4 March 2016

Center for Advanced Study Task Force
Brian DeMarco (co-Chair), Department of Physics
Jay Rosenstein (co-Chair), Department of Journalism
Renee Baillargeon, Department of Psychology
Harry Liebersohn, Department of History
Jennifer Robbennolt, College of Law
Gene Robinson, Institute for Genomic Biology
Abbas Benmamoun (ex officio), Office of the Provost

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Center for Advanced Study (CAS) Task Force. CAS has a distinguished record of recognizing faculty excellence, enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration and the intellectual life across our campus and the wider community, and fostering faculty development and scholarship. The pending shift of CAS from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs provides an opportunity to refocus CAS and position it to become an even more prominent hub for intellectual inquiry, critical introspection, and scholarly interchange on the campus.

We ask you to address the following questions:

1. In what ways should CAS activities shift given its realignment under Academic Affairs? Are changes needed to create more emphasis on cross-disciplinary scholarly exchange and exploration?

2. Which CAS programs deserve greater prominence given its (realigned) position, mission, and profile?

3. Is there a new or renewed charge that would make CAS more distinctive relative to other venues for cross-disciplinary intellectual inquiry on the campus?

4. How can the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs leverage the strengths of CAS and CAS Professors to advance campus priorities in faculty development, recognition, retention, and recruitment?

5. Should CAS become a resource for disseminating perspectives on critical state, national, and global grand challenges? If yes, how might it do that?

6. How should the governance structure of CAS be reformed so that it can carry out its revised mission effectively and also include all stakeholders it serves?

As you consider these questions, we ask that you keep in mind our present budget situation: namely that all units on campus—especially those that are centrally funded—are likely to absorb some budgetary reductions over the next couple of years necessitated by the current state budget

impasse and the campus’s plans to reduce gradually its dependence on state support. We need your guidance on how CAS should prioritize its spending.

We ask that you develop a process that provides opportunity for all CAS stakeholders to offer input, including the current Director Professor Tamer Basar and the CAS staff who are critical partners in this effort. Also, to produce well-informed answers to the above questions, please consult reports already available (past reviews of CAS, annual CAS reports on activities and programs) and information on similar programs at other campus centers and institutes such as IPRH and Beckman.

Professors Brian DeMarco and Jay Rosenstein have graciously agreed to serve as co-chairs of the task force. Staffing for your committee’s work will be provided by Susan Maxwell from the Provost’s Office. We would like to receive a memo or very brief report by 15 May 2016.

Thank you for lending your time and expertise to this effort.

Sincerely,

Edward Feser  
Interim Vice Chancellor  
for Academic Affairs

Peter Schiffer  
Vice Chancellor for Research

c:  Abbas Benhamoun
    Susan Maxwell