August 27, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

I hope you had a productive and refreshing summer, and that your fall semester is off to a good start. The faculty turnout at the Opening Mass was excellent, and was appreciated by Fr. Jenkins, the deans, and myself. We are most grateful to those of you who were able to attend.

Last year I shared with you the report of the Task Force on Collaborative Hiring\(^1\) and described a number of opportunities for faculty to comment on the report and offer further suggestions on collaborative hiring. Many of you did in fact submit suggestions and comments, for which the committee members and I are grateful. The report was also discussed at last year’s retreat of the deans and department chairs. The deans also led conversations on the report within their colleges and schools, and shared with me and with each other the comments made during those conversations. Overall, the report received a thorough airing and careful analysis. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the actions we have taken, will take, or will encourage as a result of the report. All of these actions are unanimously supported by the deans and were endorsed by the strong majority of faculty commenting on them. In short, neither the report in general nor its recommendations in specific proved to be controversial.

The basic charge to the Task Force was to review collaborative hiring practices and procedures at Notre Dame and make recommendations for improving these procedures so that, when such hiring is appropriate and desired, we can carry it out in an optimal fashion. In addressing this charge, the Task Force identified the benefits of collaborative hiring and recommended the adoption of several principles aimed at creating a productive climate for collaborative hiring, including the principles that: (1) disciplinary excellence is essential to facilitating interdisciplinary excellence; (2) the ongoing evaluation of existing interdisciplinary programs at the University will significantly enhance the quality of these programs; and (3) when a school or college department hosts a collaborative hire at the request of and with funding from another academic unit, the person hired ordinarily should not count against what the department

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\(^1\) The report is available at: https://www.nd.edu/~provost/current-initiatives/collaborative-hiring/documents/CollaborativeHiringReport.pdf
would otherwise receive from the Dean in terms of other resources and faculty lines in support of the department’s strategic plan. The deans and I, along with those faculty members who commented on them, endorse each of these principles.

The Task Force also identified a range of strategies and practices for deans, department chairs, CAPs, institute directors, and others to consider when recruiting a faculty member who would have responsibilities in more than one academic unit. These strategies and practices do not narrowly prescribe one model for collaborative hiring but, rather, present numerous options consistent with the observation that different challenges and responsibilities obtain in different situations. A description of these strategies is available at: https://provost.nd.edu/for-current-faculty/resources/toolkit-for-collaborative-hiring/. The Task Force gave careful thought to the ideas described in this website; I hope you will find it to be a useful resource.

Other recommendations of the Task Force require and will receive, especially by the deans, further study before final decisions are made about their affordability and possible implementation. These include the recommendation to create new faculty lines for collaborative hires, and the recommendation to reallocate or seek funding for new endowed chair positions that would report directly to the provost, perhaps using a title such as University Professor, rather than to a college or school. Finally, the Task Force did not recommend, but did mention the possibility, of permitting T&R faculty appointments outside of colleges or schools, such as within university institutes, beyond currently established procedures for institute/college collaboration. There was little support for this possibility expressed at the various campus discussions, beyond currently established procedures for institute/college collaboration. While one could imagine the need to revisit this question in the future, for example, were the title University Professor to be established, at present there is no plan to establish tenure outside of a college or school.

Once again I thank the members of the Task Force for an excellent report and the many other faculty members who contributed to its campus-wide discussion. I look forward to working with the deans to support the many excellent principles and procedures identified for encouraging, when appropriate, more interdisciplinary and collaborative hiring at Notre Dame.

Best wishes for a productive and rewarding academic year.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas G. Burish

cc: Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C