April 8, 2014

Academic Affairs Advisory Committee Finding for the proposed College of Engineering and Natural Sciences

Numerous points were discussed in our committee, and following the Faculty Code for the AAAC, we submit a list of supportive and constructive items for consideration by Faculty Council.

[From the Standing Rules of the Faculty Code: The committee shall advise the Provost on programs having campus-wide implications that affect academic affairs. This includes coordination and allocation of resources among instructional units, assisting to establish the jurisdiction of instructional units over curricular areas, program development, academic support services, preparation of the calendar and the official UM-Flint Catalog, and other matters of concern to the committee or the Provost. The committee shall make its recommendations on all new degree programs, support their development, and make recommendations to the Provost on all matters affecting the academic life of the campus.]

1. As a means to secure necessary faculty resources for a new College of Engineering and Natural Sciences (CENS), the committee looked at the proposal’s rationale and documentation and found both a need and opportunity for future growth, success, and stability within a structural change that allows for a greater degree of self-determination and autonomy. The proposed structure allows the new unit to better serve its students, manage its resources more effectively, provide greater support to its faculty and staff, and improve service to the community.

The Committee is charged to seek to maximize efficiency and collaboration wherever possible. In light of this charge, the proposed structure, as is true with any new initiative, presents a conundrum of sorts. However, the Committee believes that the prospective impact and benefit generated by enrollment growth outweigh the concern for maximizing efficiency.

2. Growth, as an objective of both the strategic plans and economic health of the university, is generally served well by additional academic units or schools. This is especially true of a unit that focuses on STEM disciplines and addresses an important public interest. This public spotlight on Flint and its many partners should also bring a positive note and special attention to the university.

3. Academic programs in the reorganized CAS, which teach many of the required courses for the sciences, should continue to hold on to and enjoy the additional growth anticipated for the new unit. As stated in the proposal and expressed repeatedly in various forums, the faculty of the new college strongly believes that liberally-educated STEM graduates are vitally important and highly desirable. In addition, they do not plan to lower the number of general education requirements or to engage in any sort of course duplication. The AAAC members will continue to
advise the Provost to take a dim view of course duplication as a means of securing additional funding.

4. The Committee has reviewed the CAS response to the proposal which proposes instead the creation of a division within the College for the STEM disciplines. The Committee is of the opinion that this proposed structure that creates an Associate Dean position that oversees and represents a new STEM division could ultimately fall short of the goals for budgetary and hiring autonomy and lessen the ability to secure third-stream funding without a College Dean’s watchful and experienced focus and advocacy.

The Committee is in agreement with the Interim Dean’s observation that CAS suffers unduly under the current budget model. In light of this, the Committee strongly recommends that the proposal to create CENS be implemented in a way that not only does not adversely affect the reorganized CAS, but strengthens its budgetary position.

5. The Committee feels that the issues providing the original impetus for this proposal, and the need for a separate STEM unit were largely due to budgetary management at the University level that created an unnecessary scarcity of resources and overly competitive scenario within the existing CAS structure. The proposed new college addresses and potentially solves these issues for the STEM disciplines, yet the issues still remain within CAS.

Issues that affect the faculty and teaching are increasingly negative at UM-Flint as indicated by the most current findings and report of the Committee on the Economic Status of Faculty. The same external pressures that contribute to poor resources, limited research opportunities, and scarcity of time for developing teaching excellence for faculty are the same underlying the pressures on the remaining academic unit.

The Committee would agree a new structure and budget be implemented to support and grow the proposed new college, but would prefer to see this as an opportunity to instead create two new academic units that would benefit from a reorganization and budgetary support. In this model, with similar administration support, both units benefit and emerge stronger to tackle future needs equally, and equally serve the needs of the University.
Report on the College of Science and Engineering Proposal
Graduate Programs Committee
March 27, 2014

Members

Thomas Hemphill (SOM, Management)
Kazuko Hiramatsu, Chair (CAS, English/Linguistics)
Jeff Kupperman (SEHS, Education)
Shu-Yi Tu (CAS, Mathematics)
Amy Yorke (SHPS, Physical Therapy)
Aries Okungbowa-Ikponmwosa (Graduate student representative)
Vahid Lotfi, ex officio

As requested by the Faculty Council, the Graduate Programs Committee considered how the proposal for creating a College of Science and Engineering (CSE) would affect the development, operation and quality of graduate education at UM-Flint. To inform our review of the CSE proposal, the committee met with Jessica Tischler (Chemistry) and Dr. Stephen Turner (Computer Science, Engineer, and Physics), department chairs from two of the four departments proposing the new college, as well as Albert Price, Interim Dean of CAS.

