



Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Dietrich School Bulletin*. Over the past several weeks as I've met with groups of faculty and staff, I've discussed my vision for the Dietrich School and the overall priorities that will guide my deanship. While these priorities address different aspects of our mission, they all reflect a primary and necessary commitment to excellence.

Continued excellence of the Dietrich School is essential in positioning the University of Pittsburgh as a world-class institution in which researchers and scholars drive the intellectual agendas of their disciplines and address critical social needs. As faculty and staff of the largest school at the University, your contributions shape the educational experiences of thousands of undergraduate and graduate students who have come here to participate in the transformative intellectual engagement that higher education guarantees. Each of you has an important part to play in ensuring that we always reach toward our greatest potential and fulfill our commitment to our students, alumni, broader community, and each other.

With this charge in mind, I invite you to join me in advancing these priorities:

- **Enhancing the Undergraduate Educational Experience**

We are competing for increasingly more ambitious, focused, diverse, and higher qualified students and we need to match our degree-granting programs to this group. Creativity and collaboration within and across departments – and even across Schools at Pitt -- is more important than ever in growing innovative degree programs and refreshing our existing majors, minors, and certificates.

We also need to expand our available experiential learning offerings to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in meaningful, hands-on learning—including mentored research, scholarship, and

creative activity—in every discipline.

Continuing to enhance undergraduate advising—both within the Dietrich School Advising Center and in our academic departments—is key to our progress in this area. Under the leadership of a new director, the Advising Center will begin to explore and implement new ways of providing personalized advising. Concurrently, we will be working with departmental advisors to ensure that our students have a seamless transition to their majors.

- **Advancing Teaching and Research Excellence**

Our world-class faculty members are already leaders in research and scholarship in their respective disciplines. Our new challenge is to reach deeper within and beyond our disciplines to identify future zones of intellectual opportunity. In doing so, we should take advantage of the intellectual interdependence of the arts and sciences, as much exciting work is happening at the edges of disciplines and fields.

We are grateful to the Provost for a significant investment in the Dietrich School in the form of new faculty positions. This gives us the opportunity to shape the Dietrich School of the future, with faculty who will lead research and scholarly agendas and shape generations of students well into the twenty-first century.

Determining how best to steward this investment requires many voices and perspectives. Throughout this fall, I will be meeting with the Dietrich School Council and PBC that constitute our shared governance, as well as department chairs and program directors, to formulate principles for hiring these new faculty members. In the spring, I will invite departments to submit proposals for the first wave of these positions.

- **Promoting Innovation in Graduate Education**

Many graduate students at the Dietrich School pursue advanced degrees that prepare them to assume positions in the professoriate. But an increasing number of our students are interested in careers outside of higher education. It is intrinsic to our mission that we prepare graduate students for the full spectrum of excellent and

high-impact career options— in academia, government, non-profit, and industry/business. In order to effectively serve all of our graduate students, we are increasing the range of resources we offer to master's and doctoral degree candidates throughout the school to include more robust, personalized assistance with professional development and career development.

We also need to consider new models of graduate education in some disciplines. These might take the form of partnerships among departments within the Dietrich School or that link our degree programs to those of other institutions. Degree programs that integrate our undergraduate degrees to graduate degrees in the professional schools at Pitt are another model that can address the aspirations of students in some fields.

- **Creating a More Diverse and Inclusive Environment**
Recent climate surveys of both our faculty and staff have yielded sobering but unsurprising news: there are large differences in satisfaction levels depending on race, gender, and international status.

Diverse groups of people are better than any one person at solving problems. To ensure diverse representation around the tables where decisions are made, we're making faculty leadership opportunities within the school more accessible by making selection processes more transparent. We also know that in order to retain diverse faculty we need to improve our efforts to ensure inclusive climates across our many departments, programs, and units. Our diversity committees will be addressing climate issues for faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students across the Dietrich School. And the [Open Door Project](#) remains active, with events scheduled throughout the fall.

- **Embracing Core Operating Principles.** The Dean's senior leadership is committed to a set of core operating principles for the school: **support excellence; create a welcoming environment; foster collaboration; increase communication; promote diversity and inclusion; enhance responsiveness; employ strategic, data-driven decision making; and practice transparency.**

In part, these operating principles started with all of you. They reflect the concerns and ideas you shared during my interviews for this position. Your generous willingness to be candid, to go out of your way to contact me, and to ask

challenging, meaningful questions showed me how invested you are in the continued excellence and success of the Dietrich School. It also let me know the areas where we should focus our attention to improve processes and communication that will be most impactful to you and your departments.

We're proceeding with a number of initiatives to put these principles into practice, and you should be seeing changes in many areas of our operation.

- **What's Next?**

As a school, we can't merely stay the course. We must be nimble to stay ahead of the constant changes in the higher education environment, and we need to take advantage of those changes to do what we do well—generate cutting-edge and impactful research, scholarship, and creative activity; educate outstanding students; recruit and nurture extraordinary faculty; and hire and develop talented staff.

In future issues of the *Dietrich School Bulletin*, I will be providing more comprehensive information about the five priorities I've outlined here, and what we're doing to address them.

In the meantime, I encourage you to reach out and let us know what we can be doing to support your efforts. Please feel free to share your ideas with me or any of our senior administrative team members:

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On behalf of the entire Dietrich School Dean's Office team, best wishes for a peaceful and successful fall term.