MEMORANDUM

TO: Peter Crouch
Dean, College of Engineering

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Response to Program Review

Thank you for your memo of September 25, 2012 concerning the Graduate Program Review. I appreciate your response and I think the accompanying summary listing the responsibility of various people in the College will be very useful in tracking actions as you move forward.

I think there are a number of integrating themes in your response that I want to highlight and endorse in what follows. First, there are a number of comments concerning steps that need to be taken to move the graduate programs in the College forward, and you task the graduate chairs in the department with responsibility for many of these. A challenge in the past has been the unusual organizational structure in which graduate chairs felt they reported to the Graduate Dean, not to department chairs and you as Dean. This issue may recede if indeed the Graduate Dean begins to report to the OVCAA, but my advice would be that you create structures of communication and dialogue inside the College with the graduate chairs and not assume that the issues of misalignment will automatically change given a change in reporting of the Graduate Dean. The vectors of change as suggested in the Report and endorsed in your response are all ones I endorse. I think a change in the ratio of doctoral to masters students will help with the research portfolio of the college, though I also take your point that we may not be in a position to have as high a percentage of doctoral students as many of our peers. The issue of having a graduate handbook seemed of particularly importance to the graduate students, and I urge rapid movement on this issue.

Graduate student stipend levels is an important issue here, as our stipend levels are simply not competitive with peer institutions on the mainland. You comment that we could raise stipends on research assistantships now, but this would cause inequality with teaching assistant positions. So we are faced with a question as to whether to raise RA stipends.
now, causing an inequality between RA and TA stipend levels, or whether we wait until we can do both. If the cost of raising teaching assistantship levels is only $94,000, that is essentially one faculty position. A possibility to consider would be to cannibalize one faculty line in order to bring up these TA levels. If you choose not to do that, I think allowing RA levels to raise is still worth considering. I would rather have the RA positions competitive than have them equal to uncompetitive TA stipend levels for the sake of internal consistency.

The graduate review raises the issue of whether the workload policies in the College sufficiently differentiate between highly productive and less productive faculty. Your point that the new policies approved last year are too new for their effect to be visible is a good one, so this is an issue we will need to continue to revisit. It remains my concern that any workload policy be responsive to differences in research productivity and to develop a mechanism for less active researchers to take on additional teaching responsibilities, and it will be important to see if this actually takes place in practice as a result of adopting workload policies that allow for this possibility in theory. If this does not take place, then the concerns of the Graduate Program Review will be increasingly germane.

The review raises other longer term issues, such as increasing research productivity, increasing the quantity and quality of the space available to the College, and improving the nature of the communication inside the College. You support the recommendations of the Program Review in all these areas, and I endorse them as well. I welcome the possibility of renovating Holmes Hall under the Renovate to Innovate initiative, and clearly this would help with the long term project of raising the research funding and profile of the College along with other issues raised in the Report and in your response.

The next step in our program review process is a three year report from you on progress made on the issues identified in this process, and this report is due to us from you on September 15, 2014.