

# Regents, consultants encourage input on review

By Diana Pounds  
April 03, 2014

A public forum on the state Board of Regents' efficiency review of the three public universities drew a crowd Tuesday. Some 150 members of the university community assembled in the Howe Hall auditorium and another 246 tuned to the forum's livestream to find out more about the review.

## Details

[Forum video](#)  
[TIER review homepage](#)  
[Deloitte presentation \(ppt\)](#)

The Iowa State forum was the second in five days for the regents and Deloitte Consulting representatives, who are making stops at all three campuses to help launch the first phase of the regents Transparent, Inclusive Efficiency Review (TIER). Iowa's forum was March 31, and Northern Iowa's is April 7.

A few themes emerged during the 90-minute session at Iowa State. Regents and the consultants repeatedly stated that:

- They're going in to the review with no preconceived notions
- Input and involvement from the university communities is key

Following are forum highlights and responses to some of the questions posed during the Q&A session. Deloitte representatives promised to follow up on unanswered questions in an online FAQ that will be added to the ISU [efficiency review site](#).

## Leath: Continuing the trend

Opening the forum, President Steven Leath referenced renewed support from the state legislature in the past few years. One of the reasons, he said, is that "we've done a very good job with the money we've received from the state.

"The fact that we've done such a good job is the reason we're benefiting," he said. "But it also means we have a responsibility to continue to manage as efficiently and wisely as we can. We owe it to our students, to their parents, to the taxpayers of Iowa to be sure we operate as efficiently as possible going forward, not just in the past."

Deloitte Consulting, the firm conducting the review, has considerable experience in similar work with other universities, Leath said. "I'm pleased to join the regents and University of Iowa and Northern Iowa in this comprehensive review of our entire administrative and academic operations, and we're looking forward to working with the team from Deloitte."

## Rastetter: The time is right

Board of regents president Bruce Rastetter said it's important to do a study now because one hasn't been done for 30 years, and the savings can be reinvested in the universities.

"We should do this study when, frankly, the state has dollars and isn't intending to ask for these dollars back," Rastetter said. "We have said very clearly -- and I continue to say -- that all savings found at each individual university will be reinvested at that university upon the recommendation of the president and the stakeholders at the university and the regents."

## McKibben: Student debt is problematic

Regent Larry McKibben, who is chairing the review committee, said a key concern is student debt. Average debt at graduation for an Iowa State undergraduate student is \$29,324, he said.

"That's an economic problem for the state of Iowa," McKibben said. "It is a problem for students. It is a problem for families. And frankly, it's a problem for all of us in this room because if we don't address the problem, it's going to be harmful to the great universities ... we have in the state."

Echoing similar comments by Leath, Rastetter and the Deloitte consultants, McKibben asked members of the university to get involved in the review.

"I just can't emphasize enough," he said. "We need your support, we need your input and we need your active participation."

## **Phases 1, 2**

Deloitte team director Rick Ferraro and project manager Virginia Fraser outlined the first two phases of the review. A timeline has not been established for phase 3, which involves designing and launching improvements.

Phase 1 began approximately a week ago and will continue into May. It includes data collection in advance ("so we can use your time as wisely as possible") followed by hundreds of interviews. Consultants arrive on Iowa State's campus the week of April 14. They'll look to identify key strengths and challenges, strategic priorities and potential opportunities to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

During phase 2, consultants will sort through potential opportunities identified in phase 1 for improving services or reducing costs, and select some for in-depth, cost-benefit analyses. An implementation roadmap will be developed. Phase 2 is an estimated 11-week process. Since the phase overlaps summer, consultants said they'll adapt schedules to ensure engagement and involvement with faculty.

### **Question: What kind of data has Deloitte been collecting and who will consultants meet with on campus?**

Fraser said consultants are collecting data on such things as policies and procedures, organization charts, existing process flows or process materials, budgets, goods and services expenses, annual reports and technology systems.

Consultants will meet with the president, provost, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, faculty members and leaders from a variety of areas, including finance, procurement, human resources, information technology, student services, marketing and communications -- "essentially the breadth of the university," Fraser said.

### **Question: What criteria might be used to determine an academic major should be cut due to duplication?**

"Those criteria are partially going to be dependent on what you think," Ferraro said. "It's not predetermined. We don't have a set of criteria that we walk in the door and say, 'This is the only way to do it.' There are no preconceived notions. We need to interact to come to the right answer."

Rastetter emphasized that the board has no preconceived ideas on programs or program elimination. He said the regents would like to see a board-level policy on how it approves new programs and courses.

"When we approve 30 or 40 or 50 new courses and programs, one of the challenges is understanding whether there exists duplication between the three universities or if we're creating more duplication with precious dollars," Rastetter said.

He added that the board has asked Deloitte to come up with a policy and recommendation that helps the board make judgments on program proposals "so that we don't create three look-alike universities going forward."

### **Question: Has Deloitte been involved in similar studies with other universities and if so, what were some outcomes?**

The consultants pointed to studies in Virginia, California, Texas and Massachusetts. Fraser said a common issue at universities is that they tend to develop organically over time, winding up with complex processes and policies and inconsistencies in how work gets done. Fixes often not only result in cost savings, but in freeing people's time so they're not caught in administrative tasks, she said.

"It's well known that universities are that way," Ferraro added. "The extreme example we find would be a university that has seven email systems or more."