

A Faculty Notice of No Confidence in Chancellor Carwein

Statement

As tenured faculty who have invested their careers into building a strong IPFW, we are writing to the public and to the Purdue Board of Trustees to express our lack of confidence in Chancellor Vicky Carwein's leadership. Recent pressures created by changes from within and from without the institution have exposed Chancellor Carwein's multiple failures of leadership, which have imperiled IPFW's future and undermined its mission to provide students in our region with a high-quality, affordable education at a comprehensive university. We have no confidence in the Chancellor's ability to provide leadership to IPFW as this crucial point in our history. In particular, Chancellor Vicky Carwein has failed this campus in the following key areas:

- Failure to adequately represent the interests of the campus in work related to the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) working group on the future of IPFW
- Lack of commitment to the stated mission of IPFW, coupled with an inability to articulate a clear vision or rationale for changing the mission
- Mismanagement of the University Strategic Alignment Process (USAP) and lack of commitment to operationalizing the 2014–2020 Strategic Plan
- Damage to campus morale and creation of a culture of fear

Because of these substantial failings, we have no confidence in Chancellor Vicky Carwein's ability to lead this institution. IPFW faces significant challenges; the university, the city, and the region will benefit from a new chancellor who can lead the institution toward the goals outlined in the 2014–2020 strategic plan while preserving its identity and mission as a comprehensive university. As tenured faculty, we have deep ties to this institution, our community, and our students. We want better for the people of northeast Indiana than we believe Chancellor Carwein has the abilities, both as an administrator and a leader, to deliver.

The actions of Chancellor Carwein, Purdue University President Mitch Daniels, and the Purdue Board of Trustees have been troubling. The board and president should begin to fix the damage through the following actions:

1. Accept IPFW Chancellor Carwein's resignation.
2. Allow the IPFW faculty to take leadership in choosing an interim Chancellor immediately and allow IPFW to take the lead in hiring a replacement chancellor.
3. Cancel the ill-considered cuts announced on October 18, 2016.
4. Permanently table the LSA recommendation to split the IPFW campus into two parts.

Additional details regarding Chancellor Carwein's key failures of leadership and administrative expertise

Failure to adequately represent the interests of the campus in work related to the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) working group on the future of IPFW

Chancellor Carwein has failed to advocate for the interests of this campus and has not adequately communicated the strengths and institutional successes of IPFW to Purdue University and Indiana University. Indiana Bill HB 1001, the bill that provided the charge for the LSA working group, "provides for the development of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne as a multisystem metropolitan university and requires Purdue University and Indiana University to make findings and recommendations concerning the role and governance of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne." Instead of making recommendations in light of the new designation as a "multisystem metropolitan university," as the bill directs, the LSA recommendations characterized IPFW as a failing institution and a problem to be solved, and Chancellor Carwein acceded to this characterization of the institution. Chancellor Carwein failed to convey IPFW stakeholders' legitimate critiques of how both Indiana University and Purdue University handled their roles and responsibilities in the management agreement and in their participation in the LSA working group. IPFW has long been underfunded by our legislature, misunderstood by the Commission on Higher Education, and underappreciated by our parent institutions. When the LSA recommendations failed to respond to the clear charge of HB 1001 and instead, as characterized by Vice Chancellor Carl Drummond, viewed the work of the committee as creating "an exchange of assets agreement," Chancellor Carwein did not object.

IPFW deserves a chancellor who reminds Indiana and Purdue that a management agreement is based on "agreement" and that communication and decision-making involve a two-way street. Parent institution leaders have little understanding of IPFW and spend little time here. Purdue in particular has been too directive in key recent decisions at IPFW. 1) Purdue did not grant former Chancellor Michael Wartell a waiver to extend his contract despite a Fort Wayne Senate resolution. 2) Purdue provided IPFW with minimal direct input about the selection of the current chancellor, Vicky Carwein. 3) Purdue representatives steamrolled the IPFW members' votes on the LSA study in order to recommend dividing an institution that has enjoyed fifty years of success as the intellectual hub of Northeast Indiana. Purdue LSA committee members based that decision on a study based on faulty premises and on empirical findings either erroneous or purposefully biased. 4) Purdue misused an internal strategic alignment process to force cuts to programs that are essential to IPFW's mission and strategic plan, and they did this not to strengthen education in northeast Indiana but, again as characterized by Vice Chancellor Drummond, in order to protect their financial commitment to IPFW in the event that profitable health-sciences departments are shifted entirely to IU control, as recommended by the LSA report. The third and fourth examples constituted particularly critical moments for leadership, and Chancellor Carwein did not provide sufficient rebuttal against the LSA's failure to accomplish the task it was charged with and against the most recent command from the Purdue Board of Trustees to make deeper program and department cuts than recommended by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and every dean on campus.

