

To: University Faculty Council

From: Tim O'Donnell, Provost

Re: February Report

Date: February 12, 2026

I encourage you to review the various reports prepared by Academic Affairs for the upcoming Board of Visitors meeting. There is a great deal that is happening across our three colleges and in various offices and units within our division.

Inclement weather: I have not received much feedback (either critical or supportive) regarding the change in our approach which provides faculty with greater flexibility when the University is closed due to inclement weather. While I hope that we will not face further weather-related challenges this spring, my expectation is that this will be the policy going forward.

SCHEV update: SCHEV has approved the addition of the BFA in Theatre to our existing degree program in Performing Arts. The proposal for a BS in Geography has been revised and will soon be resubmitted to SCHEV. They have provided a first round of review on the MS in Artificial Intelligence in Business proposal as well as the two Certificates (Artificial Intelligence in Business and Entrepreneurial Leadership). A central critique is that Artificial Intelligence doesn't fit into an existing CIP Code and there is insufficient proof of demand for degrees that do not yet exist. Following the Board of Visitors approval, SCHEV will receive name change proposals for the Department of History, American Studies and Sociology, the Department of Art, the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance, the Department of Management and Marketing, the College of Education and Human Development.

MSN Program: The new MSN program will be admitting its first class in fall 2026. Presently, Dr. Elizabeth Ritt (interim director of the program) is working with faculty and the community to complete the development of the program, including scoping out placement for the program in the Eagle Village mixed-use building. Elizabeth will be with us through June and then we hope to have completed the search for permanent leadership.

Deans search: As you know, finalists for the Dean of Education and Human Development are visiting campus. I am grateful for the efforts of Dean Mellinger and the entire search committee who have been working on this important search since mid-fall.

Waples: Four faculty applied for and are receiving Waple fellowships. Congratulations to Dr. Ranjit Singh, Dr. Sayan Sarkar, Dr. Lance Gentry, and Dr. Debbie Hydorn and, thank you to the Committee on Sabbaticals, Fellowships, and Faculty Awards. With that in mind, it is time once

again to collect nominations for a number of **faculty awards**. Those announcements will go out from Dr. Christy Irish in the next few days. I encourage you to take time to nominate colleagues.

Strategic Planning: In the last few weeks, I have benefitted from multiple conversations with faculty from all three colleges and am grateful to those who took the time to provide written feedback including the generation of a revised version of the draft. There are many good ideas and suggestions, all of which will be reviewed and considered. A few themes have emerged related to faculty input, faculty support, and teaching loads—all important topics which will inform planning and resource allocation conversations. Please continue to share your thoughts and ideas.