



School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

College of the Environment

January 24, 2012

RE: Centers, the Institute of Forest Research, Final Report from Professor Bare regarding Task #2 from the September 27, 2011 Retreat and Recent Guidelines regarding research units.

To: Faculty and Staff, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

On January 20, 2012, Professor Bare sent me the final copy of his committee's Institute of Forest Resources task force report (see attached report).

On the same day, Ms. Lynne U. Chronister (Asst Vice Provost for Research & Director of Sponsored Programs, Office of Sponsored Programs) sent the following emailing regarding guidelines for a New Programs: Organized Research Units:

"We are pleased to announce a new document for center and institute faculty and administrators. The Guidelines for Establishing Organized Research Units was created to provide a tool to facilitate the development of multi-investigator collaborative units that promote research that cuts across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

This document (dated January 11) contains valuable information including: definitions of ORUs, procedures for naming an ORU, procedures for requesting central funding (matching funds), new requirements for ORU reports and reviews (for ORUs that do not have mandated sponsor reporting), and guidelines for funding between units. We will be adding templates and tools for ORU activities as they are finalized.

This document is located on the Research Center site at: <http://www.washington.edu/research/centers/>

If you have any questions or comments please contact Linda Gamman at: research@u.washington.edu"

I asked Professor Bare to examine the guidelines for establishing Organized Research Units in light of the work of his task force and their report. He provided the following comments:

"A quick read of the Jan 11, 2012 guidelines for organized research units reveals nothing that is contrary to the mission of the newly re-energized IFR. In fact, the Jan 11 document is primarily directed at the establishment of organized research units. Clearly, the IFR does not fall into this category. That being said, I believe that the issue of performance reviews of research units and their leaders and the issuance of an annual report are requirements that we need to take seriously. I also noted that an organized Institute may be able to charge administrative costs as direct costs – something not usually allowed under Circular A-21 (it needs to be clarified whether this refers to, for example, a NSF formed Center where the administration of the center is assumed part of the grant or not. The other case is that the center is cemented together with a series of relatively small grants and these may or may not be able to cover administrative costs)."



Please read the report provided by Professor Bare's task force and, Center directors need to keep in mind the requirement for annual reports.

I thank Professor Bare and the task force for their fine work. Membership in the task force included Beverly Anderson, B. Bruce Bare, Robert Edmonds, Greg Ettl, and Sarah Reichard. I also thank Professor Bare for presenting the task force's final report at today's faculty meeting. I will be consulting with the task force and the School's Council as we move ahead towards implementation of their recommendations. Your feedback and suggestions would be similarly appreciated.

Thank you,



Thomas M. Hinckley
Interim Director of the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences
David RM Scott Professor of Forestry

SFR Strategic Planning Tasks for 2011–2012

Task #1: *Complete an assessment of the ESRM curriculum that addresses the quality, capacity, and efficiency of core courses, capstones, and options.*

Are we producing the core competencies required of today's and tomorrow's graduates? Can current resources support an enrollment of 400 undergraduates? Assess costs/benefits of capstones and determine if capstones should continue to be required of all students. Can capstone opportunities be increased through the expanded use of staff and graduate students? Identify and provide resolution for bottleneck points in enrollment or graduation. Assess options: are they optimally organized; should low enrollment options continue?

Who: Curriculum committee

By When: End of academic year 2011–2012

Task #2: *Develop a collaborative center structure, as defined under new Institute of Forest Resources legislation, that promotes functional, informational, financial and administrative interaction and efficiency.*

The proposed structure or structures must address the following criteria: a) provide flexibility to address changing research issues and opportunities as they arise; b) promote internal efficiencies while simultaneously retaining the support of external stakeholders who identify with a specific research program; c) increase our ability to respond to RFP's in a timely and effective manner, i.e., build research capacity; and d) minimizes administrative overhead. In carrying out this task, provide a portfolio of active and potential research strengths of SFR researchers. Consider the use of some McIntire Stennis funds as "incubation" funds to test the effectiveness of the model and provide a platform for a later request for state funds. Consider the use of Foster School faculty/students to gain fresh perspectives.

