Relevant Sections to the AS Retreat of President Conoley’s Convocation Address

We have been developing efforts in most of the challenges mentioned above—we are responding to what the rest of the nation is struggling with. Despite the wise advice to not fix things that are not broken, I think, number one, we live in changing times that demand responsiveness on our side, that is the VUCA environment I mentioned earlier—volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous. And number two, that built into our university realities may be processes and norms that do not enable success in the 21st century, for example, disciplinary silos that limit our ability to focus on the grand challenges of the day, which include health care, water, climate change, terrorism, immigration, poverty/racism, energy, globalization, sustainable economic development, political corruption/gridlock, and other matters of national and international concern. Land grant universities were created to work on societal challenges as they emerged—and we certainly have some in this century.

With your help and advice we need to eliminate barriers to our success and impediments to the ways we share and create knowledge critical to addressing these grand challenges of the day.

I think we should ask ourselves if we are organized and/or hire new faculty and staff in ways to reach new levels of achievement for our students, faculty, staff and alumni. Do our traditional departmental structures make the most sense? Should we begin to organize ourselves in ways that bring the power of the sciences and humanities together; connect the research in social sciences and health to the realities of diverse populations; better leverage the expertise of both our student affairs and academic affairs professionals for student development; pair the ingenuity of the engineer with the creativity of the artist, the performance and communication skills from our Cole Conservatory with the planning and business acumen from our business school—all supported by our vast library and electronic resources? Your proposals around this idea are most welcome. Or you might tell me “it’s not going to happen.”

I know there is substantial wisdom throughout our organization. I also know that student and organizational success depends on everyone being involved so my requests for input are sent out to all.

We must also expand some of the innovative efforts from the humanities to establish firmly their places in the development of the truly educated citizen. I am especially impressed with several of the departments who have been partnering with other major fields to share their special insights to a broader audience of students and faculty colleagues.

I’d like us to begin a process of change without knowing where we’ll end up except in being a better place to live by our values of transformation, unequalled access/opportunity, and greater community.