

Email on strategic change and the Board of Regents sent on October 23, 2006, from Sheldon Kurtz, Faculty Senate President, to all faculty

Dear Colleagues:

The press has recently reported about an ongoing strategic change process that could have serious implications for the future of The University of Iowa. Because these press reports about this process have been incomplete and sometimes confusing and because this process may lead to fundamental changes at our University, I write to share with you what I know about the process at this time.

On July 20, 2006 Regent Michael Gartner, Chair of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, initiated a "process of strategic change at the three universities" via an e-mail to the Presidents of The University of Iowa, Iowa State University and The University of Northern Iowa, and Regent Teresa Wahlert. Copies of this email were forwarded to the other regents as well.

The email states that the questions to be considered by the two regents, the three presidents, and the other regents are: "If we were to design three state universities today, how would we do it and what would they look like? Then, having that in mind, how close do we want to come to achieving that look, how close can we come, and how are we going to get there?"

Board President Gartner specified a number of questions for the group to answer along the way including: 1) what do our "customers" want; 2) how should each campus be organized academically and administratively; 3) what should we be doing that we are not doing; 4) what are we not doing that we should be doing; 5) what functions should be centralized; 6) where are we academically great and are those areas we should be great in; 7) where are we academically weak and should we remain in those areas; 8) do the universities compete in academic and non-academic areas where they should not compete; and 9) how to determine where areas of excellence should be sited.

In that email he also asked: "do we have a rational management structure, financial structure, academic structure and "cultural atmosphere." To these questions Regent Gartner states in the email that "the answer is probably no."

To begin the strategic change process, Regent Gartner states that he and Regent Wahlert will meet individually with each university president then the group of five will meet "jointly." I do not know whether those joint meetings have begun. Likewise I do not know what briefings, if any, have been given to the other seven regents. There have been two Board meetings since July and nothing on this subject has been on the public agenda.

President Gartner's e-mail expresses a sense of urgency for the process but is otherwise silent on the timetable for the strategic change process. A Press Citizen report indicated that Regent Gartner suggested that there would be some report to the regents by the end of the year.

Some faculty members have asked why this process is moving forward while we have an interim president. President Gartner doesn't address that issue directly in his email but does say we have three terrific presidents who are willing to devise and then take the bold steps that probably will be required.

To date, I have been unsuccessful in learning more information about this strategic change process beyond that provided in President Gartner's e-mail. I do know that President Gartner's strategic change process was begun without formal approval by the Board of Regents and that this matter has not been on a Board agenda since that time.

You may also be aware that an internal strategic assessment that ranks programs within each of the colleges was conducted over the last couple of months. I believe this assessment was performed at the request of the Board of Regents. I presume that this strategic assessment could have some impact on the strategic change process that is being undertaken, but its exact relationship to that process is unclear. It also is unclear to me whether a similar internal assessment process has been undertaken at the other regents' universities.

At last week's meeting of the Faculty Senate, a report of this matter was made to the senators. Following an extended discussion, the Senate unanimously adopted a sense of the senate motion to allow me to draft a resolution to the entire Board. This resolution will express the Senate's recommendation that any strategic change process is conducted in the open and with input from all stakeholders in the university at all levels of the deliberations. I am in the process of drafting that resolution which will be posted on the faculty senate website.

The strategic change process initiated by Regent President Gartner may prove to be of historic importance to The University of Iowa. I have been and will continue to devote much of my time and energies to this matter. I will try to keep you apprised of the steps that I am taking.

If you have comments, send them to [faculty-senate@uiowa.edu](mailto:faculty-senate@uiowa.edu). In the near future you will be able to find additional information about the strategic change process at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~facsen>.

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