



THE PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fred Cate, Vice President for Research
John Applegate, Executive Vice President for University Academic Affairs
Jackie Simmons, Vice President and General Counsel
Brad Wheeler, Vice President and CIO
Joan Hagen, Interim Vice President and CFO
Karen Adams, Chief of Staff, Office of the President
John Whelan, Associate Vice President for Human Resources

FROM: Michael A. McRobbie
President 

RE: Presidential Initiative to Reduce Administrative Barriers to Academic Excellence

DATE: June 24, 2016

In order to fully achieve what is set forth in the Bicentennial Strategic Plan it is essential that we continue to remove and reduce administrative barriers to academic excellence and innovation. As is the tendency with any large and complex organization, over time bureaucratic barriers emerge and provide obstacles to achieve organizational success. These include, but are not limited to:

- Slow or nonexistent responses to necessary requests for approvals or processing.
- Being told something cannot be done for legal reasons when in fact it can be done legally and ethically.
- Unnecessary rules or policies, often justified on the basis of non-existent or non-applicable "legal obligations."
- Lack of apparent authority or overlapping or conflicting authority.
- Multiple layers of people doing similar jobs because of the need to navigate unnecessarily complex procedures.
- One-off approaches to frequently recurrent issues, so that we end up with conflicting results.
- Poorly designed tools, automated and otherwise, that introduce inefficiency.
- Units blaming each other for lack of achievement, rather than working together to achieve IU's mission.
- Lack of central university and central campus resources to act on opportunities.
- Misfocused attention on individual unit financial solvency so units end up treating each other as sources of revenue.

Such obstacles either directly block activities that serve the university's academic mission or they waste scarce resources by delaying valuable academic activities. In addition, they can waste administrative resources by escalating comparatively simple issues to higher and higher levels within the university. We will not fully meet the challenges or seize the opportunities outlined in the Bicentennial Strategic Plan with timidity or rigidity.

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Therefore, I am appointing you effective immediately as a working group to facilitate a Presidential Initiative to Reduce Administrative Barriers to Academic Excellence with the specific task of conducting a systematic review of administrative policies and procedures in order to eliminate unnecessary or duplicative ones and to reduce the burdens they impose wherever possible. I am appointing Fred Cate and Karen Adams as co-chairs of the working group.

As part of the effort, you should engage other faculty, faculty governance, administrators, and staff as appropriate and devise a mechanism to allow members of the university community to submit concerns about policies viewed as unnecessary or inefficient. This is not just a question of efficiency or cost-savings or employee morale. In the face of unprecedented pressures on higher education and our ambitious goals in the Bicentennial Strategic Plan, the ability to innovate boldly and imaginatively is critical to our survival, as well as our success. I will expect full cooperation from all parts of the university as you systematically work to achieve your mandate.

I expect this initiative will be ongoing in nature and will cross organizational units including financial, capital, research, and information technology. Please report to me on the results of your efforts at the end of each academic semester – with the first report expected in December 2016.