Dear Colleagues,

As I announced in the winter edition of keyNotes, this quarterly message to the campus community is intended to keep you abreast of the initiatives and activities of the Office of Academic Affairs. Though the 2005–06 academic year is winding to a close, we’re already at work on a number of fronts for next year. This second issue of keyNotes will bring you up to date on these efforts and other areas of interest.

Let me start with an issue that’s been much in the news of late.

Academic Freedom and Intellectual Diversity

A topic of discussion on the nation’s campuses and in state legislatures—including our own—and the subject of considerable media attention in recent months, academic freedom and intellectual diversity have been cornerstones of the ethos of our university since it opened its doors in 1873. In April, I issued a campus-wide memo reaffirming our university’s ongoing commitment to freedom of thought and expression, respect for multiple points of view, and the civil and open expression of these views. My memo included an overview of the principles of academic freedom and intellectual diversity developed and promulgated by the American Council on Education (ACE), the major coordinating body for the nation’s higher education institutions, of which Ohio State is a member. The ACE principles are as follows:

- Academic freedom and intellectual pluralism are core values of America’s higher education system.
- Government’s recognition and respect for independence of colleges and universities is essential for academic excellence.
- Colleges and universities should welcome diverse beliefs and the free exchange of ideas.
- Grades and other academic decisions should be based solely on considerations that are intellectually relevant to the subject matter.

Leadership Development at Ohio State

The protection of academic rights and the discharge of academic responsibilities are indispensable values at a university as complex, visible, and accountable as Ohio State. So is the thoughtful preparation of its future leaders. Earlier this spring, I was invited to speak to the Board of Trustees about what Ohio State does to ensure that its departments and colleges will have ongoing, seamless leadership at all levels. The members of the board were impressed by the number and variety of opportunities that allow our faculty, staff, and students to hone their leadership skills. Here are some of the programs I discussed with the board.

Faculty Leadership Development

- The CIC’s Academic Leadership Program, which was developed to hone the leadership and managerial skills of faculty members in CIC campuses*. Participants take part in three two-day seminars that rotate among the CIC institutions. In the last five years, Ohio State has sent 20 faculty members to this program, more than half of whom now hold prominent university leadership roles. They include a dean and seven assistant or associate deans, three department chairs, and our deputy CIO.
- The President and Provost’s Leadership Institute. A two-year program for long-term faculty leadership development. Focusing primarily on the nature of effective leadership rather than discrete leadership tasks, the institute aims to create a pool of potential leaders from groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in key leadership roles, especially that of department chair. Participants are tenured faculty who don’t currently hold significant leadership positions, but who may be in a position to do so within five to ten years.
- Managing Laboratories Workshop Series, developed for Ohio State’s women faculty and researchers in the sciences to enhance their skills in recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and mentoring; developing budgets; managing conflicts; and setting up collaborations.
- Ohio State’s First-Year Experience for New Deans, designed to give our new deans an up-close look at the Offices of Finance and Finance, Research, University Development, and University Relations. A key element of this initiative is that it pairs a new dean with an experienced dean who has been selected to serve as mentor. The two hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings during the first year of the new dean’s appointment.
- The Academic Leader Development Series, aimed at training all of Ohio State’s new academic leaders in the roles and responsibilities of a leader, faculty review and development, critical legal issues, staff performance management, and financial stewardship. We encourage the participation of new deans as well as all new associate and assistant deans, school and center directors, and department chairs. The Academic Leader Development Series is meant to serve as a follow-on program for participants in the President and Provost’s Leadership Institute.

Staff Leadership Development

- The Leading Edge, a program that provides intensive learning experiences for mid-level staff managers who want to enhance their leadership skills. The program helps participants design a professional development strategy that suits their ongoing needs.
- The Women’s Professional Leadership Series, aimed at expanding opportunities for women staff members. In this year-long series of monthly sessions, participants meet with senior women staff members and other discussion facilitators.

