

UNIVERSITY *of*  
NORTHERN COLORADO



Recommendations of  
President's Planning Council  
Subcommittee 1

May 30, 2008

To: President Kay Norton

From: President's Planning Council Subcommittee 1

Date: May 30, 2008

Subject: Recommendations of PPC Subcommittee 1

### **Charge and Scope of Work**

In accordance with your charge, Subcommittee 1 of the PPC convened in April to begin assessing our academic structure in light of the university's goal of enhancing academic excellence. Over a two-month period the subcommittee gathered extensive information from deans, directors, and program coordinators to understand better how academic units are working, what successes they have enjoyed, and what impediments they are encountering. We paid particular attention to the role and function of school directors. We were guided in our deliberations by the values and goals expressed in UNC's Academic Plan.

### **Information Collected**

The subcommittee used open-ended questionnaires to solicit feedback from directors and programs [cf. Appendix], and requested open-ended comments from college deans. All deans responded, as did directors from the following schools: Communications; Chemistry, Earth Science, and Physics; English; Educational Research, Leadership, and Technology; Finance; Modern Languages and Cultural Studies; History, Philosophy, and Political Science; Human Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Psychological Sciences; Social Sciences; and Teacher Education.

The following programs responded: (HSS) Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, English (n.b. this is a school), Geography, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology; (NHS) Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Criminal Justice, Dietetics, Gerontology, Mathematical Sciences, Physics, Recreation, Rehabilitation; (EBS) Applied Statistics And Research Methods. In sum, we received responses from twelve schools, twenty-one program areas, and all academic deans.

In the cases of those units that did not respond, the subcommittee thought it prudent to make no assumptions about the meaning of a non-response, and recommendations are based solely on areas that supplied information. In several cases the subcommittee recommends no action in a given area, not because it has determined that the status quo is satisfactory, but because it lacks sufficient information to render a judgment. We anticipate that further analysis will be needed as the University's planning processes move forward.

## **Deans' Responses**

Responses from college deans reflected considerable differences in perspective, detail, and depth of analysis, a fact that made these responses somewhat difficult to translate into concrete suggestions. In regards to UNC's current academic structure, the deans noted that many single-discipline schools, and those multidisciplinary schools with strong interdisciplinary affinities, seemed to work well. Most felt that the efficiency of a relatively small span of direct reports, as well as fiscal control and flexibility, were advantages of the current school structure. One dean observed that directors have in many cases adopted more of a college-level leadership perspective as opposed to one of individual program advocacy. Another found the current structure particularly apt for the unique needs of the college in question, but noted that the same model might not be ideal for other academic areas. Two others noted that a 12-month administrative post provides for appropriate staffing during the summer, a crucial time for recruitment and advising.

At the same time, the deans identified several deficiencies in the current structure. While the director position might seem to offer an opportunity for leadership development, the task of recruiting and retaining directors has proven difficult for various reasons, including workload and the move of directors to exempt employee status. Three deans share a concern that the university has not invested resources in the professional development required to make the director position fully functional. Further, the program configurations in some multidisciplinary schools appear to be an awkward fit. The role of program coordinators is ill-defined: their expertise and function is needed in multidisciplinary schools, but they have no defined scope of authority. Directors in such schools must choose between managing multiple budgets or delegating budget management to program coordinators, who have no official authority. Further, program area coordinators often complain that their voices are not heard at the college level. Space configuration, staffing levels, and personnel policies are in some instances not aligned with the school structure.

Taken as a whole, feedback from the deans suggests that the current organizational structure is only partially successful in promoting academic excellence and efficient administrative functioning. The most acute areas of concern are the multidisciplinary schools. A strong background theme in the deans' responses was that the school/director structure continues to be a source of morale problems that trace back to its implementation. Having looked at the rather broad picture provided by the deans, the subcommittee turned to the responses of directors and program areas to gain a more detailed and specific picture of how the current structure is functioning.

## **Directors' Responses**

School directors across the university report a number of issues that affect their work. Some find the workload daunting, and in several cases feel that their span of responsibility is not matched by a commensurate level of fiscal authority. Some have found especially difficult the task of implementing a new model and having to define new roles and functions. In particular, the move to a more or less "pure" administrative function has proved difficult for some directors because it has disengaged them from the work of teaching and research in their academic disciplines, which for many is a disincentive to continue in a director's role. Further, because faculty members generally represent distinct areas of expertise, the assignment of a faculty member as a director can deprive a program of important courses not easily replaced.

