

10-11-1988

FYI- Oct. 11, 1988

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Recommended Citation

Staff, University Relations, "FYI- Oct. 11, 1988" (1988). *FYI*. 141.
<https://neiudc.neiu.edu/fyi/141>

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

October 11, 1988

Northeastern Illinois University

FYI is published by University Relations, Northeastern Illinois University, for university faculty and staff members. Please send information to University Relations, C-437.

FACULTY ASSEMBLY HEARS PRESIDENT

At the Faculty Assembly on September 15, President Lamb gave his annual State of the University address. He began by stating the importance of the Strategic Planning process, then introduced Richard Hesler, chairman of the Strategic Planning Council, who summarized the council's work so far.

Hesler Updates Planning Process

Hesler made several points about the ad hoc group, which has been meeting in various task forces since last winter and recently released a draft mission statement for the university based on its work.

- The council was appointed by the president and is responsible for making "bottom-up" recommendations to him. The recommendations are coming directly from the council's efforts.
- The council has not reached any firm decisions "on mission, clientele, or any other topic," he continued, explaining that they want to study "the configuration of the entire university." For example, they decided to look at the Center for Program Development as part of their deliberation, but reached no conclusions.
- The council believes, "President Lamb wishes to lead us into a future that WE envision."

Hesler urged the university community to participate fully and directly in the strategic planning process-- as more than 70 people already have-- by reading and commenting on the first set of task force reports and by providing input on revising the draft mission statement.

President discusses policy making and funding

Dr. Lamb reiterated the need for more involvement, saying, "I hope it is obvious how important this planning effort is to the university and its future. Things are changing all around us and we need to be able to respond to those changes and, where possible, be on the leading edge with academic or service programs. If we don't plan, if we don't project our university into the future, if we don't try to anticipate, we will be left behind and will face the loss of students and eventually programs. We will be ignored by community leaders, and the state legislature and Board of Higher Education.

Lamb reminded the audience of some 300 faculty and staff that the Board of Governors sets policy for Northeastern, so the strategic plan will be presented to the chancellor and the board, who are already aware of and very interested in the process.

In response to recent rumors about the future of CPD, he emphasized that CPD continues to function under an assistant provost and that there has been no decision by anyone to disband it.

He then went on to talk about funding for the university, commenting that the recent tax increase campaign, while it failed to increase funds, did prove valuable in bringing higher education together and creating a climate responsive to an increase. He pointed out that the struggle did call attention to the need for higher salaries, and that he will continue to work to improve salaries for faculty and staff, including civil service. He noted that tight budgets for the current fiscal year, have meant "cuts across the university, with no office immune from reductions."

Speaking about a change to a semester calendar, Lamb stated that funding levels are not adequate to implement such a change, but that calendar studies are mentioned for three BOG campuses in the recently concluded UPI agreement. UPI and the administration will be forming a joint task force this academic year to study implementing a calendar change.

Highlights of 1987-88 Year

Next, Lamb talked about positive changes that have occurred at Northeastern in the past year such as a 91 percent increase in grant funding from public sources, a 60 percent increase in scholarships, and increases in private sector and corporate matching gifts. He cited the fundraising dinner and Ramsey Lewis concert last May as remarkably successful for a first effort, and announced plans to continue faculty development grants begun last spring. "We will be sure all faculty have an equal chance to be considered."

He listed the new "Think of Northeastern" brochure series, the "Community Commitment" neighborhood newsletter, Annual Report, and promotional video as examples of new efforts to gain recognition for Northeastern off-campus, and mentioned the new "Student Notes" newsletter for students as a step forward in communicating with that key constituency.

Other highlights of the year included Commencement at the new Physical Education Complex; the Honors breakfast and medallions to further recognize outstanding academic achievers; and the naming of the Markham Prairie as a federal natural landmark, which Lamb called "a tribute to Professor Robert Betz, without whom the prairie would not exist." He also mentioned the larger, on-campus Child Care Center and the move of Beck's bookstore to campus as notable.

The president pointed to several new initiatives as well.

- The International-Intercultural Core Faculty which has been appointed by Provost Barbara Hursh. This group will "focus on ways to mainstream cross-cultural emphasis into the general education program and other departmental offerings... and assist the university to realize the the great educational benefit of the cultural diversity we enjoy."
- An increase of 12 percent in travel money for Academic Affairs and new guidelines to make these funds more readily available to faculty.
- The continuation of the Inland Real Estate Distinguished Lectureship Series and the Mostly Music Chamber Music Series.

Clearing up misconceptions about Athletics

President Lamb used a humorous story to point out how miscommunication can occur on a campus. This led to a clarification of what is happening with the Athletics, Intramurals, and Recreation programs. He reviewed the results of last year's task force report that recommended some changes in intercollegiate competition, and described the work he and the task force did with an outside consultant. The eventual conclusion was that a school of Northeastern's size and facilities should be in NCAA Division I, and "that we move away from the ad hoc nature of our athletic program... and relate (its) goals to the academic goals of the university." The consultant's views, including the affordability of making the necessary changes, were shared with the task force. Subsequent decisions have led to the following changes.

- The hiring of Dr. Dennis Keihn as athletic director, based on his experience and his record of success in tying athletics to academic achievements of students, and emphasizing intramurals and recreation as well as athletics.
- Application to NCAA Division II until it is feasible to move to Division I.
- A 25 percent reduction of state funds supporting intercollegiate athletics.
- A significant reduction in the amount of salaries for people directing Athletics, Intramurals, and Recreation with no loss of jobs.
- A continuing commitment to Intramurals and Recreation.
- The upcoming appointment of a policy-setting Intercollegiate Athletic Board, comprised of four faculty, one staff person, a student and an alum. The Faculty Senate will nominate faculty representatives.
- The upcoming appointment of a faculty member as academic representative and liaison to the NCAA. This person will have sole authority to rule on student eligibility.

Lamb concluded his formal presentation by declaring, "Even though we don't yet have the state commitment we need, we can be optimistic about Northeastern's future. We have succeeded in spite of financial difficulties, we have an excellent faculty, and more and more people are finding out about those faculty every week. I am still convinced that, in spite of today's financial picture, tomorrow's will be better and we will be able to glow a little in the sunshine of those days. We must be poised to take advantage of that future and I believe we can do just that."