Who: Ad hoc committee, chaired by Bruce Bare; members to be determined

By When: By March 1, 2012

Task #3: *Complete an assessment of instructional delivery methods that could increase SFR's efficiency, enrollments, and SCH, and resolve bottlenecks, while at the same time ensuring quality.*

Identify the full suite of options available today, including those used by other CoEnv units. Consider both technological options and options that employ nontraditional instructors and nontraditional means. Provide best practices associated with each option. Consider whether on-line degree/course options are feasible for SFR. Review the structure and functioning of the Western Governors University.

Who: Ad hoc committee; members to be determined

By When: End of academic year 2011–2012

Task #4: *Conduct faculty portfolio analysis.*

Include in the analysis the following: justify future needs in teaching, research, and outreach, identify likely future societal challenges; review what other institutions are doing; understand student interests/preferences. Along with "futuring," the analysis should also include an inventory of current faculty resources. Vet to external constituents.

Who: Ad hoc committee, chaired by Gordon Bradley; members to be determined

By When: End of Autumn Quarter 2011

SFR Strategic Planning Tasks for 2011–2012

Task #5: Establish SFR's fundraising goals and alumni/friend engagement activities and synchronize them with Advancement's annual plan.

SFR having reaffirmed its commitment to long-term engagement with friends and alumni at its 2011 annual meeting, identify engagement opportunities for this group and coordinate them with Advancement's calendar. Ensure that other planned fundraising activities and goals are coordinated with Advancement's calendar. Survey alumni to determine program affinity. Conduct a fund-raising portfolio analysis throughout SFR to gather current needs. Provide opportunities for Advancement staff to meet with faculty, staff, and students for information exchange as needed.

Who: Ad hoc committee; members to be determined

By When: End of Autumn Quarter 2011

Task #6: Conduct staff portfolio analysis to determine critical functions that could be performed by additional staff support.

In the manner of the faculty portfolio analysis, develop an inventory of current staff resources by area, title, and FTE and survey program leaders regarding future needs and their justifications. Review what other units and institutions are doing with regard to staffing. Identify positions that would be particularly helpful to ABB metrics.

Who: Ad hoc committee, chaired by Beverly Anderson; members to be determined

By When: End of Winter Quarter 2012

Task #7: Continue to advance the argument with the CoENV dean and others that under current ABB plans outreach provides unfunded value to the UW and its units.

Who: Director and others, as opportunities arise

By When: Throughout A/Y 2012, as opportunities arise

Task #8: Continue building a coalition of universities to push agencies to pay reasonable overhead.

Who: Director and others, as opportunities arise (including Bare at SAF/NAUFRP meetings)

By When: Throughout A/Y 2012, as opportunities arise

Task #9: Provide tools and training to PIs on various funding vehicles that improve research cost recovery.

Provide a "white paper" and/or training to researchers regarding the various funding instruments available with the Forest Service and other low-overhead agencies; and existing UW and federal rules for directly charging for support activities. Review what other units/institutions are doing, particularly SAFS, who deals with some of our same issues.

Who: SFR Financial Services Office

By When: March 1, 2012

Task Force Report¹

Developing a Coordinated Research and Outreach Enterprise in SEFS

January 17, 2012

The passage of SHB 1254 by the Washington State Legislature in 2011 provides the opportunity to review how we, as a School, are organized to efficiently and effectively carry out research and outreach programs of maximum benefit to society.

The Legislature created the Institute of Forest Products (IFP) in 1947. It was renamed the Institute of Forest Resources in 1979 and made responsible for pursuing research and education related to forest resources and their multiple uses. The 2011 legislation directs the School to organize itself to pursue coordinated research and outreach, covering traditional forestry issues along with emerging issues related to forest and environmental sciences, and to improve the understanding of complex forestry and related issues for stakeholders, policymakers, and other interested parties.