## Program Responses

In the case of multi-disciplinary schools, the diversity of disciplinary expertise needed to administer programs has meant that directors often must rely on “program coordinators.” Modes of compensation for these “program coordinators” varies across campus, some receiving course release time. The “coordinators” take on administrative duties including but not limited to course sequencing, scheduling, evaluation of potential hires, handling student issues, and budget management. In these units (i.e., program areas within multidisciplinary schools in HSS, NHS, and EBS) the subcommittee has found that many important outcomes imbedded in our planning documents (CTF, Academic Plan) are not currently being realized. The following issues are noted:

- **Communication.** The Academic Plan, in Goal 1, objective 1.a., stresses the need for two-way communication and collaborative decision-making. While the grouping of multiple disciplines into schools ostensibly affords a more manageable span of direct reports to college deans, there has been a noticeable decline in the ability of program areas to articulate their needs and concerns at the college level, since the director, as a line officer, must serve as a conduit to the dean for formal communication. Communications from deans to programs must similarly go through a process of translation at the director level. More than two-thirds of the program areas independently identified the additional layer of bureaucracy as impeding the smooth and efficient flow of information.
- **Organizational effectiveness.** Both CTF and the Academic Plan underscore the need for effective and efficient organizational structures, and both call for data-informed review processes to evaluate the university’s academic organization. Several programs in multidisciplinary schools have indicated that total administrative costs to support the school/director structure are higher than they would be with a structure of program-level administration [see attachment]. This is partly due to the hidden cost in FTE allocation of program coordinators, and partly due to the fact that in some—though certainly not all—schools, the 12-month full-time director contract may represent overcompensation for duties performed. Ideally, multi-disciplinary schools might be envisioned as loci of the kinds of interdisciplinary collaboration called for in our planning documents. But the current structure makes certain aspects of cross-campus collaboration more cumbersome. Many programs in multidisciplinary schools reported more difficulty in carrying out routine administrative functions, let alone more complicated tasks, in light of the extra layer of bureaucracy represented by the school director.
- **Program identity and visibility.** Our academic planning documents stress the need to recruit and retain high-quality faculty and staff, as well as to highlight and promote the academic accomplishments of our faculty and students. Several units across the university report that their identification as a “program” has caused confusion among potential students and job candidates: fewer applicants for job openings than expected, as well as questions and concerns regarding the school structure. “Program” is an anomalous term among undergraduate degree-granting units in American higher education, “department” being the more generally-accepted designation. UNC faculty members who have attended preview sessions and other recruiting activities report that some students and parents find our nomenclature confusing, especially since many disciplines are

perceived to be “buried” in our organizational structure. In addition, the reports reflected that some students and parents have expressed concern regarding the quality of education and the competitive validity of “program” degrees as compared to peer institutions. Many current students and alumni from programs in multi-disciplinary schools still identify strongly with their academic major but are frequently confused about where to take concerns without a directly identifiable individual within the program. Admissions staff report that summer transfer advising often suffers from the problem of school directors’ inability to give expert advice about programs in their schools that fall outside their disciplinary expertise. Further, “apples-to-apples” comparisons of UNC programs to those of peer institutions regionally and nationally are often rendered more difficult by our anomalous structure.

### **Criteria Employed**

The subcommittee generated a set of criteria to govern any proposed structural modifications. These are as follows:

- Organizational structure must promote the University’s mission and goals as expressed in CTF and the Academic Plan.
- Organizational structure must optimize the effectiveness of academic units in fulfilling their mission.
- Organizational structure must support the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff.
- Organizational structure must be consistent with the goal of enhancing UNC’s academic reputation.
- Any proposed modification to our current structure must be budget-neutral or show savings relative to current costs.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the criteria enumerated above, the subcommittee makes the recommendations below. We reiterate that in cases where the subcommittee makes no recommendation, it lacks sufficient information from the units in question to render a judgment. Certain considered assumptions about nomenclature underlie the specifics of our recommendations. In accordance with national norms, the term “school” is appropriately used to designate academic units whose primary focus is professional preparation, and/or whose size, complexity or academic stature warrants a designation distinct from that of a department. The term “department” is appropriately used to designate a single-discipline unit that offers a major degree program of study in the liberal arts and sciences. Departments are headed by a faculty member serving in the position of “chair,” exercising the traditional duties therein, including, but not limited to hiring, evaluation, budget, and scheduling. He or she communicates directly with the college dean. The term “program” should denote either an interdisciplinary area of study (e.g. Environmental Studies) or a unit whose FTE faculty allocation or student credit-hour production is too small to warrant department status

(e.g. French or German). The committee regards as minimum criteria for department status (1) four full-time FTE faculty members and (2) the offering of a major degree program.

