replaced and will be an integral part of programming at Valpo well into the future. It is also worth noting that for those students who are unable, for whatever combination of reasons, to take part in long-term study abroad, short-term study abroad, appropriately designed and implemented, can also have strong efficacy for students. Ensuring that we provide our students with the right selection of study-abroad experiences is an ongoing goal of the study abroad program.

A quick, but significant update about the Kalyani International University, KIU, initiative is also in order. Based on changes in government regulations and the impacts of these regulations on our potential partner in India, we are not actively pursuing this initiative at this point in time. While a change in legislation could change this reality, a long-term collaboration with KIU is unlikely at this time. We will certainly keep you posted if the situation with this initiative changes.

**Objective 1.5: Valparaiso University will create a robust system of support for undergraduate, graduate, and law students throughout their enrollment at the University, including academic advising and mentoring.**

More and better space for academic support services are being provided in the Christopher Center through cooperation between the library faculty and staff and the Office of the Provost. We believe that this new space will benefit both staff and students, alike.

Interactive language sessions, that themselves carry 0 to 1 academic credits, have been added to specific programs and courses in the Graduate School so as to improve the English language skills of our international students. These sessions offer assistance with English language competence within the specific context of various disciplines. By providing English language instruction within the context of the disciplinary field of study, the opportunity for deep learning is greatly improved and the student is more likely to retain and use their increased English proficiency.

As noted earlier, the Graduate School and Continuing Education has undertaken a sweeping effort to create and implement a robust assessment plan for all programs within the school. Significant progress has already been made with respect to establishing student learning outcomes for some courses and programs, and robust assessment plans are being implemented. This work will continue aggressively as we prepare for the visit from the Higher Learning Commission during the 2017-2018 academic year as a part of our re-affirmation of accreditation process.

On a related note, the efforts we will be making with regard to the re-affirmation of accreditation process with the HLC will be significant and pervasive over the next few years. There are few things more valuable to Valpo than its accreditation through the HLC. As the HLC seeks to appropriately enforce guidance and regulations from the federal Department of Education, they also seek to pass along associated compliance issues to colleges and universities such as Valpo. The key element in this overall process is the fundamental shift in expectations from the Department of Education, and, hence, from the HLC. No longer will re-affirmation of accreditation be something that we can largely ignore for 8 years, and then put concerted effort into for 2 years leading up to our re-affirmation visit. The new approach from the HLC is focused on continuous improvement and reporting in order to ensure that Valpo is in compliance with key governmental and accreditor guidelines and regulations at all times. So, even after our visit from the HLC during the 2017-2018 academic year, you can continue to expect to hear a lot about the HLC and our efforts to ensure that Valpo is operating such that we meet or exceed all accreditor and governmental expectations. We appreciate your support, understanding, and patience as Valpo as an institution adjusts to the changing landscape of higher education accountability.

**Objective 1.8: Valparaiso University will develop and support programs and projects that effectively advance inclusion and dialogue within diverse groups both within the University and in the Northwest Indiana region.**

The past year has been a busy one with regard to initiatives related to diversity and inclusion at Valparaiso University. While not tied to a specific action item in the strategic plan, I wanted to share the great news that came out of the Urban League Luncheon, hosted by the Urban League of Northwest Indiana, in March of this year. Valparaiso was honored with two awards, the only organization so recognized. Valpo was named a 2015 Workforce Diversity Award Winner, with Phil Powell spearheading the successful nomination process. Valpo was also recognized as a 2015 Community Relations Award Winner, for work related to the Welcome Project, led by Liz Wuerffel and Allison Schuette. It was gratifying to be in attendance at this event, and to see the genuine enthusiasm for the good things that are happening at Valpo and in

our larger community because of the outstanding contributions of members of our university. I look forward to our continued positive impact on our region in areas of diversity and inclusion based on the strong contributions of our faculty, staff, and students.