This modernized directive comes at a time of great economic tumult, sweeping changes in access to information, on-going change and uncertainty within the UW, and numerous leadership changes within SEFS, suggesting that the time is right for a fresh look encompassing functional, informational, financial, and administrative interaction and efficiency to more effectively generate and disseminate new scientific information critical to a healthy natural resource sector.

A Task Force emerged from the September 2011 SEFS strategic planning meeting to consider this fresh look. To date, it has met on three occasions: October 25, November 17, and November 28, 2011. During the initial meeting, background presented at the planning meeting was reviewed. The key question is: How should the School organize and administer its research and outreach enterprise to optimize effectiveness and efficiency? Relative to our existing structure of research centers and cooperatives, can we define a new approach that: a) provides additional flexibility to address changing research issues and opportunities as they arise; b) promotes internal efficiencies while simultaneously retaining the support of our external stakeholders who identify with a specific research program or issue; c) increases our ability to respond to interdisciplinary RFP's in a timely and effective manner; and d) minimizes

¹ Task Force members: Beverly Anderson, B. Bruce Bare, Robert Edmonds, Greg Ettl, and Sarah Reichard. We also thank Jerry Franklin and Rick Gustafson, who provided valuable insights to the Task Force.

administrative overhead? The latter two meetings were extended conversations with School researchers, exploring wants and needs from their perspectives.

Task Force Discussion

There was considerable discussion related to the relationship between the Institute and the School's existing research centers and cooperatives. It was recognized that many external partners and stakeholders identify with a given center/cooperative. The Task Force believes that these relationships are valuable and, as long as funding is available, these separate nodes should be maintained. If core funding is lost, these initiatives could move to research group status and still maintain connections with their stakeholders. The Task Force recognizes that research and outreach in the School are also performed by individual researchers/staff unaffiliated with an organized center or cooperative. The Institute should be framed to potentially serve all researchers.

There was unanimous agreement that individual faculty or faculty groups are the generators of proposal ideas and that the science aspect of proposal writing and development cannot be farmed out, although editing and clear writing may be supported by the Institute. Similarly, it is the faculty member who develops his/her networks in an organic fashion through the course of their work; mass networking opportunities provided by organizations are not particularly effective.

A revitalized Institute can serve as the focal point for the School's research and outreach programs and do so in a value-added way. Ultimately, three broad roles for the Institute were developed: 1) as a provider of services; 2) as a web portal restructuring our research around issues; and 3) as a promoter of new research.

Services

There was agreement that one role the Institute can play is to provide a range of services benefiting the School's research/outreach programs. Many of these services can be, and are being, carried out by existing staff. In some instances, current staff effort may need a change in emphasis, and additional staff needed to expand the scope of current services. Portions of existing center/cooperative staff with the requisite skills can be purchased for Institute unmet staff needs. Examples of services that the Institute can provide are:

- communicating new research opportunities to researchers in a customized way ("this might be a good fit for you or your group"), causing more than a casual look at yet another email;

- insulating PIs from as much pre-award form preparation/involvement as possible and ensuring that all proposal details are attended to;
- assisting PIs with proposal budget preparation;
- assisting PIs with post-award project management of large projects;
- assisting PIs with post-award financial reporting matters;
- assisting with preparation of research reports and, increasingly, on-line newsletters (it was noted that while some efficiencies might be possible by merging newsletters, in some cases stakeholders specifically don't want a bigger picture);
- organizing outreach opportunities;
- procuring or brokering professional services related to grant writing and technical research support;
- in a targeted fashion where considered effective, facilitating meetings of faculty around new research opportunities or sponsoring seminars and discussion groups to enhance communication among researchers;
- providing a welcoming meeting space for informal discussions and spontaneous interactions;
- working with external stakeholders and funding organizations to generate new research/outreach opportunities;
- engaging in a broad outreach program to communicate results of research programs;
- doing more with social media;
- as needed, providing editing/writing services;
- promoting the undertaking of new research opportunities that cut across the boundaries of existing research groups, centers, and cooperatives;
- continuing to bring science and public policy together through the "living conversations" of the Northwest Environmental Forum, as an arm of the Institute.