### **A. Recommendations Concerning College Organizational Structure**

**1. College of Performing and Visual Arts:** no recommendation. School directors did not respond.

**2. Monfort College of Business:** no recommendation. One school director (School of Finance) responded.

**3. College of Education and Behavioral Sciences:**

- School of Teacher Education: retain existing school structure.
- School of Special Education: retain existing school structure.
- School of Psychological Sciences: retain existing school structure.
- School of Professional Psychology and Counselor Education: retain existing school structure.
- School of Educational Research, Leadership, and Technology:
  1. Educational Leadership should become a school containing ELPS and HESAL.
  2. ASRM should be given independent status as a department.
  3. Educational Technology should be given independent status as a department.

**4. College of Natural and Health Sciences.** The subcommittee notes that NHS houses a mix of traditional academic programs and programs focused on professional preparation, and that differing models of organizational structure are appropriate.

- School of Nursing: no recommendation.
- School of Biological Sciences: no recommendation.
- School of Sport and Exercise Science: no recommendation.
- School of Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and Physics. The subcommittee recommends the following reconfiguration:
  1. Chemistry and Biochemistry (effective 7/1/08 a school distinct from a School of Earth Sciences and Physics) should be given independent status as a department, with a chair compensated by release time and an appropriately calibrated stipend.
  2. Physics should be given independent status as a department, with a chair compensated by release time and an appropriately calibrated stipend.
  3. Earth Sciences should be given independent status as a department, with a chair compensated by release time and an appropriately calibrated stipend.
- School of Human Sciences. Three programs within the School of Human Sciences—Gerontology, Recreation, and Rehabilitation—have a long history of fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration, and seem well-served by their current configuration, and the program in public health seems to make a reasonable fourth partner program. Three units in this school, however, are potential candidates for reconfiguration. The subcommittee recommends that:

1. The School of Human Sciences should be reduced in size to four programs: Gerontology, Recreation, Rehabilitation, and Public Health.
2. ASLS, by virtue of its size, complexity, and program mix, should be granted the status of school or department, as deemed appropriate in relation to its peer programs nationally.
3. The Dean of NHS, in consultation with the faculty of the Dietetics program, should determine the appropriate configuration for Dietetics. Faculty members in Dietetics have expressed the desire to become a stand-alone department, but since this unit has only three FTE faculty members, the subcommittee hesitates to recommend such a change at this point. It may well be that Dietetics would be better served by moving under the umbrella of another school or department.
4. Criminal Justice should be moved out of the School of Human Sciences. While the subcommittee notes that their situation is currently in flux, CJ faculty members have expressed a preference to become a free-standing department in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The subcommittee declines to make a further recommendation in this matter pending the outcome of initiative already underway that may place CJ into an alignment with Sociology in HSS.

## **5. College of Humanities and Social Sciences.**

- The School of Communication: No recommendation.
- The School of English Language and Literature should become a department (in line with national norms) and replace the director with a faculty chair, who will be compensated with release time and a stipend to include summer compensation calibrated to actual duties performed.
- The School of History, Philosophy, and Political Science should be dissolved in favor of the following arrangement:
  1. History should become a department with a faculty chair. The chair's summer duties should be compensated with a stipend calibrated to actual duties performed.
  2. Philosophy should become a department, with the chair compensated with release time equal to what is now given for program area coordinator duties.
  3. Political Science should become a department with the same compensation structure as that in Philosophy.
- The School of Social Sciences should be dissolved, with individual program areas treated as follows:
  1. Economics should become a department, with the chair being compensated in the manner currently being used for the program coordinator.

2. Anthropology has proposed becoming a department. The viability of this proposal, however, will depend on certain school-level contingencies to achieve budget neutrality. The subcommittee recommends that the additional course release that should go to the chair of Anthropology could be funded by savings from the elimination of the school director's position.
  3. Geography should become a department, with the chair compensated in the manner currently being used for the program coordinator.
  4. Sociology has proposed becoming a department. Its proposal, however, does not take into account a possible new realignment with Criminal Justice [cf. above under NHS]. The subcommittee recommends that this proposal be evaluated by the Dean in consultation with the affected faculty.
- School of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies.
    1. Modern Languages. The program has proposed becoming a separate department and severing its connection to the cultural studies programs (Africana Studies, Hispanic Studies). The subcommittee is not prepared to recommend this move at this time, given that we do not have information about its impact or desirability for the other programs involved.
    2. Cultural Studies. A proposal from Hispanic Studies arrived too late in the subcommittee's deliberations to be helpful at this point. No information was provided by Africana Studies. We recommend that the configuration of these programs, and of the school, be studied further in future deliberations of the PPC.

