

President MacPherson, President Nichols, and Trustees –

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on behalf of the Financial Crisis Advisory Committee and about its work over the past 19 weeks.

It is fitting that as the President and I present the financial crisis report to you today that one of the oldest members of UW is sitting next to one of the newest members of UW.

I wish to apologize in advance for the personal nature of this report, but the process of the past 19 weeks has been deeply personal to me.

To begin, I would like to thank the members of the Financial Crisis Advisory Committee for their dedication to UW; their willingness to work on weekends, late at night, and early in the morning; their hard work; their perseverance on a difficult task; their positive attitude in an often negative and emotionally draining environment; their willingness to speak up and represent their constituencies; and their inspiration to me and their patience with me. It has been a privilege to chair this committee and is a privilege to represent them today.

In the history of the University of Wyoming, the Financial Crisis Advisory Committee and its work are unique. Although we have experienced several budget reductions, and I have been involved in many of them, UW has never been under the potential “threat” of a possible declaration of financial exigency before. This placed the crisis committee and the University in an environment without historical precedent. As a consequence, we received a charge with a task to fulfill without receiving any direction or guidance as to how to go about it. Perhaps I suffered most without these sign posts to show me the way, but my wanderings certainly resulted in the committee working with less efficiency and effectiveness than the University deserved and needed. In spite of my limitations, the direction provided by President Laurie Nichols, VPAA David Jones (in July), Provost Kate Miller (since August), and Vice President William Mai were instrumental and invaluable in enabling the committee to complete its task and bring us to today. The University of Wyoming is fortunate to have these great leaders at this difficult time in our history. It has been a privilege to work with and to get to know these people.

Before President Nichols officially presents the Crisis Plan to you for consideration, I would like to make a few observations gleaned from my own

experience and those shared by members of the committee at our debriefing meeting.

Let me state prior to these observations that I am a psychometrician. By profession I am an expert in the development of reliable and valid measures of almost anything. I am an information specialist. This will color my observations somewhat.

To my knowledge, never before has any group within the University been assigned the task of actually assessing the “integrity of the University” so that it could be preserved or actually assessing the nature of “substantial harm” so that it could be prevented. By invoking UW Regulation 6-41, the financial crisis advisory committee was required to consider both of these issues in the development of a reduction plan for FY 2018.

From the beginning I was haunted by my inability to define “institutional integrity” and “substantial harm,” and I was crushed by the responsibility placed on my committee. We were being asked to consider a grave situation and make recommendations that potentially could impact the institutions for years. We all took our job and our responsibility very seriously. As such, we felt the need to acquire information of the highest quality.

Unfortunately much of the information that was presented to us was of questionable quality; inconsistently reported, inaccurate, and often out of date. This was really not the fault of the various groups who provided us with information, but UW desperately needs to invest in obtaining and maintaining high quality information.

Several times we were asked to consider a situation at UW in relation to our current set of comparators. As a measurement specialist with considerable experience, I guarantee that our comparators do not define and measure activities in the same manner that we do. In addition, these other institutions are similarly plagued with information of questionable quality. If we wish to use comparator information, we need to invest substantial time and energy into completing this task once and for all. As a measurement specialist, I do not believe that this task will ever be completed successfully. [I would love to be the consultant on this project. I would have funding for life.] However, there is absolutely no need to establish a legitimate list of comparators prior to the completion of the Strategic

Planning Process. Who we are will change and as such who we are like will also change.

The most fundamental guiding document in any effort to enhance or reduce an institution is its strategic plan. The University of Wyoming does not have an existing plan. Fortunately, we have begun the process to develop one.

As I said at the first meeting of the crisis committee, it will take a miracle for us to complete our task successfully, within the timeframe that was imposed on us. Given the absence of high quality information and the absence of a strategic plan, I underestimated the difficulties confronting us.

Then, in a stroke of genius, we decided to enlist the aid of the University in our task. I was still haunted and burdened, but we had a direction. To each division of the University we assigned the task of making suggestions to us on how to accomplish our task from their perspective. Although this may sound like “pass the buck,” I like to think of it as use your resources. We then enlisted the aid of those who had gone before us. We read numerous position papers, white papers, and previous budget reduction plans. And finally we established open meetings and listening sessions to hear from the University. We learned much. In retrospect this was probably the real information that we needed all along.

Then a miracle happened. In times of trouble it is common for individuals and groups to think territorially. I have seen this occur here at UW in past crises. However, I was privileged to witness and actually be a part of several meetings in which Vice Presidents reached out to one another, and to see some divisions take on an extra burden so that others would be less impacted, especially in Information Technology, Academic Affairs, and in Student Affairs. This is the miracle we needed and it was instrumental in our success.

In the absence of almost everything we needed to do our job, a plan has been developed. The draft plan was distributed on October 12 to the campus community and beyond. Over the 18 days of the comment period I read hundreds of comments. However, I did not read a single comment that proposed any change to the draft plan. On October 31 the committee met to consider changes to the draft plan and unanimously endorsed the plan as proposed by the President.

It would thus appear that we have successfully completed our charge. The plan that is being presented does not include a recommendation to declare a financial exigency. It is my belief (not based on information) that the proposed plan manages to preserve the integrity of UW and it does prevent substantial harm to the institution. However, I know that many of my faculty colleagues disagree with my conclusion. I have spent many hours listening to their arguments. And part of me has sided with each of these individuals with whom I have spoken. We have lost many people at UW over the past several months, faculty and especially staff, and as can be seen in the proposed plan, we will lose many more, most hopefully only through attrition. However, no matter how it happens, this will be a fatal blow to the UW that we have known. UW will not recover. We will not be able to back to what was. All things, even in positive and nurturing environments, change and evolve. And so will UW.

The impacts of the changes to the FY 2017 budget are still being realized, and the proposed changes to the FY 2018 budget will not be fully known until July of 2017, if even then. How much we have experienced and how much we will experience are still unknowns. Don't be fooled by our apparent success, we have not escaped. We have only delayed the reality of our decisions.

It is painful to go through budget reductions. And regardless of what July 2017 brings, I can guarantee that the services and the quality of services offered by the institution have been and will continue to be effected. These things happen every time there is a budget reduction. However, the potential impact on UW that has me the most concerned is the change of attitude that I hear from many corners of the University. UW has experienced much trauma and people are questioning their ability to continue to walk the extra miles and put in the extra effort that our students and our institution deserve.

It tears at my very soul to see UW change in the manner that it has and for the reasons that have been imposed on us, and I have been forever impacted by being a part of this process. Today I am relieved of my burden, but I am still haunted. For me, I have decided that the *integrity of the institution* will be found in what it will become rather than what it has been.

I have faith in our leadership, I have faith in the Strategic Planning process, and most importantly I have faith in our people. We are down, but we will rise up to

meet the needs of our students and our institution. This is the UW that can never be taken away from us by any budget reduction or external force.

In closing I want to paraphrase the saying when there is a change in the monarchy in England. Although it is somewhat premature, let me be the first to proclaim, The Old UW is dead, long live the New UW.