Web Portal

The Institute should take advantage of the web, which allows even the smallest idea to have a world-wide presence, and recognize that complex webs of relationships are taking the place of

hierarchical one-way information flows that formerly were the domain of universities and other “knowledge industries.” It should develop a strong user-friendly, partially interactive website in order to provide our partners, stakeholders, policy makers, and other interested parties with the latest information being produced by SEFS. Further, this web presence should be organized around issues/problems rather than by the traditional research interest areas. Issues/problems serve as an ideal organizing principle that will encourage a multitude of innovations, large or small, substantive or procedural. It is also an ideal structure with which to focus a variety of resources since it is understood that big problems require an interdisciplinary approach.

The Institute web page should be the School’s major web-based source of non-instructional information, the science and application of what is going on here. This issue-based structure is likely to appeal to students, whose social conscience directs their interests to the problems of our time, and to the “new donor,” who wishes to be more involved in the organizations they contribute to. This approach is also likely to increase the status and relevance of the School’s research program and its researchers. The website should provide progress information on issues of interest to lay audiences, rather than expecting this audience to find our value in academic journals. The website could lead to new funding opportunities as well as the involvement of new research collaborators from elsewhere in the College and UW; even in difficult financial times funding for the sciences is usually available to attack big problems.

The website can also be used to involve the public in specific research projects or programs and acquire auxiliary research dollars from small contributions to meet or supplement specific project needs. It is much more appealing to some donors to provide funds, for example, for simple well engineered farm stoves for migrant workers in Costa Rica through a Facebook page than to passively give to a department.

The Task Force views the Institute as the centerpiece of our School’s research/outreach programs. Focusing on issue-based presentations will promote the value of the Institute and our School’s faculty and research/outreach community. It is also in synch with UW President Michael Young’s guest columnist comments in the December 16, 2011 Seattle Times: [The UW will] “Align our work and efforts with the needs of our economy. Our graduates need to be prepared for jobs in a 21st-century global economy. Our research needs to progress from our labs into our homes, hospitals and businesses. As we struggle to do more with less, we need to focus on where our efforts produce the maximum impact for our students and for society.”

New Research

The prime defining role of the Institute is to build an integrated and innovative program of research, focusing faculty around one or more big problems in a very visible way. The Institute can nurture/coordinate inter- and multi-disciplinary research of the sort that can be difficult for a single researcher or research center to foster.

If the definition of innovation is to create value out of existing resources or processes, then the new Institute will itself be an innovation, creating many values -- relevance, donor and other funder attraction, student attraction, etc. -- out of primarily existing resources. We can strategically redirect a strong complement of existing resources to form an issue-based Institute with the following benefits:

- Provides services to individual faculty or groups of faculty, whether organized as centers or not
- Overrides silo mentalities
- Provides a mechanism for public engagement, whether by means of information provided to them or funds obtained from them as a function of their interest in our work
- Provides appeal to the “new donor,” who is interested in outcomes and long-term impact and wants a social return for future generations. It is important to keep in mind that new donors comprise both the most and least affluent segments of the donor pool. Both are worthy of attention, and both can contribute in this model.
- Appeals to the entrepreneurial spirit and social conscience of today’s students
- Assumes the maxim that good research supports good teaching
- Has the flexibility to customize resources dedicated to each problem
- Encourages/facilitates more interdisciplinarity
- Encourages impactful research since it is responsive to a problem
- Keeps resources focused on impactful efforts
- Attracts funding, which is more likely available for big problems
- Involves entrepreneurs

This won't happen by itself. A unique brand of leadership is critical in order for this part of the Institute endeavor to be successful. The director needs to be a dynamic and engaged faculty member with an entrepreneurial inclination and special abilities as a networker. Under current and near-term economic conditions, it is ever more important for faculty to be entrepreneurial, aggressive, and competitive; the director should have the skills to help with that. He/she would be, or become, very familiar with what faculty are doing, their talents/aspirations, so that they and their work can be effectively highlighted/facilitated. He/she needs to keep a well-developed profile of the faculty in mind. This deep level of familiarity will allow the director to function as a broker in ways that support the researcher as an individual as well. He/she would build and maintain an innovative responsive structure that supports and develops the School's research and outreach enterprise. This position would also engage with stakeholders and donors as he/she involves them with the School's research.