These recommendations, once implemented, will create differing organizational structures among academic units, even within the same college. The subcommittee believes, however, that in those colleges where there will be a combination of schools/directors and departments/chairs, a healthy and productive combination of faculty and administrators will be brought together in college leadership meetings.

## **B. Recommendations Concerning Broader Issues**

### **1. The Roles of Directors**

Given that many of the directors highlighted concerns regarding workload, compensation, and fiscal authority, the committee recommends that the academic deans and directors meet in the fall to discuss these matters. If the reorganization of programs, schools and departments is approved as recommended, those deans and the remaining directors will be able to reassess directors' roles in light of this reorganization. This discussion would be an opportune time to evaluate the variable workloads, compensation and authorities of the directors. Deans and directors could then make further, specific recommendations to refine the directors' responsibilities, keeping in mind the principle of cost-neutrality expressed in the subcommittee's criteria.

## 2. Financial Considerations

The subcommittee was charged with analyzing “current expenditures for administration of the colleges to determine whether we have achieved the goal of reduced or at least stable costs.” (“Charge to the President's Planning Council Subcommittee 1”) However, because the committee's tasks were so complex, and because it was not provided with information regarding current expenditures, we recommend that the PPC be charged to investigate expenditures in the fall of 2008. We would like to reiterate that the organizational changes proposed will at least be cost neutral and in some cases should result in cost savings. Just what those savings are should also be analyzed by the PPC in the fall.

### **Implementation**

The subcommittee asks that our recommendations be acted upon as soon as practicable, given the many steps that must take place in order to implement them in a timely manner. To the extent that many of our structural issues affect faculty recruitment and retention, student advising, and program visibility, we feel that there is considerable urgency in this matter. At the same time, we are aware that thoughtful, deliberate, and circumspect implementation will pay dividends. Subcommittee 1 worked diligently and conscientiously in making these recommendations. We are encouraged by this opportunity to collaborate with University leaders to foster an environment conducive to continuous institutional improvement, moving toward the goals articulated in our planning documents.

Respectfully Submitted,

President's Planning Council, Subcommittee 1

Mark Anderson, University Libraries  
Joan Clinefelter, History  
Rhonda Corman, Economics  
Marcus Embry, English  
Cynthia Galovich, Physics  
David Gilliam, Psychology  
Brian Luedloff, Music  
Stan Luger, Political Science  
Michael Mills, English  
Francie Murry, Special Education  
David Pringle, Chemistry  
Michelle Quinn, Finance and Administration  
Gloria Reynolds, President's Office  
Thomas Smith, Academic Affairs  
Robbyn Wacker, Academic Affairs

## **APPENDIX: Questionnaires Used to Gather Information**

### **President's Planning Council**

#### **School Director Questionnaire**

The President's Planning Council is seeking your input to assist in developing recommendations to enhance the role of school directors. This questionnaire is not intended to be a scientific survey, and its results will not be used to assess the performance of any individual school director or academic unit.

1. Please list in order of importance and explain the major duties and responsibilities of your position and indicate the average percentage of time spent performing each separate job duty.
2. What functions, if any, should be added or removed from your current job responsibilities in order to enhance your role and the success of your school?
2. What are the most difficult challenges you face as a school director?
3. What suggestions do you have for further developing the role of school directors?
4. What organizational structure would best support the academic programs in your school? (You might consider issues related to recruitment and retention of faculty and students, grants, visibility, etc.)

### **President's Planning Council**

#### **Academic program Questionnaire**

The President's Planning Council is seeking input from your program to assist in developing recommendations to enhance the role of school directors. This questionnaire is not intended to be a scientific survey, and its results will not be used to assess the performance of any individual school director or academic unit. We encourage you to consult with your program colleagues and include their feedback in your response.

1. Please identify your program and college:
2. Please list in order of importance the functions performed by your school director:
3. Does your area have a program coordinator? If so, please describe the functions she/he performs for your program:
4. Please describe how the transition to school directors has impacted your college, school and/or program.
5. What organizational structure would best support your program? (You might consider issues related to recruitment and retention of faculty and students, grants, visibility, etc.)