

April 15, 2009

Dear Provosts and Deans:

I hope you will join me (and consider submitting a proposal) for the 2009 Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities' annual conference, hosted by Widener University, in Philadelphia, October 11-13. (See <http://www.cumuonline.org/conference/index.htm>.)

In addition to encouraging you to submit proposals (deadline extended to May 8), I am especially pleased to invite you to the inaugural **Provosts' and Deans' Roundtable** to discuss the impact of the CUMU mission on the *academic* initiatives and challenges facing our institutions. As you know, CUMU has long been recognized as a presidents' and faculty members' forum for driving institutional collaborations and impact in the communities we serve. What has frequently been missing from such conversations, however, is the role that provosts and deans play as the "go-betweens" in these critical initiatives. We hope to remedy that void with this roundtable and with sessions you propose. Some topics we might explore together include the following:

General Issues for Provosts and Deans to Explore:

- How do we recruit and retain faculty who can contribute to our urban missions?
- In what ways do the curriculum and research agendas advance the urban mission? And what role can provosts and deans play in influencing that agenda?
- How do we reward faculty through tenure, promotion, merit pay, etc. for the work they do in line with this mission? How can we engage meaningful conversations about revising our tenure/promotion documents to institutionalize a rigorous recognition and reward structure for urban-focused projects?
- Are there strategic ways to use adjunct faculty in promoting the urban mission? And what should their reward structure be? And can we assure their integration with full-time faculty in meaningful, contributive ways that advance the institutional mission?
- How do we assess the intellectual impact of the urban mission in our curriculum and co-curriculum?

Conference Thematic Issues for Provosts and Deans to Explore:

- What does "resiliency" mean in the *academic* context of an urban mission? What are the specific threats to resiliency that astute provosts and deans are addressing?
- In what ways do we conceptualize resiliency in the context of our current economic status? Given the multiple means of cutting budgets, can we articulate a set of priorities that specifically address resiliency?
- How do we recognize and prepare for enrollment fluctuations that may threaten the resiliency of our programs?
- How do we recruit new faculty in anticipation of mass faculty retirements as a measure of resiliency?
- How do we reposition faculty development initiatives in the context of promoting resiliency?
- How do we position academic leadership initiatives (i.e., creating a pipeline of future leaders) in the context of promoting resiliency?

- Given tough economies, evidence of increasing faculty and student incivility, and enhanced external pressures (compliance, reporting, accountability, etc.), how do we maintain our *emotional* resiliency as leaders of the academy?

Finally, I am especially pleased that members of the University Leadership Council, a Washington, DC-based organization whose purpose is to conduct and disseminate “best practices” in higher education, will be providing a special luncheon keynote for provosts and deans. Their presentation focuses on best practices in recruiting diverse faculty, clearly a challenge for many institutions who value diversity as a key characteristic of urban institutions. I believe you will enjoy the wealth of information this group provides and find ways to borrow some strategies and modify others to suit your own institutional needs.

As noted earlier, this is the first time that Provosts and Deans have been singled out for the roles they play in promoting the CUMU mission at their institutions. I believe it is a long overdue conversation and opportunity to network with colleagues with whom we can share observations and realities, challenges and solutions, proven strategies and what if’s. While I realize that travel economies might necessitate your coming alone (and we will make you very comfortable with our Philly hospitality!), you might find even greater rewards from coming in pairs or groups to get and offer a broader perspective on the academic impact of the CUMU mission. In fact, co-presenting with each other or with faculty might be a perfect combination of perspectives; and opportunities for student poster presentations might offer a unique forum for these students to talk first-hand about their experiences with urban-missioned education, while gaining insights on academic leadership.

Our website includes a direct link for Provosts and Deans, as well as the link for submitting proposals. Soon we will have the registration link ready, where you may RSVP for this invitation to join the luncheon and roundtable session. (See the site at <http://www.cumuonline.org/conference/index.htm>) If you have any questions about the conference, the roundtable session, or general information about CUMU and/or Widener, please do not hesitate to call me.

I look forward to seeing you in Philly!

Jo Allen

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