

March 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues -

I would like to thank everyone for the thoughtful papers submitted in response to our ONEWSU questions. I have had the opportunity to look through all of these and I wanted to share some impressions after reading these.

First, there is clearly no strong desire from anyone to change significantly from our current academic model where faculty hiring and promotion, curriculum decisions, and promotion and tenure remains strongly centered around a college model lead by academic deans. **I feel that there is a renewed sense of commitment from academic leaders across the system to not significantly change a system that many of you believe is working well.** I would like to add that one of the silver linings from our use of Zoom during COVID is that it has actually helped with collaboration and communication across the system – and it will be important to keep using these tools in the future to avoid some of the communication issues that were present prior to COVID.

Second, there is **consensus that there are several areas which, if properly structured, would be much more efficient when handled and/or coordinated at the system level** and do not need to be unnecessarily duplicated at the college and campus level. Items such as compliance, government relations, finance and administration, human resources, IT services, and fundraising were mentioned by many of you as potential areas for inclusion in a system structure. I believe that this is the next area that should be laid out in our next concept paper.

Third, many of you have asked for more **specifics on what is actually being proposed for a system structure** and commented that it is hard to provide feedback when there is not yet a clearly defined proposal in terms of system structure.

Fourth, the **need for a revised budget model continues to be a common thread.** This is also a chicken and egg problem – we need to know the way the budget will work to determine appropriate structure and if we had an appropriate structure we could then develop a budget model that would best support it. Thanks to the Executive Budget Council, I believe we will have a proposal on a budget model near the end of the semester – so this will provide some clarity in this regard.

Fifth, I know that **several people commented that it is unclear what problems we are trying to solve.** In my mind, this is a bit more complex to describe. In my conversations with many of you over my tenure – frequently frustrations with system

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operations, roles and responsibilities, and fuzzy decision making were often key topics. The Roles and Responsibilities report was our first foray into attempting to solve some of these challenges – and our two concept papers were an attempt to provide some definitive steps towards a more robust system model. So – what I am trying to solve is best summarized as –

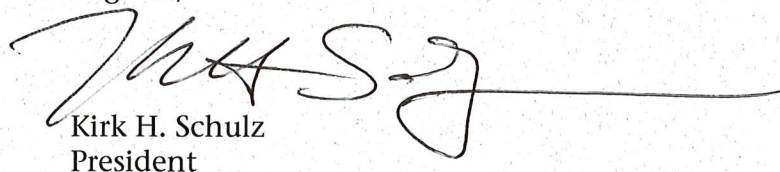
- Position WSU more strategically for future growth in student population across the system.
- Provide enhanced opportunities for campuses to shape their academic and student programs to be aligned with their students, as well as individual community needs and expectations.
- Provide clarity on authority and decision making.
- Put in place an appropriately staffed administrative structure that provides system level support and that does not need to be duplicated at the individual campus level.

Finally – I sincerely believe that we are going to need to continue to evolve the way we do things moving forward. **I want us to change things that will benefit WSU in the long run and to keep and expand things that are working well.** I believe this is the ultimate challenge we face as leaders at WSU is to differentiate between the things we need to change and the things that we should leave alone.

The need for institutions to continue to evolve has been discussed in the national higher education literature for some time – this article is timely around the need for continued change even in the midst of COVID uncertainty - <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/03/11/colleges-should-invest-new-initiatives-even-these-financially-challenging-times>.

I appreciate your leadership during these challenging times and want to continue to engage in lively dialog and discussion as we continue to evolve the WSU system.

Regards,



Kirk H. Schulz  
President