

Visiting Committee Meeting

November 15, 2002

Members present: Jim Anderson, Brian Boyle, Dale Cole, Maureen Frisch, Roger Hoesterey, Duane Kelly, Robert McLachlan, David New, Curt Smitch, Phil Woolwine.

Also present: B. Bruce Bare, Debra Friedman (for part of the meeting), Steve Hettinga, Tom Mentele, Sally Morgan.

After introduction of the attendees, Debra Friedman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, addressed the Visiting Committee concerning the current situation of the University. She distributed a handout showing the budgets for the State and the University and quoted State Economist Soon Chung Moon's observations expressed at the Administrators' Workshop in September: 1) the taxpayers are seemingly not willing to pay more taxes in the economic downturn; 2) the taxpayers are seemingly not willing to support education. (This, in spite of the high value taxpayers express they put on the results from the University.) In this era of constrained budgets the Provost's Office asks each unit: What can you give? What can you contribute? Every unit must give and be a good University citizen. The bar is higher now; standards have increased, both in quality and in efficiency. Faculty need to be doers as well as teachers. She expressed that the committee and Dean Bare have identified the major issues faced by the College. To be successful, an entrepreneurial, innovative approach will be necessary to meet the College's goals in this constrained situation.

The following is a summary of the question and answer session between Associate Provost Friedman and members of the Visiting Committee.

Has the University's budget request gone to the Governor? Yes. In a change from past procedures, the budget just asks for an increase in per student core funding (rather than specific requests for individual items). The reality is that there will be cuts; there is simply too little flexibility in the overall state budget, so even small amounts can have a large impact on the discretionary portions of the budget. The next step is that units will be asked for their potential cuts.

What percentage of the actual cost is paid by students? 50%, roughly.

Have the fundamental structural changes in the state's economy been taken into consideration for the projections for the future? Yes, the projections are based on assumptions that include the changes in industry and employment throughout the state.

Does the University have a long-term plan to remove financial well-being out of the hands of the legislature? Yes, there is a greatly increased effort toward self-sustaining programs. This is a change from the past focus on public education values. The upcoming development campaign will not be to provide enhancements – it will be to support core operations of the University. This is part of the ongoing drive to rethink, refocus and transform the University.

If the University succeeds in becoming self-supporting, have we set ourselves up for no further support? Possibly, but we cannot remain paralyzed by that concern.

What particular advice can she offer for this Committee and for the College of Forest Resources? Demands are very intense. It is hard for a faculty that has done things in one way, so support for transformation is key. Understand that CFR will be called on to sacrifice, but that is not a punishment. Each unit must contribute something.

Has the Administration considered ways to restructure? Yes, but changes must come from within the College.

If a unit is very successful in their development campaign, would the unit be penalized? Yes, if by that you mean will the state subsidy be allocated to other units less successful in increasing funding. For example, an endowed chair for existing faculty position could free funds to address salary inequities.

What is the amount of the current shortfall? Depending on a number of factors, the expectation is that the state-provided funding will be reduced by 5 – 10%.

Dean Bruce Bare addressed the Board, noting that the budget is a driver in looking for changes, but it is not the only one. The document he distributed on October 31 (in the Committee packet) identifies the goals, factors and approaches that he is asking the College to work on. He emphasized that based on the Committee recommendations, the College has incorporated the charge to excellence as a “world class” institution. The recommendations followed the Charting Directions Committee report: Are those still the recommendations of the Board?

The College is moving toward a new understanding of its niche, emphasizing the functionality and sustainability of natural resource and environmental systems. We seek to study and understand the science and interactions of these systems across broad scales from the individual level to the ecosystem. Questions of the Dean are as follows:

What was the former niche? Over history, the basic core has been forest production. In recent years there has been a shift in interest from students in those traditional areas to other areas. There is a broad interest in a natural resource management undergraduate degree with additional specialization occurring at the Masters level. This is partly efficiency-driven, and partly from student interest. By increasing our efficiency at the undergraduate level, we believe students can move through the system in five years to obtain both a BS and and MFR degree.

