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**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2009 11:26 AM

**To:** Campbell, Bonnie J.; Downer, Robert; Evans, Jack B.; Gartner, Michael; Harkin, Ruth; Johnson, Greta A; Lang, Craig; Miles, David; Vasquez, Rose

**Cc:** Doyle, Sheila [BOARD]

**Subject:** Letter To President Mason from Edward Barker

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President Sally Mason  
University of Iowa  
101 Jesup Hall 52242  
Iowa City, Iowa

Dear President Mason:

The floods of 2008 were devastating. This can hardly be under estimated! The University of Iowa, the city of Iowa City, and the city of Coralville, along with residential areas and business communities of both municipalities have made remarkable progress during the past sixteen months. Hancher Auditorium stands almost alone as one very valuable property where little, if any, visible progress has been made. For a few weeks, after the flood had abated, most people, I believe, thought that Hancher Auditorium would be cleaned, repaired and refurnished within a year or so. That was indicated to me by the top Hancher administrator when he told me he thought it would be prudent to not only replace the seats on the main floor but also the ones in the balcony. It never occurred to me that the thinking would change so quickly, giving consideration to building an entirely new Hancher Auditorium as the only viable option. The question seemed to be only where it would be built. Last week I had a very good discussion with Bob Downer in regard to Hancher, after which he suggested I write a letter to you.

Three options have come to the surface. I would like to touch on all three, plus my thinking on a fourth option, which actually was considered immediately after the floods had abated.

**Option One: A New Hancher Auditorium Near The Levitt Center:**

Constructing a new Hancher on the slope by the Levitt Center would probably take approximately eight to ten years. That location would have some of the same advantages the current Hancher Auditorium has, but, in my judgment, it is not a realistic or practical solution. First, a decision would need to be made to tear down the current Hancher and construct parking in that area, then build a new Hancher near the Levitt Center or vice versa. Either way it is done will eliminate a considerable amount of necessary daytime parking used by University employees during the construction period.

**Option Two: A New Hancher In downtown Iowa City South Side Of Burlington Street:**

Option Two would take the longest time to build with a completion date of around 2020. Negotiations on the price of the land and litigation between the owners and the University would likely take at least two years. Only then would architects be able to begin preparing the detailed drawings. Bidding would take some time and then construction would take a lot more. In addition, if the University prevails, Iowa City would lose approximately \$13,000,000 assessed valuations from the involved properties.

Parking would be a problem. People coming to Hancher from parking ramps north of Burlington would need to walk across that very busy street twice unless a skywalk is built. Parking in the ramp east of Dubuque Street would cause people to do the same.

Some have suggested that people enjoy eating downtown before or after a performance. That may well be, but there are many fine restaurants in the Iowa City/Coralville/North Liberty area that are in easy driving distance from downtown Iowa City. Many of those restaurants would actually be on the route people would travel in getting to a downtown Hancher. Some people do not enjoy walking around Iowa City in the evenings and would prefer to have Hancher at its current location.

**Option Three: A New Hancher Near The Levitt Building And The Rest Of The Complex In Downtown Iowa City:**

I won't comment on this option as it does not seem practical to me.

**Option Four: Repair The Current Hancher Auditorium, Making It An Outstanding Modern Day Facility: In addition, repair the music and art education buildings, the art museum, and theater building.**

It is strange that this has not been considered a viable option throughout the entire decision making process. It just makes sense. It would take the least amount of time (approximately two years) and would cost the least amount of money, in the neighborhood of \$20,000,000 to \$25,000,000. It would not disturb the current parking areas, nor would it remove private property from the tax rolls.

Some have said that there is major foundation damage to the building. That can be repaired. Mold would be a problem, particularly since I believe the fans were turned off some time ago. Mold can be removed successfully.

A berm would need to be constructed along the entire east side of Hancher with wings extending to higher ground on the north and south. That can be done in an attractive and stable manor. I would suggest that some of your facilities people examine the berm along the river in Galena, Illinois. There are many examples of berm projects reasonably close by that could easily be studied as to their effectiveness. Some would object to this procedure saying it likely would increase flooding downstream. Iowa City officials are considering building a berm along the Iowa River on the south side of Foster Road to protect the Idyllwild Condominium development from flooding. Also, Coralville officials are planning to increase the height of the railroad tracks which are parallel to Highway 6. These berms will be longer than the one which would be needed at Hancher. Berms can be attractive as well as effective. The suggested berm, properly constructed, would give the University of Iowa a good feeling of security if, in the future, an equal amount of water comes down the river.

Repairing Hancher would make it easier for the University of Iowa Foundation to raise the needed funds to help finance Option 4. Knowing that Hancher would be open in a relatively short time would encourage people to make donations.

People I have talked with feel that, once huge amounts of FEMA money was made available to help build an entirely new facility, decisions were made, thinking that was the only way to go. The Press-Citizen, dated Tuesday, October 13, 2009, stated "The third option surfaced after UI received word that it could be covered by Federal emergency Management Agency. FEMA funds will help pay for the

estimated \$267 million project, of which UI would be responsible for \$114,000 million.” I do not know if the \$114,000 is accurate. Even if it is accurate, FEEMA money is not free. The money, no matter how you look at it, will come from taxpayers or donors. Twenty five million just has a better ring to it than \$267,000,000 when the first amount accomplishes about the same thing as the second amount. The same Press-Citizen article stated that Rod Lehnertz, UI director of planning, design and construction, said that repairing Hancher does not appear viable. The article gave no reasons as to why Option Four is not viable.

President Mason you, along with the members of the Board of Regents will be making a very important, long term decision. When all of the discussions on site locations are completed, I believe that keeping Hancher Auditorium where it is currently located will emerge as the best possible solution. I wish you well in making this decision.

Sincerely yours,

Edwin K. Barker

David W. Miles, President, Board of Regents  
Members, Board of Regents