Administrative Review of Dean John F. DiTusa

Executive Summary

Per the Indianapolis Faculty Council review procedures, the administrative review committee conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Dean John F. DiTusa and the School of Science. The committee examined multiple data sources, including the Dean's self-study, surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews with faculty, staff, students, campus leaders, and external stakeholders. These sources provided a nuanced picture of the School's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for continued growth.

Stakeholders emphasized that the School of Science is operating during a period of significant transition, including COVID, new university leadership, the move from IUPUI to IU Indianapolis, the separation from Purdue, the development of new campus research institutes, and broader changes in higher education. Within this context, many participants noted the Dean's efforts to maintain continuity during institutional shifts and highlighted his focus on student success and commitment to communication during moments of uncertainty.

Survey responses reflected a range of perspectives, with some faculty expressing concerns that identified specific areas for improvement in communication, planning, and alignment within the School, while others conveyed positive assessments of the School's leadership. Themes across focus groups included a desire for greater clarity and larger voice in determining long-term strategy; stronger communication practices; a more understandable and proactive approach to the management of limited resources; and strategic initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. Participants also raised questions about the relationship between the School and the new campus research institutes as well as the broader competitive landscape.

The final recommendations presented below reflect the most important themes that surfaced across multiple data sources. They are intended to build on existing efforts, support opportunities for stronger alignment, and position the School to navigate the evolving landscape facing the campus and the discipline.

Recommendation One: Advance a Clear, Forward-Looking Strategic Direction for the School

Faculty and staff expressed a desire for more clarity about the School's long-term direction. Developing a more transparent and inclusive planning process to enhance the School's Strategic Plan, the design of new research institutes, and new academic programs will strengthen confidence in the School's future, reduce perceptions of reactive decision-making, and help create understanding of how current choices support long-term goals.

Recommendation Two: Establish Opportunities for Collaborative Input into Strategic Resource Management Plans

Establishing venues for productive, collaborative discussions with faculty and staff, paired with clearer communication and constructive dialogue about fiscal priorities, growth opportunities, and constraints, could strengthen confidence, support greater equity, and engage stakeholders in generating creative options in the face of declining resources.

Recommendation Three: Improve Transparency and Effectiveness of Communication

Opportunities exist for improving the effective use of faculty governance structures within the departments and School and establishing more effective channels for communication and collaboration between School leadership and faculty across departments. Strengthening communication practices, particularly through more effective engagement with faculty committees to improve transparency of decision-making and foster collaboration, is essential for building trust, elevating morale, and promoting shared understanding throughout the School.

Recommendation Four: Strategically Engage Departments and Faculty with University Research Institutes

Clarity regarding engagement opportunities for departments and faculty within the new Institutes, more robust interaction between institute leaders, School leadership, and departments, and visible advocacy for the equitable involvement of the School's departments and faculty in the institutes have the potential to help build trust, improve transparency, and support integration of the institutes into the School's academic mission.