Another motivation is to consolidate our undergraduate programs so we can better position the college to take a leadership role if a new academic unit is formed to incorporate environmental and natural resources subjects.

The faculty voted last year to transform the undergraduate offerings to 5 curricula, but now work is going ahead to further consolidate into 2 curricula – what is that about? The meeting with the Provost’s office made it very clear that a 5 curriculum model is not acceptable for the College to pursue – it is insufficiently transformational. We were told to go back and try again.

At the same meeting we were told that some of the faculty positions that are currently vacant cannot be filled. Because other comparable units are suffering more than CFR, it makes sense that CFR will be cut more. Efficiency metrics such as class size indicate that CFR has too many small classes, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Course consolidation will permit us to offer the same material through fewer classes.

What is the balance sought across the “triple bottom line”? We are seeking an even distribution across all three.

Are cross-college collaborations examined? Yes, that is an ongoing effort. A broad group of faculty is looking at connections with other units. Our College has several on-going collaborations and additional ones are being examined.

There was a general discussion of the preceding topics. Brian Boyle noted that the participation of the faculty

at the retreat was very poor; apparently some faculty didn't feel a need to be involved. The dean has taken several actions, but there isn't evidence of sufficient buy-in from all faculty. Brian called the Committee's attention to the actions the dean has taken, in regard to addressing the concerns of the administration, requiring the faculty to reconsider the curricula, and to reduce classes that are under-subscribed. Memos from the dean are in the packet.

Phil Woolwine stated the Charting Directions Committee nearly recommended disbanding the College (he indicated that was averted by actions of the Visiting Committee). Disinterest of faculty and failure to "transform" reinforces view of the central administration the CFR is not sufficiently motivated.

The comment was made that CFR has historically been seen as very self-serving. Is there any way to change that? Over the last 10 or 12 years there has been an increase in service teaching. This increased level must be sustained and enhanced. In addition, Dean Bare has set a goal of increases of 25% in research funding in the next 2 years (there have been increases, but last year the increase was lower than the average increase for the university as a whole.)

Tom Mentele, CFR Director of Development, gave a presentation concerning the University-wide fundraising campaign (see notebook insert). He presented a general overview of the UW Campaign information, and refined the focus to the College of Forest Resources, outlining campaign goals, a description of possible professorships, chairs, and student support endowments. He noted that the goals are derived from a needs-driven analysis undertaken earlier this year, with input from the central administration and development, as well as within the College.

He emphasized the importance of campaign volunteers, and requested that Committee members actively identify and engage constituents to help fund faculty, student, and program needs delineated in the UW and CFR Campaign presentation.

Because earlier portions of the meeting had gone over the anticipated time, Tom Hinckley, who was due in class, was unable to make a presentation on the progress of Merrill Hall reconstruction.

Brian Boyle distributed a handout and slide set describing the Northwest Environmental Forum. This is envisioned as a collaborative meeting and workspace to bring together decision makers and stakeholders to apply scientific and policy information to address critical environmental and natural resource management issues. In response to a question concerning the time frame for implementation, Dean Bare noted that the Forum will be housed in a building that is part of the new Merrill Hall. Since the University does not have resources to put toward this construction, completion of it could strengthen the position of the College by showing high level support from our donor community.

Dean Bare asked for input from the Visiting Committee on how the College can best package itself to transform for success. There was an extensive discussion, including changes in the social and economic situation. The incorporation of forestry at Duke University into a larger school was brought up. It was noted that while the name has been lost, the scholarly discipline is still there. Dean Bare also asked for the committee's views on the differentiation between "natural resources" and "environment" (in terms of the impact of the specific words). There was agreement that there is considerable overlap between the two concepts, but environment is often seen as more of a regulatory consideration or approach.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 to allow the board members to attend the farewell reception for President McCormick.