Lack of commitment to the stated mission of IPFW, coupled with inability to articulate a clear vision or rationale for changing the mission

The mission of IPFW, updated and reaffirmed in 2014, during Chancellor Carwein's tenure, reads: "Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) is a comprehensive university that provides local access to globally recognized baccalaureate and graduate programs that drive the intellectual, social, economic, and cultural advancement of our students and our region." After the new strategic plan was finalized, Chancellor Carwein initiated a process of strategic alignment (USAP) that was allegedly about operationalizing the strategic plan to ensure that all parts of the plan were on track for achievement by 2020. And yet to many faculty members, in the years since then, Chancellor Carwein appears to have been casting about for a new mission for the university, but without clear ideas about what that mission should be. Additionally, the USAP process mistakenly blended medium- and long-term strategic planning with short-term budgeting, leading to restructuring plans that confuse budget cutting with strategic planning.

Faculty members actively pursued a substantial role in the 2014–2020 strategic planning process, which led to an intense consideration by many faculty of how to strengthen the strategic plan draft into the solid Plan 2020 that was to have been the basis for the USAP process. Chancellor Carwein has noted on many occasions the large number of IPFW stakeholders who participated in the creation of Plan 2020, strengthening our claim that Plan 2020's statement of the university's mission should be seen as a definitive, broadly supported idea of our mission. Since that time, faculty have been repeatedly told that the status quo is unacceptable and that we must embrace change. Faculty are not against change, but we require a vision of change and a reason why change is progressive, both of which Chancellor Carwein has failed to articulate. Making bold changes for the sake of change is not sufficient reason. We oppose change that will hurt students, compromise the quality of higher education in northeast Indiana, and injure our community.

The Chancellor has not presented "change" with any coherence since her arrival. In annual convocations, she has emphasized something new each year, from the need for "rightsizing" to congratulating IPFW on a new doctoral program and its newly granted metropolitan status. These were two areas that might have become part of a vision for a revised mission, but these were failures: the nursing doctorate has now been slated for closure, and the Chancellor never leveraged our metropolitan status for growth or funding gains. Now, the idea of deciding what being a "multisystem metropolitan university" means for us, and making a plan to become that, is a dream of the past, because now the vision and the plan involve being split into two parts. Changing the mission of a university requires the participation and consent of more than one person. The lurching from priority to priority and crisis to crisis of the past several years comes from a person who knows that she does not have the authority to officially change the mission of the university but would like to change it without actually revising the mission statement.

Mismanagement of the University Strategic Alignment Process

The primary mission of the university is to educate students. It is the chancellor's job to administrate effectively in order to allow faculty to teach, produce scholarship and creative

works, and engage the community. By misdirecting our resources and energy toward administration and away from education, the Chancellor has confused the means and ends of higher education. Solid administration and healthy budgeting are in service of education, scholarship, and service of a comprehensive university. Chancellor Carwein's failures to provide leadership and competent administration for the university as a whole are exemplified by her failures to effectively hire and manage administrators at the highest levels. Some high-level turnover is to be expected when a new executive enters an organization, but the extraordinary administrative flux under this chancellor includes eight vice chancellors, a double-digit number of deans, three enrollment directors, and dramatic addition to and turnover in the Chancellor's staff. Despite the efforts of those in these positions, there have not been sufficient positive outcomes in enrollment, fundraising, or coherent internal reform. After a decline in administrative positions during the difficult financial years of 2011–2013, Chancellor Carwein has overseen an uptick of administrative positions, until now the number is at its highest ever, and administrators now outnumber faculty members. An inability to manage people relates in important ways to Chancellor Carwein's failures in managing the USAP process.

With USAP, departments, deans, and IPFW leadership expended considerable time and manpower to provide the USAP task force with exhaustive amounts of information, but there has been little attention to alignment with and plans for all parts of the Plan 2020. The USAP committees had initially promised that one of the results of their work would be to make sure that none of the parts of Plan 2020 would fall through the cracks, and that USAP would ensure that plans were in place to achieve each of Plan 2020's goals. Yet as the work developed, USAP lost sight of these goals, advancing recommendations that paid attention to fewer than half of the goals set out in Plan 2020. Instead, the Chancellor's and USAP's focus shifted to budgeting, cost-cutting, and a nebulous but pernicious discussion of "rightsizing." Chancellor Carwein confused budgeting with strategic planning, and this failure to understand the fundamental priorities and operations of the university has endangered the educational comprehensiveness of IPFW by cutting our community's educational options. Indeed, it is ironic that so little of Action Plan 41 has anything to do with the actual education of students. Rather, it advances a series of administrative changes without connection to the strategic plan or student success. The document discusses "an organized culture focused on continuous improvement," but it emphasizes procedural administrative improvement at the expense of the educational goals of the comprehensive university envisioned by Plan 2020.

