

**Minutes of the 20 February 2009
Meeting of the College of Arts and Sciences**

- Dean Ford made opening comments regarding the Provost's memos; the informal meetings of the Natural Sciences and Mathematics and of the Humanities and Social Sciences; and the open forum with the Provost on 18 February 2009. She decided at the outset to take a neutral voice to facilitate a positive, constructive conversation with the faculty, and get all the issues out on the table. She did not attend the prior meetings because she did not want to be perceived as leading the faculty in a specific direction; she believes she needs to balance her role of supporting the College faculty and the Provost. She thinks the faculty voice came through loud and clear from those meetings, however.

Issues discussed and concerns raised in the open discussion after Dean Ford's comments included the following:

- Issues surrounding another College reorganization:
 - Whether there would be a good fit between the current (philosophical, pedagogical, and scholarly) orientations of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences departments, and the Kimmel School; it was noted that there are already existing synergies between the Humanities, Mathematics, and the Social and Natural Sciences. The question seems to be whether those that might be created in a College of Science and Technology [hereafter "CST"] would be stronger in terms of collaborative faculty research, student education, etc.
 - Whether it would even be possible to create new synergies in a CST without physically moving offices, labs, etc.
 - Whether some departments or programs (e.g. Natural Resources Management) would remain or go to a new CST.
 - Whether a CST might be elevated to the stature of the premier College of the University, and the consequent feeling that the (perhaps already under-resourced) Humanities and Social Sciences could be marginalized as "leftovers."
 - Whether the economic savings would actually justify such a reorganization.
 - Whether the Kimmel School needed to be bolstered by the addition of resources from the College of Arts and Sciences (faculty numbers, SCH, or finances)
 - One faculty member asked whether it was true that payments have stopped being made on the Kimmel name due to the decrease in construction business. Dean Ford indicated that she had not heard that.
 - Whether a CST would fit the culture and community at WCU.
 - Whether the size of the College of Arts and Sciences was an appropriate reason for reorganization.
 - Whether the College of Arts and Sciences, as currently constituted, is capable of acting "nimble" and "innovatively," inasmuch as the Provost had pointed out at the open forum for the College [2/18] that he saw a number of new, innovative programs coming from some of the smaller colleges.
 - Dean Ford pointed to evidence of our innovativeness in a couple ways:

- She noted that she still planned to bring 4 key themes that the Strategic Planning Committee believe represent the entire College to a business meeting later this semester.
 - She also noted that the Curriculum Committee has been working to develop the idea of briefer coordinated double majors that are doable within 120 hours, that would increase interdisciplinary work, helps with education collaboration, etc. This could be a large marketing piece: some of the best students are in the Humanities program. This could be our major QEP initiative, if the faculty support the idea.
 - Another faculty member noted that last year, over 70% of the NCUR presentations were in the Arts and Sciences, and that we should be doing more PR for ourselves on this front.
 - It was noted that the nature of basic research is to be methodical.
 - One faculty member argued that if the critique of the College of Arts and Sciences is that we are not nimble and innovative, we have now lost another year to be such, if we are focused on possibly reorganizing again during the forthcoming year.
 - Whether the current administration of the Kimmel School would remain in place after the proposed reorganization, given that the majority of the new CST faculty would have had no input in selecting their leadership.
 - Some faculty noted that the College of Arts and Sciences is not unified on this issue: while the “no” voice from the faculty has been quite loud, there are some who are in favor of the reorganization, and there are also others who would like to see more arguments and data presented before rendering a judgment.
- The structure of the task forces as proposed by the Provost in his second memo:
 - Some faculty expressed concern that the stated charge of the task force would be to determine *how* it would enhance student learning, collaborative faculty scholarship, etc. rather than *if* it would.
 - Some faculty asked why we needed two task forces to make a proposal on one question (namely, whether the proposed reorganization should take place).
 - Several faculty argued that the formation of two separate task forces, and the language of the Provost’s second memo, played into the notion that the decision had already been made.
 - Dean Ford indicated that her understanding was that one task force would be to envision what a CST could look like and whether it would be workable; the other would be to envision what a college of Humanities and Social Sciences would look like, and how it could be strong and workable.
 - A number of faculty advocated for one task force rather than two, with representation from the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences, and Mathematics departments; as well as the departments of the Kimmel School. Arguments for this position included:
 - Not working at cross-purposes.
 - Efficiency, given that Dean Ford would be asked to chair one task force and co-chair the other.

- If the reorganization does go forward, both new colleges would need to go through a visioning process anyway; there could be a secondary set of task forces at that point.
 - Questions about whether particular departments or programs (e.g. Natural Resource Management) would be represented on one or both task forces.
 - The population of the task forces: why not elect members departmentally (rather than nominating and having the Provost choose from those), and have the Provost add a set number that he chose, as well? Isn't that the way these committees are normally constituted?
 - Can we rely on the expertise of emeritus faculty, who have no clear stake here?
 - Whether Mathematics and Natural Sciences faculty would be able to have frank discussions and debate about whether they would prefer to remain in the College of Arts and Sciences or in a new CST (regarding who would be their "boss" in the next year) on a committee co-chaired by the current Deans of Arts and Sciences and the Kimmel School.
 - Perhaps it could be co-chaired by distinguished faculty members?
 - Perhaps it could be chaired by another Dean? Two faculty members noted, in response to this issue, that another Dean might not understand all the issues at stake.
- The perceived communication gap between Faculty and Administration on this issue:
 - Some faculty read the Provost's first and second memos as indicating that a decision to reorganize had already occurred. Others noted that the Provost had indicated at the open forum [2/18] that this was not a done deal, and he would listen carefully to the task force recommendations before making a decision.
 - Dean Ford indicated that she believed the Provost had a clear, strong leaning (that was even stronger before the reactions from the faculty), but that a final decision has not been made.
 - Some faculty were surprised that the Provost did not anticipate a strong negative reaction to a proposed reorganization from the College of Arts and Sciences, given the findings of the previous task force on reorganization. One faculty member said that more troubling than the actual reorganization was that the Administration apparently did not perceive the sentiment of the Faculty at all accurately on this issue.
 - Erin McNelis [requested attribution] indicated that the College of Arts and Sciences, the Kimmel School, and the Provost appeared to be looking at the possibility of a CST from different perspectives:
 - The faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences generally believed it was a done deal that we were *not* moving in the direction of a CST.
 - The Provost thought it was considered more seriously, but lost track of where things were in the end.
 - The Kimmel School thought it was an open conversation and we were moving toward it anyway.
 - One faculty member was concerned that the decision might be based on public relations issues (casting WCU as a certain kind of school), rather than academic.

- **Dean Ford was asked to entertain a motion that the sense of the College of Arts and Sciences is that a single task force should be formed to study this issue; with representation from the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and the Kimmel School; and that the members be elected by the respective Departments.**
- **It was established that a quorum did not remain at that point in the meeting.**
- Dean Ford noted that the only thing she felt a clear consensus from the faculty on was that there should be one task force (as opposed to two), and then another task force at another stage (if that stage comes), and that she would take that issue to the Provost.

The meeting was adjourned shortly after 5 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John F. Whitmire, Jr.
Secretary of the Faculty
College of Arts and Sciences