A number of action items have been completed over the past year that are directly related to Objective 1.8. A Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion was constituted and completed its work over the past year. The members of this task force were:

Stacy Hoult-Saros - Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Co-Chair  
Chris Childers - Former Senior Executive Director, Marketing and Enrollment, Valparaiso University School of Law, Co-Chair  
Phillip Powell - Special Assistant to the Provost for Inclusion  
Joseph Baruffi - Director of Student Relations, School of Law  
Tom Cath - Director, Career Center  
Sherry DeMik - Assistant Professor, Department of Education; Director, Disability Support Services  
Joseph Frake - Assistant Director, Office of International Programs  
Del Gillispie - Associate Professor, Program Director, Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship Program  
Tasha Henry - Associate Director of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Carlos Miguel-Pueyo - Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures  
Samuel Payan - Assistant Director, Office of Multicultural Programs  
Musa Pinar - Professor of Marketing, College of Business  
Holly Singh - Former Director, Office of International Programs  
Ruth Wertz - Assistant Professor, College of Engineering  
James Wetzstein - University Pastor  
Yun Xia - Assistant Professor, Department of History  
Lissa Yogan - Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminology

The group met regularly over the past year and accomplished a number of outcomes, including discussing and recommending a means of assessing progress with regard to diversity and inclusion on our campus; initially implementing the campus diversity and inclusion status instrument at Valpo; conducting a series of focus groups in order to collect information about the status of diversity and inclusion at Valpo; creating and implementing a campus diversity and inclusion survey that went out to all faculty, staff, and students in the spring of 2015; completing and submitting interim and final reports of the work of the task force to the president and the provost. The final report of the task force is already being reviewed by the president and the provost and is being shared with Stacey Miller, the assistant provost for inclusion. The findings of the report will be used as we seek to enhance diversity and inclusion on our campus for all members of the campus community and all of our guests. I am deeply grateful to the members of the task force for their strong and hard work, their deep concern for Valpo, and their efforts toward greater diversity and inclusion. To each of you, thank you, very much.

Other areas that saw progress this past year included an enhanced approach for deploying individuals who have been trained as diversity facilitators. These diversity facilitators will play

an important role in the Fall Faculty Workshop, so all of you will have the opportunity to interact with them, although many of you already have done so. A protocol has been developed and implemented to support the reporting of harassment and discrimination on and near campus. This protocol is under continuous review as we seek to make it even more responsive and easy to use for anyone impacted by harassment and/or discrimination. Finally, we were able to successfully appoint the inaugural Assistant Provost for Inclusion. Stacey Miller joined us on July 13<sup>th</sup> from the University of Vermont. Dr. Miller brings a wealth of experience, education, and training capability with her, and she has certainly hit the ground running. Do make a point of meeting her as soon as possible. Stacey's office is in Kretzmann Hall, Suite 103.

**Objective 1.9: Valparaiso University will support the diversification of the faculty, staff, and senior leadership through robust strategies.**

Work is ongoing with respect to this objective, and the assistant provost for inclusion will spearhead work related to the recruitment and retention of faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups; work related to developing an even more robust support mechanism to facilitate the success of faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups; and efforts to review and enhance the Diversity Advocates Program, with a goal of extending the program to include staff and to enhancing both recruitment and retention.

**Objective 1.10: Valparaiso University will expand the College of Nursing and Health Professions**

While work will be ongoing, key aspects of this objective have been met with the launch of the Public Health and Physician Assistant Programs, and enhanced programming at the graduate level. Hence, this objective can be removed from the Strategic Plan as completed.

**Objective 1.12: Valparaiso University will provide means by which faculty are encouraged and empowered to pursue pedagogical innovation in academic programs, including offering faculty workshops that focus on academic innovation in all its aspects.**

A regular schedule of faculty workshops and learning communities has been established with the goal of encouraging faculty understanding and use of emerging academic technology and tools. Allison Hunt has joined the university as the Assistant Director of Instructional Technology and she is helping to strengthen activities in this area.

