

# Default Report

*Collegiate Review Feedback 2023*

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## Q2 - Please provide any comments or feedback below.

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The report was spot-on. Morale is low because there is no sense of a shared vision or shared mission of teaching anymore. The pandemic certainly hit all of that hard, but we have not recovered like other schools and colleges have. There is a clear lack of leadership and almost no communication of what is going on in the college regarding staff restructuring, resource allocations, or hiring plans. The incoming Dean needs to be able to get up to speed fast and start building back the community and faculty trust. And, most critically the new Dean needs to come and communicate. In the absence of information on budget and hiring, the rumor mill does enormous damage. The college is at a tipping point where with good leadership that gets on their feet fast we could turn things around, but we need to strong, positive, transparent leadership ASAP or I fear that the college will continue to lose it's most valuable faculty.

Matt McLaughlin's title should be Chief Technology Officer. Diane Fountain was also present for the Collegiate Leadership interview, however, I came late.

I am an alum actively working in the field also teaching a class in the CEE dept. I think there is a disconnect between what employers want from entry-level engineers and what a lot of schools provide. CAD skills primarily, but other software as well (GIS, HECRAS, etc in my field). The College needs to fit the ABET accreditation I'm aware, but find as many ways as possible to use software. It maybe isn't correct, but many students and employers want undergrad engineering degrees to be more skills based and less knowledge based. I think we can do both if we're actively looking to update material.

I think the committee's report is accurate and sheds light on many of the problems the college is facing. In the section on infrastructure there is a bullet point about recruiting junior faculty and getting senior faculty more engaged. There is nothing there about addressing the needs of mid-career faculty. That is an area also requiring urgent attention, as successful faculty at this stage may leave if they encounter infrastructural obstacles to maintaining a productive lab.

I hate to say it, but the report is very accurate. I would have put more emphasis on outdated equipment and lack of support (staff, money, and decentralize equipment/space) and maintenance of lab equipment. The problem is where to put resources to do the best good. For what it is worth here is what I would do. 1. Look for good cheap effective advertising. I wanted to do a 360 VR walk through each research lab, where we can show off what we are working on. This is a two-fold attempt to bring in Graduate level students to help in research and as high-level TA support for faculty. Secondly this will help with our ranking and alumni recognition. I was told no one looks at talking heads. So, my idea was shot down. Sorry, but wiz bang tricks like new technology works. You get a good web page cited on the news, in the paper, or other articles for free is like gold. 2. There are some good faculty that want to reach out to our K12 schools to bring in future students. If we can get some ready made course materials for our K12 schools and slap "University of Iowa College of engineering" on it, this would help with advertising to future students, donors, alumni, and maybe local industries. Items 1 and 2 take little money but it does take time and work. 3. Reach out to alumni. This may help with items 1 and 2. Alumni can help focus on what industry may want from our students, help raise funds, provide a source for labor, and advertising. 4. Engage our students in outside the classroom activities. For example, the library and NEXUS creative classes can not only enrich the students educational experience, but it becomes a source to create and test K12 course material. This can and should include our student organizations for help and ideas. If they can be encouraged to teach or help create a class it will look good on a resume. If money can be found these courses should be provided free and travel from school to school. The school may need to pay for any consumables. 5. When enough classes are made, string them together to create a course that the student can take to earn a digital badge. This may even work for prospective students if the course is online only. Engage other colleges to help with the digital badging. Add the business college for a one-hour course on how to find funding, how to make a business model and so on. Add the Engineering Library to do one hour course on, patents, trademarks, citing other papers.... We can teach a one-hour course on how art students should protect their artwork from being stolen. These classes can also make media advertising for free. 6. With the above five things working for you, the hope is research dollars, donations, and grants may start to bring in money so the college can hire more faculty and staff. In this modern information age students get their answers too easily, too fast, with little work, and as such don't need to remember anything. Students don't grow up using tools so they lack hands on skills. Something our k12 course material may help with someday. Because of the lack of hands-on skills and instant gratification some students are graduating without the skills they need in industry, because they don't feel it is necessary. I don't know how to fix this problem, but I think providing the opportunity and lead by example is a good place to start.

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In a recent meeting with the Provost, someone brought up the issue of morale in the staff as a challenge and the Provost seemed unaware of the problem, despite it being one of the high-level bullet points. There's a lot of talk about communication of the budget being the problem. In my mind, the communication problem had to do with active challenges to the changes from people who were losing power. It wasn't poor communication; it was active conflict with the messaging. That's what happens with controversial decisions. The fundamental problem is that there is not a clear plan about how to balance the enrollment/income versus costs, all a consequence of the budgeting model. My sense is that enrollment has been increasingly centralized and we don't seem to be getting the traction we need. If we can't control that end of the business model, we're basically at the mercy of centralized enrollment targets and seem to be facing a ramp-down in budget for the foreseeable future so that the overall net income/student can be maximized. That's crazy! Why would the university choose to tie our hands that way when it's clearly a critical element of our sustainability. My overall sense from the report is that the central administration is not very committed to the college and our unique challenges, which was a depressing realization.

The College of Engineering does have engagement with K-12 educators across Iowa. However, prior to and during COVID, we have drastically lost 3 FTE who did outreach. It would be nice if the College of Engineering would help to boost the outreach. Also, the College's admission is only effective when the students arrive on campus. It would be great for more pre-visit engagement of prospective students.

The Committee's report seems to be a fair representation of the current status of the College, particularly with regards to very poor communication of what the overall goals of the College are and how leadership believes these goals can be achieved. In particular, no one has a clue as to how the Dean decides which departments can have new faculty lines. The report noted that the College has decided to pursue three main areas of focus "health care, the environment, and emerging technologies." Yet it fails to note that this slogan is vacuous, as "emerging technologies" is a near synonymous term to "engineering."

As one of many faculty members NOT in the Department of Biomedical Engineering, yet focusing on biomedical research (and collaborations with the College of Medicine), I was somewhat surprised at calling out the Department of Biomedical Engineering as a particular strength and lack of these collaborations in other departments as an area to focus upon. I just want to verify that for those interviewed, they specifically meant the Department of Biomedical Engineering (and not just biomedical research in general). It sounds like a general consensus item, yet I am not sure it would be a consensus (in my interview group this was not discussed). From survey: "Biomedical Engineering (BME) is a strong program, and the College leverages its connectivity to the health sciences colleges on campus. Partnerships with the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics are an asset to the BME program." ... "Departments other than Biomedical Engineering could find more ways to take advantage of connections with the UI health sciences and other colleges." I was thrown off by this as there are many faculty with active partnerships with the College of Medicine that do not have primary appointments in BME. For instance, look at the people of the Iowa Institute of Biomedical Imaging to see many examples of other faculty in other departments: <https://iibi.uiowa.edu/IIBI-People>.

## End of Report