Folks,

First, thank you all for agreeing to serve on our College Task Force. I am happy to note that, after careful consideration, Doug has agreed to chair the task force. I am confident that his thoughtful leadership will serve us well, and I am confident in your abilities, both individually and collectively. I am looking forward to working with you over the course of the year.

The work that the task force will engage is key to our ability to maintain our focus and values as an academic community and to ensure that our increasingly precious institutional resources—both human and fiscal—are efficiently directed to fulfillment of our mission to our students and communities, as articulated through our four Core Themes and the ten goals which underlie them.

As I noted in my earlier email to all of our faculty colleagues, the charge I am asking the task force to fulfill centers on the recommendations concerning the administrative structure and best functioning of our academic colleges, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, and the College of Education. As even the most cursory glance at our history and our Core Themes shows, all three of our colleges—their programs, their faculty, their staff, and their students—are central to EOU’s continuing vitality and our collective ability to fulfill our mission and to serve our communities effectively.

The overarching goal of the task force, broadly writ, is to arrive at an understanding of how our colleges can be effectively and efficiently run so as to best free our faculty to engage our students, our communities, and our academic and professional disciplines. Our institutional shared governance model is emerging as an increasingly sound and effective set of structures; we need to ensure that our college administrative structures are organized and function accordingly as well. As I have noted, the first step in this larger goal involves articulating pros and cons/advantages and disadvantages of our current two-dean model and a potential single-dean model, followed over the course of the year by successive steps examining how to best approach four broad areas: 1) Annual evaluations and their needed/inherent connection to 3rd year review and our tenure and promotion processes; 2) Course scheduling and curricular planning over multiple years; 3) Academic programming to serve our distant students; 4) Academic advising.

(Let me rush to add at this point, that while our institutional challenges make timely decisions and prompt actions necessary, I have an increasingly concrete understanding that sometimes the best way to move quickly is to slow down. Our general timeframe for the first step of your work is the end of this term, and the end of spring term for the following successive work. We will discuss this in greater detail at our first meeting.)

After discussions with Doug and several of you, it appears that our best approach to our initial task force meeting is to set aside 3-4 hours in a retreat to discuss the specifics of my charge to you and to organize the work before us. While I am hesitant to intrude upon your weekend time, the pace that everyone maintains during fall term makes it difficult indeed to find common slots for potential meetings, particularly in the amount of time that we need for the initial meeting. Accordingly, Doug and I have scheduled this first meeting for Saturday, October 22, from 9am-1pm, in Inlow 201, the Board Room. (I will provide beverages and a hot brunch to keep us going.)
Our goal with this initial meeting—indeed, with all of the task force meetings over the course of the year—is to have a preponderance of members at the meeting, rather than having to endlessly search for common times for ALL members. If you are unable to attend our initial meeting, please talk with Doug or with another of your colleagues on the group, so that we can maintain communication channels in both directions with each of you for the work that the task force is engaging.

Doug will be working with me over the next week to develop a concrete agenda for our initial meeting; I encourage you to contact him (and me) with thoughts, feedback, concerns, and questions which we can bring to bear on our first meeting.

Again, thank you for your willingness to serve on the College Task Force; I am looking forward to our work this year.

Take care.

Steve