The Graduate Programs Committee discussed several aspects of the proposal, including the rationale for the creation of a new unit, the proposed budget, and the impact on CAS. We do not believe that the creation of a new CSE would impact current graduate programs in CAS, or the ability to create new graduate programs in the future. A significant challenge that will likely impact graduate education on our campus is the lack of physical space to accommodate the anticipated CSE growth.
4/14/2014
Chancellors Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning
Report Regarding College of Engineering and Natural Sciences Proposal
Members:
Chair: Emily Newberry-Thompson Library
Chris Douglas-CAS, Chris Pearson-CAS, Jie Song-CAS, Sharman Siebenthal-Adams-SEHS, Cathy Larson-SHPS, Weiqi Li-SOM, Greg Tewksbury-Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance (ex officio), Jerry Glasco-Director of Financial Services and Budget (ex officio), Gerard Voland-Provost (ex officio), and Ruth Person-Chancellor (ex officio)

Background
In February 2014, CAC/BSP was presented with a proposal drafted by representatives of Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Computer Science, Engineering and Physics (CSEP), and Earth and Resource Sciences to separate these departments from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) to form an independent College of Engineering and Natural Sciences. On February 21, 2014, Steve Turner, from CSEP and Joe Sucic, from Biology, attended the CAC/BSP meeting to explain the proposal and answer any questions. On March 21, 2014, Interim Dean Albert Price, of CAS, attended the CAC/BSP meeting to explain the formal response to this proposal as put forward by CAS, along with answering questions. On April 5, 2014 Jessica Tischler from Chemistry and Steve Turner from CSEP attended the CAC/BSP meeting to present the revised version of the proposal, which amongst other things, changed the new school from “College of Science and Engineering” (CSE) to “College of Engineering and Natural Sciences (CENS).

As explained in the proposal, the main justifications for this division are:

- By reorganizing based on their common identity as laboratory sciences with a shared scientific culture, they will be better able to address issues of faculty/student retention, resource allocation, and grant seeking.
- A new college will increase student enrollment in these disciplines and make UM-Flint a school of first choice among students looking for STEM related degrees.
- By having a dean who comes from the sciences, CENS will be better positioned to successfully seek grants, as well as having a consistent “seat at the table.”
- A greater degree of autonomy for these departments.

CAC/BSP discussed the proposal at length and was tasked with outlining our views of the proposal’s strengths and weaknesses with an emphasis on budget.

Points of Discussion
In drafting this document CAC/BSP only considered the official CENS proposal as was presented to us.
CAC/BSP considered what kind of budgetary effect the departure of CENS departments would have on the remaining CAS departments. CAC/BSP determined that this model is careful to make sure that CAS is not harmed with the division. This is only the case if
CENS agrees to take 55% return on revenue as well as making sure that the university support of $800,000 does not come from the budget of CAS. Assuming the budget is as presented in this proposal, CAS should be able to continue to function successfully with no negative impact.

Concerns were raised about the proposed annual contribution from central administration’s base fund. This amount is estimated to be approximately $800,000 in the proposal. CAC/BSP is not certain of where this money will come from. CENS has said that they plan on requesting this $800,000 become a permanent part of their budget. CAC/BSP understands the need for initial start-up money, but as the College begins to generate a substantial profit as predicted within the five year time frame of their budget, the $800,000 was argued to be an unnecessary burden to the University. It seems likely that this money would come out of a new initiative fund, or the University’s cash reserves fund. This fund is used for one time purposes and would not therefore end up becoming a reoccurring contribution from the entire University.

Another issue that was discussed with regards to the $800,000 contribution is determining if the creation of a new level of administration is in the best interest of the University and the students. The proposal states that the $800,000 would be used to cover the costs involved with funding new dean’s office, which they estimated to cost approximately $720,000 in the first year. The authors of the proposal argue that an investment in a dean who comes from the sciences will reap rewards that will more than make up for this cost, including gains in grant funding as well as more efficient resource allocation. The question was raised within CAC/BSP as to whether the creation of a new level of administration is the best use of University money, or if the resources would be better served meeting other needs, such as faculty posts or equipment. There was disagreement within CAC/BSP which direction would be better for the CENS departments in the long run.

CAC/BSP discussed the enrollment projections in the 5 year budget proposal, which assume 3% enrollment growth within the next 10 years. Appendix A in the CENS proposal does show at least 3% increase in total numbers of students for the last several years. However, the total number of credit hours generated over the last five years appears to be flat according to Table 1. CAC/BSP has seen additional data that shows over a longer time frame that enrollment has averaged very close to the 3% estimate that the CENS proposal predicts. This information was not included in the official proposal, so initial discussions were not able to take this into account.

The absence of Mathematics in this proposal was another point of conversation. It is unclear whether Mathematics decision to remain in CAS will hinder CENS efforts to attract STEM monies. The proposal makes it clear that Mathematics is welcome to join at any time, but the Mathematics department, in an official response circulated to all faculty via email, stated that they “believe we better serve students by being firmly connected to both the science programs and to the rest of the College.” At the present time they would prefer for the STEM units to remain in CAS and therefore it is unclear if they would decide at a future date to join CENS.

Conclusion
CAC/BSP did not come to a consensus on any specific recommendations in regards to the CENS proposal.
As the proposal stands, these departments have adequate faculty members to justify the establishment of a separate college. They also have taken the health and welfare of the remaining CAS into consideration when creating their budget, and CAC believes the budget would be sustainable if the assumptions made in the proposal hold. With that in mind, several discussion points were brought up in CAC/BSP deliberations.

- A market study should be conducted to determine if the per credit fee charged to students included in the CENS proposal will impact student enrollment.
- The $800,000 contribution should come from University cash reserves and therefore be a temporary measure to get the CENS off the ground. A time limit should be set at which point when CENS is predicted to be sufficiently revenue generating, this contribution will no longer be needed. If they do not reach certain goals for revenue, other expenses will need to be cut within CENS to cover their deficit.
- An official agreement should be drafted in which CENS and CAS agree to work cooperatively regarding curricular issues to ensure classes are not duplicated and to develop curriculum that provides UM-Flint students with the best general education experience.