Student Leadership Development

- The Student-Alumni Council, responsible for coordinating such events as May Week. Its members serve as liaisons to prospective students and their families at the Maximos Scholarship Competition, the Office of Minority Affairs Day, and otherwise as requested by the Office of Admissions or University Honors and Scholars.
- The Buckeye Leadership Society, which sponsors monthly talks on success and leadership.
- The LeaderShape Institute, a six-day focus session on action planning, group problem solving, and ethical decision making.
- Mount Leadership Society, a living-learning initiative specifically developed to set students on a leadership path through Ohio State. The society is one of Ohio State’s 12 Scholars Programs.
- Our three student governance organizations, the Undergraduate Student Government, Council of Graduate Students, and Inter-Professional Council. The representatives of these groups learn to be responsible leaders and engaged citizens by serving as liaisons from their constituencies to the governing bodies of the university.

Our university’s leaders are central to the development and articulation of our professional values, to our ability to define and achieve strategic priorities, and to our shared desire to channel good will and energy into achieving the goals of our institution’s Academic Plan. I hope this overview of Ohio State’s leadership development opportunities makes it clear that we are actively building the university’s leadership capacity—at every level.

*The CIC, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, is a consortium of the Big Ten schools that also includes the University of Chicago.
Reaccreditation and Academic Program Reviews

While these leadership development programs are regular, ongoing efforts, a once-per-decade initiative is now front and center of our university agenda. This year and next, Ohio State will undergo a university-wide reaccreditation review with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission demonstrates our commitment to assuring and advancing quality.

The reaccreditation review requires us to show that we meet core criteria in such areas as student learning and effective teaching, the acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge, and preparing for the future. Relevant information from faculty, staff, students, and administrators is being collected and analyzed and will then be shared with an external evaluation team that will visit the campus in spring 2007. While here, the group will conduct interviews with members of the university community. In addition, as part of the reaccreditation process, we’ve been asked to do a focused study of graduate and professional education. The site visit team can then assist us by acting as consultants in this special focus area.

Our reaccreditation effort is being led by Vice Provost W. Randy Smith, who as a faculty fellow led our last reaccreditation in 1997. Faculty Fellow Stephanie Davidson, associate professor of speech and hearing, is coordinating the collection of information.

Periodic reviews of yet another sort have been taking place this year. On a routine basis, Ohio State’s academic departments conduct an academic program review to appraise and refine their goals and examine progress toward them. This provides an opportunity to analyze resources, courses, and programs and gauge the impact of program decisions on the achievement of goals within the unit, the college, and the university. Analytic and data-driven, the review can emphasize specific topics and issues and readily align with specialized accreditation processes. The self-review is followed by a visit and report from an external team of peers as well as consultation among the department, college, and OAA.

In addition to providing oversight for our reaccreditation review, Randy also oversees Ohio State’s academic program reviews. Assistant Provost John Ryan serves as academic program review coordinator. Throughout the process, John is available to advise and support the departments undergoing review. The information that emerges becomes an integral part of the college and OAA’s departments in the Colleges of Human Ecology and Mathematical and Physical Sciences and the schools in the College of Education have recently completed reviews. Currently, the Departments of Economics; Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology; and Geography are completing reviews. Reviews in the Departments of Art, Greek and Latin, History of Art, and Women’s Studies are underway.

College Annual Reports Giving Way to Biennial Dialogues

A new plan for the future in other ways, an initiative that’s taking shape will spell the end of the college annual report as we know it. The change is an important one, since it will make the reporting process both interactive and proactive. The annual questionnaire about accomplishments and goals is being replaced by a biennial dialogue about college-specific data that will be provided by OAA, along with questions, observations, and comments. The dialogue will give us the opportunity to engage the leadership of each college in an analysis of strategies to enhance that unit’s academic excellence. This year our focus is on doctoral program quality, undergraduate education; and student, staff, and faculty success. The dialogue will help deans develop a leadership action plan that will guide strategic decisions for the coming years.

This new reporting process is part of a larger effort to integrate and routine our requests for information. By establishing a simple, sensible cycle of information gathering—from these two-year college dialogues and from the periodic program reviews described above—we will be able to connect all of this information to our strategic planning and, so, to meeting the goals of the Academic Plan.

In closing, I’d like to say how much I’ve enjoyed the series of visits that the colleges have hosted for me and my Office of Academic Affairs colleagues throughout the year. These meetings have given us a personal opportunity to discuss the issues that matter most to our faculty, staff, and students. We’re already looking forward to next year’s round of visits.

Meanwhile, I extend best wishes to all of you for a pleasant and productive summer.

Sincerely,

Barbara R. Snyder
Executive Vice President and Provost