As always, I am delighted to have an occasion to spend a little time with some of our more exemplary administrators and faculty. But before I share my thoughts, I would like to spend a few minutes applauding your accomplishments.

Each and every one of you in this room has, as they say, walked the walk…doing whatever it takes to give our students what they expect and so richly deserve…a world-class education.

That said, you have been chosen to participate in this year's Summer Institute because you have distinguished yourselves time and again. As collaborative leaders and dynamic change-agents...thoughtful scholars and outstanding educators...who are always willing to do whatever it takes to mentor a student…or redesign a course...or even wade into a war zone, if necessary, to teach our brave men and women in uniform. It is that sheer dedication to improving both the art and the science of teaching and learning that has given UMUC the momentum it needs to remain at the top of what has become an increasingly competitive higher education market.

And thanks to your leadership, as well as your entrepreneurial spirit, this university continues to connect its students with intellectually rigorous and globally relevant academic opportunities that not only challenge them...but also empower them to transform knowledge into action...and action into innovation.

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, the stakes for higher education have never been greater. In fact, President Obama has upped the ante even more with his own agenda...which calls for the United States to regain its title as the best educated country in the world by the year 2020.

Now as inspiring as that is...it also means we will need to increase overall degree attainment by at least 11 percent. So in our race to the top, American colleges and
universities are being pushed to dramatically improve their completion rates...and not just by federal, state, and local policymakers...but by such influential private foundations as Gates, Lumina, Kellogg, Carnegie, and Ford.

And whereas colleges and universities used to choose their students, students are now in the driver's seat...having become truly adept at shopping for just the right return on their academic investment.

Thus, to remain competitive, we must ensure that the knowledge they are acquiring is cutting-edge...and the degrees they are paying for, exceedingly marketable. Which, of course, underscores UMUC's ever-expanding focus on quality, transparency, and accountability in the academic offerings we design and the systems we use to deliver them. To be sure, broad-based initiatives such as Project SEGUE...and targeted development efforts such as the Graduate School's cybersecurity program design have taken root in this university's steadfast commitment to student success...and flourished under your remarkable leadership.

These highly collaborative efforts are aimed at actively engaging our students in a learning experience that is inclusive and applicable...while at the same time evaluating their progress in a way that is open and consistent.

In fact, because of your dedicated teamwork, we are now pioneering next-generation curricula and technologies that are solidly grounded in the latest research on effective teaching and learning. As such, our students...regardless of their professional focus...may choose from among UMUC programs that are not only promote sound academic theories...but also incorporate practical opportunities to test-drive them in real-world situations. Moreover, by reaching beyond these university walls to elicit industry information and feedback, these programs will integrate both the knowledge and the skills our graduates will be asked to demonstrate in their chosen fields...thereby making their transition smoother, and their degrees, far more valuable.

You have also helped this university define a learning assessment process that is ongoing, outcomes-based, and multi-dimensional...with clearly articulated standards and objectives...along with frequent opportunities for students to perform and prompt feedback around that performance.

As such, we are fast becoming capable of measuring everything from acquired knowledge to applied skills...self-concept to world view...learning styles to learning attitudes. All of which provides us with the information we must have to refine our teaching strategies or redesign our learning materials, as needed.
And by doing so, UMUC will continue to provide its students with the very best that higher education has to offer...which, in turn, enables us to grow our enrollments and enhance our completion rates...thereby fulfilling both our own mission and the President's agenda.

That's why the Summer Institute is so vitally important to this university's academic present, as well as to its future. By setting the stage for our esteemed faculty to continue seeding the change from the ground up, so to speak, we are forging new and certainly more effective inroads for student success.

Therefore, I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for taking this rare opportunity to collaborate across disciplines, departments, and divisions. I can assure you that your time will be well-spent and your recommendations, well-received.

I would also like to thank those who have so thoughtfully planned this year's agenda. It has truly been a cooperative effort among the many academic entities here at UMUC...from the CTL to the Office of Instructional Services and Support...the CSI and Course Development to Information and Library Services. You have all gone above and beyond to facilitate an Institute that will undoubtedly accomplish great things for this university and its extraordinary students.

Thank you,

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