There was unanimous agreement that we should start small and build based on need and success. As a way of starting small and testing the multi/interdisciplinary issue-based model, consideration should be given to directing available programmatic funds of the McIntire-Stennis allocation as seed money to an initial effort. This would test the effectiveness of the model and provide a platform for a later request for state funds. As a means of attracting the interest of state legislators, we might focus first on regional/local big problems that are of critical importance to the natural resource sector in the State of Washington.

If successful, the director will help create a culture of entrepreneurial science, high-impact, problem-based approaches to big problems that produces measurable results in terms of public benefit. The key word is "**impact,**" which should become a formal value in our performance measurement system.

This director will also direct the efforts of staff providing the administrative support functions of the Institute. With sufficient resources, this would be a full-time effort; with constrained resources it would need to be at least a half-time effort.

The Advisory Board

The Institute legislation allows for the appointment of a policy advisory committee at the discretion of the director of the School. We suggest that the membership and functioning of the advisory committee be carefully considered so that innovation and entrepreneurship are its hallmarks. A way to accomplish this is to populate the committee with one or more entrepreneurs active in the problem areas being addressed by the Institute or by UW faculty at large. Entrepreneurs are not necessarily business people, and the goal isn't necessarily commercialization. Innovative entrepreneurial thinking sees problems as opportunities, challenges conventional wisdom, sees ways to shift resources from areas of lower to higher

productivity, creates new value out of existing resources, synthesizes information from disparate sources, communicates clearly, and keeps an open mind. Faculty see value in having companies involved with the School, and this will be a way to provide very engaged involvement. In keeping with the themes of the Institute, appointments to this committee will be of relatively short duration, which should be attractive to very busy people and which will keep the board aligned with current issues. Consideration should be given to replacing the current Visiting Committee with the Institute Policy Advisory Committee since it is difficult for a small organization such as SEFS to properly engage multiple School-wide boards.

Another mechanism for injecting entrepreneurial thinking into the School is to develop a variation of the entrepreneur-in-residence model, which often exists in business or engineering schools. An entrepreneurial voice in the midst of a group of researchers/scientists often leads to high-impact entrepreneurial science.

Summary

The Task Force believes that a revitalized Institute can leverage our researchers and research groups, whether or not they are organized as centers, to more effectively compete for research funds and more actively communicate with our many stakeholders. It can more proactively conduct public and professional outreach programs. It can serve as an instrument that increases the public's and other interested parties' perceptions of the relevance of work that we do. The goal of the Institute should be to become the place where policymakers and other interested parties come for the best unbiased science-based information available as they consider their issues. At some point, after a track record of successes, we can expect serious consideration of funding from the Washington State Legislature and/or state agencies and from donors who wish to support our efforts.

We view this as an enabling, facilitating, and flexible structure, not one that diminishes or dismantles existing structures. We do not seek to build a new center that simply increases administrative complexity and forms an additional silo. In fact it is ideally not a structure at all....no organization charts....no particular dedicated space.....but rather a virtual organization, a system without a center, that encourages and facilitates temporary combinations of people and funds to meet issue-based needs. Time, energy, and focus are on the identified problems, not the structure. This virtual center provides a solution to silo-driven thinking in its outwardly focused perspective, i.e., "the problem," creating the right culture and the right teams to tackle the problems. Problem-based research will be the rule in the future, and we are well positioned to emphasize this long-standing strength and make it our sustainable comparative advantage on an organizational level.