Dear Faculty and staff,

In my first full year as Provost, I have worked to create a more open dialogue within the academic community while also advancing our strategic vision in visible, tangible ways. As we end the academic year, I would like to offer a few reflections and updates.

During the last two semesters, I visited more than 100 classes in all of the colleges. I started these check-ins to better understand the diversity of our student body and their tremendous potential. It also served as an opportunity for me to see a cross section of our faculty members in action.

These visits reaffirmed for me the diversity of people who make up our campus community, from the students to the faculty to the staff – all with unique backgrounds, challenges, and ideas. Yet, while each of us is unique, we share a common mission: helping our students fulfill their dreams of a college education.

Early in the fiscal year, I enlisted the Academic Affairs Leadership Team and faculty, staff, and student representatives to help develop a two-year Academic Affairs working plan. A primary goal was to create action items that would have immediate and visible results. President Qayoumi agreed to invest $6 million in this plan over two years.

We brainstormed a variety of projects and initiatives, ultimately settling on three main areas that have become known as our priority groups. These groups have been meeting on a weekly basis for most of the academic year.

The three areas of emphasis are:

- **21st Century Teaching and Learning Spaces** – focused on upgrading classrooms to create more hospitable, comfortable and functional spaces to enhance student learning. Updates include moveable and accessible furniture, whiteboards, blinds, and technology upgrades in collaboration with Academic Technology and Information Technology Services. Initial improvements will be made in Summer 2015, with additional improvements slated for 2015-16.

- **Educational Excellence and Student Experience** – focused on identifying ways to improve student retention/graduation rates and to support learning through global experiences. Some programs were initiated in Spring 2015 and additional programs will be phased in 2015-16.

- **Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity** – focused on supporting faculty and staff members in achieving continuous professional development opportunities. Resources support research, scholarship and creative activity for faculty; support potential collaborations with students; and provide professional development opportunities to staff. Some programs were initiated Spring 2015 with additional programs phasing in over the next year.

Please visit the [Provost website](#) for specific details on the extensive planning and work accomplished this year. You may also submit feedback and input on the site as we move into the second year of our working plan.

I want to thank the committee members for their investment of time and talent, and all campus community members who have contributed to the process. I look forward to providing additional updates as this important work continues.

I wish you all an enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

Andy Feinstein