In the matter of the implementation of the USAP recommendations, Chancellor Carwein, and now the Purdue University Board of Trustees, have chosen to "lead" by command and authority, despite serious reservations by IPFW's academic officers, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the deans of the six colleges, about the necessity of pursuing the program and department cuts recommended by USAP. In "A Process for Programmatic and Organizational Changes in IPFW Academic Programs and Departments in Response to USAP Recommendations 2.1 and 2.2," released by VCAA Drummond and the six deans in July 2016, these academic officers questioned the educational or strategic reasoning behind the Chancellor's push for change:

Why should these steps be taken? Over the last several years IPFW has been challenged by declining enrollments. While tuition revenue continues to go down, detailed department level analysis indicates all academic departments, schools, and colleges generate revenue in excess of their cost. This aggregate efficiency is created in large part by the substantial revenue generated by relatively low cost contingent faculty. Yet even those departments that deliver the vast majority of their credit hours through the instruction of T/TT faculty generate revenue significantly in excess of costs. The old adage “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it” comes to mind.

So again, why make changes? It is the expectation of Chancellor Carwein, President Daniels, and the Trustees of Purdue University that IPFW give serious consideration to the recommendations of the USAP task force and make all necessary and appropriate changes in order to advance the mission of the university and to achieve the goals of our current strategic plan. The challenge at hand is establishing what defines a necessary and appropriate change, ensuring that changes made do in fact advance the mission and goals of IPFW, and finally aggregating those changes in a way that a strategically impactful result can be realized.

In this report, the VCAA’s and deans’ best explanation about why we are undertaking drastic change is that it is the expectation of the Chancellor, President, and Trustees. VCAA Drummond’s September 19 recommendations built upon the ideas developed in the response co-authored with the deans, focusing on incremental change and plans for improvement for programs targeted as needing to improve their performance metrics.

The campus moved forward with the September 19 recommendations, with faculty, chairs, and deans working for weeks in good faith to address these sometimes painful recommendations. That work became wasted time on October 12, when we learned that Chancellor Carwein demanded deeper cuts and faster changes than the academic officers had recommended, without any logical or empirical reasoning to demonstrate the necessity of such a drastic acceleration. On October 17, in VCAA Drummond’s statement to the Fort Wayne Senate, we learned that the LSA and USAP processes are linked in the minds of the Purdue Board of Trustees and Purdue President, despite the Chancellor’s repeated insistence that these were separate processes. Consequently, either by design or mismanagement, the Chancellor’s strategic planning process has become a Purdue University budget-cutting process.

Damage to campus morale and creation of a culture of fear

Leaders are partly responsible for the mood of the institutions that they lead. Institutions are not flow-charts; they are made up of people and exist as a community. They work best when the community trusts each other, which nurtures an environment of deep investment in the institution’s future by all members. The top-down management, administrative failures, and panic-inducing style of this chancellor have led to justified distrust by much of the IPFW community. The Chancellor has been unwilling to listen to legitimate concerns of the faculty.

For example, her letter to the Community Advisory Board about the May 12, 2016, meeting of the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) concerning the USAP recommendations suggested that media reports about faculty concerns should be viewed as coming from just a few critical faculty whose programs were directly targeted. This was a purposeful miscommunication. The May 12, 2016, COAS meeting had enormous attendance, and some of the most vociferous critiques of the USAP report came from faculty in programs not targeted by the USAP report. Chancellor Carwein's comments dismissed faculty concerns, giving the Community Advisory Board an inaccurate impression of the reaction of the IPFW community to USAP. The Community Advisory Board should feel deceived by her miscommunication.

In the September 12, 2016, open-forum Fort Wayne Senate meeting, Chancellor Carwein stated that public criticism by faculty was hurting IPFW's reputation in the community, and she characterized criticism as inappropriate negativity. Criticizing factual mistakes and purposefully bad communications is not negativity. Advocating for IPFW to remain a comprehensive university is not negativity. This criticism of faculty is particularly jarring now, when faculty skepticism about how the USAP recommendations and the LSA recommendations might be combined to damage IPFW's identity as a comprehensive university have in fact come to fruition with the revelation from Vice Chancellor Drummond that "in the minds of the Trustees these two processes are inexorably linked." Real leadership would have acknowledged that these were negative times rather than scolding faculty who ended up being justified in their skepticism that USAP was about strategic planning.

Those faculty, staff, and students who have coordinated responses to the USAP proposals have been made to feel like any objection, however reasonable, may lead to retaliation against them. Faculty and staff have expressed fear for their jobs if they complain or object; students have expressed fear they could lose scholarships and support if they voice opposition. Some faculty and staff have in fact already been threatened because of their criticism of the administration. Dismissing valid concerns by people deeply devoted to IPFW and blaming IPFW's recent negative perception on them demonstrates a profound lack of leadership.

Chancellor Carwein's response to faculty criticisms of the USAP recommendations illustrate a pattern of contempt for faculty input and for the principles of shared governance. Her actions since arriving at IPFW suggest she sees the Fort Wayne Senate as a body to avoid, not include, in decision-making. She fails even in the symbolic gesture of coming to the Senate, remaining for the entire meeting, and being prepared to answer questions. The divide between IPFW's administration and its faculty, staff, and students can be bridged only by new leadership at the chancellor level.