**Objective 1.13: Valparaiso University will pursue the creation of additional 3 + 2 and 3 + 3 programs which allow students to smoothly complete bachelor's and master's-level or J.D. work at Valparaiso University at reduced cost to students.**

Significant progress has been made on moving 3+2, 3+3, and 4+1 programs forward at Valpo. Thoughtful work by Jennifer Ziegler, Rick Gillman, the Office of the Registrar, the EPC, and the GEPC, has helped to clarify and facilitate collaborative undergraduate and graduate programs at Valpo. Work over the past year has helped to codify how credits can be used to best facilitate this class of programs. This work has also helped to clarify the value of 4+1 programs, in which students are able to take a significant number of graduate credits during their senior

year as an undergraduate. Not only does taking graduate credits during a student's senior year shorten the time to completion of a masters degree, by up to a year, it allows the student to begin earning credits for a graduate degree while still eligible for undergraduate financial aid. The financial benefit to the student is significant and these programs should greatly help our students who face financial challenges in completing college and graduate school.

**Objective 1.15: Valparaiso University will successfully complete its Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation of accreditation process during the 2017-18 academic year. Successful completion will include avoiding the need for focused visits or reports after the reaffirmation decision.**

The action item in this area has been successfully completed based on the strong work from Sarah DeMaris, the chair of the HLC re-affirmation of accreditation team, and all of the members of that team, who are listed below.

Jim Wetzstein, University Pastor  
Andy White, Theater  
Dawn Bartush, Sociology  
Chris Childers, replaced by Del Wright, School of Law  
Paul Trapp, Marketing  
Laurie Eberhardt, Biology  
Jen Gregory, VITAL  
Doug Tougaw, Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Tim Jenkins, Student Affairs  
Aaron Preston, Philosophy  
Nola Schmidt, Nursing  
Diana Blaney, Controller  
Diane Noe, Office of the President  
Rick Gillman, Associate Provost  
Greg Stinson, Institutional Effectiveness

The compliance subcommittee consists of David Fevig, Admissions, Amy Lowery, IMC, Stephanie Martin, Registrar's Office, and Greg Stinson. To all of you, thank you for your good and ongoing work.

The work completed last year was related to reviewing the HLC re-affirmation report from 2008, and completing a scan of the requirements related to the new criteria for accreditation. The team identified all required actions based on these criteria for accreditation, and now are working to ensure that the required actions are occurring and being appropriately recorded.

It should be noted that three new objectives have been proposed for the Strategic Plan, to be considered by the Board of Directors at the October Board meeting. These new objectives are as follows:

**Objective 1.16: Valparaiso University will use data-informed strategies to improve retention and success. Freshman to Sophomore retention will increase by 4% measured from 2015 within four years.**

**Objective 1.17: Valparaiso University will have relevant and appropriate university-level student learning outcomes and co-curricular learning experiences.**

**Objective 1.18: Valparaiso University will clearly communicate and facilitate the process for visioning, developing, reviewing, and adopting new academic programs.**

The first of these new objectives is directly related to the key area of retention and success. Improving retention and success not only benefits our students and our educational mission, but it also helps our financial situation. Retaining a typical student successfully to graduation is much less expensive than recruiting a new student. The identification and adoption of relevant and appropriate student learning outcomes is a precursor to a wide range of activities that are critical for the future of the academic enterprise at Valpo, including ongoing discussions about general education and overall student development. Additionally, removing, to the extent possible, barriers to new program development is also clearly an important initiative that will continue to benefit Valpo well into the future, as we seek to empower innovation and program growth. If you have any questions about these new objectives, please do let me know. I appreciate your questions and feedback.

Finally, I have the pleasure of letting you all know that the Board of Directors has approved the new science building for construction. You already may have seen some of the work related to this project. The new building is approximately 54,000 sq. ft. in size, and will primarily house the Chemistry Department, some parts of the Biology Department, and laboratory space for teaching and research for students and faculty. The building is to come online for the Fall 2017 semester.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this report, or questions about items that did not appear in this report, please do let someone from the Office of the Provost know. I am still learning about Valpo, and I want to learn as much as possible, as soon as possible, in order to support you as effectively as possible. As I noted last year, often the best way to learn is to have the right questions posed. In seeking the right answers, both the questioner and the questioned benefit. Thank you, for all of the great things that you do for Valparaiso University.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark L. Biermann  
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs