

College of Forest Resources Response to THE CFR Review Committee Report of March 30, 2009

General Response

We thank the Review Committee for undertaking a thorough review of the College's programs as part of our 10-year academic review. The time and attention required is considerable and we appreciate the Committees' dedication to this task. The College has worked hard over this period to address issues raised in the College's 1996 academic review and we are very gratified by the positive nature of this review.

As noted in the report, changes in virtually every aspect of the College's endeavors have been made since the last review, including curricula, organization and function, administrative style and function, faculty governance, and the research enterprise. We agree with the report's assessment that these changes have largely addressed past internal problems and have led to the present where the College is "troubled primarily by external forces, most notably by uncertainty regarding: 1) the budgetary crisis... 2) the transition from status as a college to a school within the College of the Environment (CoEnv)... and 3) uncertainty as to who will lead the School..." We think that the College is on very solid ground at present and stands ready to address these and future issues successfully, but these three issues will remain sources of concern for the near future.

The leadership issue will be the first resolved. Current plans call for the Provost to select an interim Director for the School during spring quarter 2009. The interim Director will serve until a search for the Director is completed, hopefully within two years. Uncertainties associated with the transition to the CoEnv will take longer, depending upon the pace of formation of the new College, adequate funding, definition of its academic purpose, and establishment of its internal functions. Given the complexity of the CoEnv, we suspect that this may take several years. Budgetary shortfalls may well be the longest-lasting of these issues. Although the market may recover somewhat within two or three years, the effects of financial retrenchment on the CoEnv and its constituent units will be felt for a long time.

We agree with the Review Committee that there are issues of College operations worthy of attention. Several of these are already being addressed and in this response to the Review Committee's report, we comment on the following topics.

Responses to Budget Shortfalls

The unprecedented budget shortfalls for FY 2010 led to the loss of open faculty positions, staff FTE, administrative and operations support, and funds for student programs and lectureships. In the short term we expect budget shortfalls to continue for several years. In the longer term, we expect that gains in financial resources will result not from State sources, but primarily from enhancing our research program and secondarily from new private support for student financial aid and faculty professorships and chairs. These will be areas for concentrated effort over the next several years.

Transitioning into the CoEnv

Entry into the CoEnv has been the foremost topic in the College for the past two years. It has commanded discussions campus wide, planning efforts between the College and potential partners in CoEnv, and extensive discussions within the College. The College faculty and administration have been at the table from the beginning of this issue and have participated in the formative work on the CoEnv's vision and governance, structure and function, curricula, and bylaws. In anticipation of the transition into CoEnv, a report to the CFR Dean proposed substantive structural and administrative changes if the College is converted into a School. Some of these serve to consolidate staff functions and offices while others downsize the administration by sharing functions more widely among faculty and staff. The expectation is that these changes will reduce administrative and operational costs, a clear need as we face continuing financial stress. The proposed changes will be discussed and voted upon by faculty during the spring quarter 2009.

Curricular Change

The transformation of the College's curricula has been a major achievement and the product of several years of hard work. Realization of the new curricula required a rethinking of the nature of our instructional programs and a reassessment of our attitude toward the maintenance of the curricula. Since the major reworking of the curricula five years ago, we have continually assessed and adjusted them as necessary. Our attitude toward curricula now is one of adaptive management. At present the ESRM program is a flexible, transfer-student friendly curriculum with general, common coursework requirements in the lower division and student-selected, transcribed disciplinary options in the upper division. This structure allows efficient course planning and promotes graduation in four years. We think it could serve as a model for the development of curricula within the CoEnv.

The PSE program is more structured, in part due to ABET accreditation requirements. The Review Committee's concern for the PSE program was one of small faculty number. Although the Program is rigorous and well-supported financially, this has been a College concern as well. For the past two years we have attempted a joint faculty hire with the College of Engineering. An offer was made, but unfortunately the candidate chose another institution. We remain open to future attempts to increase the number of faculty associated with the PSE program.

Outcome assessment is another area where considerable effort has been directed. Both the PSE and MFR (Forest Management) programs are accredited. As such, outcome assessment of the both programs is required. We have well documented procedures that are used to measure the effectiveness of our efforts and they are under almost constant review.

Metrics for success of graduates

We agree with the Review Committee that one of the metrics for judging the effectiveness of our new curricula is an assessment of graduate success. At the present we use an exit interview of graduates that captures their immediate plans. We see the need for two efforts, one for tracking the careers of our graduates and another for soliciting the views of employers regarding the adequacy of our student's preparation. The former would be an ongoing communication while the latter might best be done periodically as we alter the curricula. Career tracking might best be done in cooperation with the Alumni Association and/or the Advancement Office.

Issues of TA support

With the double digit increase in majors over the past four years and the need for multiple offerings of core courses, our limited number of teaching assistantships has become an increasing problem. We have sought additional TA support from the Provost for several years without success. We will continue such requests. The College provides opportunities for undergraduate students to obtain credit when they assist faculty teach a course. While this may help enrich these courses, it clearly is not a solution to the problem. For the past several years most funding of TAs has been provided from unfilled faculty positions on a temporary basis. Because some of positions were cut in the current budget reduction, several TAs will not be available in the coming biennium.

Research funding

The College averaged about \$7-8M in research funding for several years before experiencing substantial faculty turnover during the past three years. As productive senior faculty prepared for retirement, they finished projects and did not seek additional research funding, leading to a drop in research revenues. This reduction in research, unfortunately, has coincided with the general financial downturn and has had especially adverse consequences for graduate student funding. We fully expect this situation to improve as the research programs of our recent faculty hires develop. Nonetheless, as mentioned in the budget shortfalls section above, because enhanced research funding is the most likely source of new money, enhancing it will be a major initiative for several years. Under the proposed plan for College reorganization, a New Research Committee will be charged with consistently alerting the faculty to research opportunities and encouraging collaborative research. Initiation of new research will be given particular attention in the faculty work planning process.

The fate of College Centers

Just prior to our academic review, the Dean received a report from the *Ad Hoc* Committee for Review of College of Forest Resources Centers. The report focused on the 5-year plans of the College's centers. This report augments the College's ongoing discussions about the structure and function of our centers and how to best organize them for success. It is clear, that future faculty retirements, research funding opportunities and the changing focus of research will necessitate a closer integration and collaboration among our centers. We expect this plan to be finalized by June 2009.