From: Tom Sullivan, President
David V. Rosowsky, Provost

To: Deans, Directors, and Department Chairs

Re: December Commencement

Three years ago, we transitioned the December Graduate Recognition event into a full commencement where degrees were awarded to those that met the necessary requirements. The ceremony included students who completed degrees over the summer (since the previous May Commencement) and were confirmed by the Faculty Senate in October and students who met requirements at a specific point during fall semester. Because of the timing of the ceremony, these students actually were not confirmed by the Faculty Senate until after the ceremony.

After discussions with the Faculty Senate leadership, we have decided to discontinue the December Commencement Ceremony. I also have discussed this with the leadership of the Student Government and the Graduate Student Senate and they concur with the decision. The decision is based on several reasons:

• The recent changes in the University’s Commencement Walk Policy make it more flexible for students who are short up to six credit hours to participate in May Commencement. Under the new policy, a number of the students who participated in the December ceremony would now be eligible to participate in May Commencement exercises.

• This past year there were 625 students eligible to participate in December Commencement. However, only 270 students—fewer than half of those eligible choose to attend. We are finding that an increasing number of students are opting to attend May Commencement.

• Finally, the cost of the event is over $125,000. Although we have looked at ways to reduce the expense, there are certain fixed costs that cannot be eliminated. Additionally, there is the substantial staff time involved in planning the ceremony. Staff have not been added either centrally or in the various colleges and schools or administrative offices to support the ceremony.

We believe that these reasons make a compelling case for eliminating December Commencement and focusing our efforts on May Commencement exercises and associated events. We want to express our thanks and appreciation to all involved with planning and implementing December Commencement. We look forward to an exciting May Commencement Ceremony and the opportunity to recognize the exceptional accomplishments of our students.

Cc: Commencement Coordinators