UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED
Institutional Planning and Analysis

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Date: April 21, 2008

To: SAP Subcommittee 1

Copy: Jim Genes, Nancy Ochsner, Roy Verley

From: Michael Roona

Re: Academic Organization and Structure Follow-up Survey Results

Of the 101 faculty members who were asked to complete the follow-up questionnaire about school structure, 42.6% responded. Among the 43 faculty members who responded to the first question, 35% favored housing all Bylaw 55 units in three schools (the current model), 28% favored two schools (such as a School of Letters & Sciences and a School of Engineering), 19% favored four or more schools with narrow focus, 7% favored one school (including programs from all three of the existing schools), 7% expressed no preference, and 5% favored none of the options presented.

In addition to the poll results above, 20 respondents availed themselves of the opportunity to elaborate on their opinions by offering comments. Their comments are reproduced in the table below, sorted according to their responses to the first question. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me (x6901) or email me (mroona@ucmerced.edu).

	Comments favoring one school
1	It seems to me, perhaps, that there may be too much emphasis in this current process on how other U.C. campuses work and not enough attention to how UC Merced can best distinguish itself and leverage its opportunities in starting fresh. I am concerned that not enough attention has been called to the fact that Plan B, defining BL55 units around undergraduate majors, brings to bear an apparently large socioeconomic market force that tends to define academic subjects in traditional, conservative --- I would say reactionary and inert -- ways. I think that faculty fears regarding Plan C could be addressed in a continued dialogue, and that more time should be taken to really examine this choice in faculty fora. That Plan C was earlier recommended for Merced should not be taken lightly. It is so easy to choose a well-trodden path taken by other campuses, but the less-trodden path of letting current research boundaries redefine undergraduate education have clearly been successful elsewhere outside the U.C. system, and can really help distinguish U.C. Merced. The statement that ORUs can facilitate interdisciplinary research (but not be an academic unit) is, in my opinion, like having a regulatory agency without powers to enforce their mandates. To promote interdisciplinarity, interdisciplinary units should be able to both hire and educate both grads and undergrads according to their visions and goals. So I beg the SAP subcommittee to reconsider moving forward with Plan B. And in any event, but especially if Plan B should be adopted, the following considerations should be brought to bear: 1) compensatory structures should be in place to promote progressive and interdisciplinary values not only in research but also education, including undergraduate education, and 2) more explicit attention should be paid in this planning

	process to how U.C. Merced can distinguish itself as an academic institution with unique advantages both within the U.C. system and worldwide. Let us recognize that many forces move us in the direction of convention, and if we do not wish to become conventional, we must actively push back against these forces. Failing that, we will become just like anyplace else, just another University among many. Therefore, I support the subcommittee's apparent promotion of fewer schools as a way to promote flexibility in defining subjects. The current 3 school system has perhaps already interfered with hiring and retaining personnel strategically within interdisciplinary programs like ESS and the SNRI. Having certain disciplines like CS within Engineering has also perhaps biased (IMHO) the hiring and representation of that discipline. I say all of the above with the reservation that I am still learning about the U.C. system, U.C. Merced, and running Universities in general; my comments may reflect ignorance or misunderstandings for which I ask your patience and benefit of consideration.

	Comments favoring two schools
2	I find the wording of these questions confusing. Isn't engineering a professional school? If so, then I'd vote for option #1, above. But the examples suggest that engineering doesn't count as a professional school. By such a definition, if we had one school, the ABET standards would drive the curriculum for the entire school. I doubt this would be healthy for any other disciplines. I would prefer to see all other disciplines under one school of arts and sciences. Thus, by the way these questions are formulated, I prefer option #2.
3	as the white paper noted, engineering stands alone in all uc campus models. for UCM, i think that one school that is the result of a marriage of SSHA and NS-- similar to UCD's college of letters and sciences-- and an engineering school, offer the most realistic way for us to continue seeking innovative, productive, and attractive interdisciplinary courses, research projects, and hires.
4	I am persuaded that a large-school model will support interdisciplinary activities and administrative economies of scale more effectively than the current model. I presume that Engineering must remain a separate school for reasons of accreditation and systemwide expectation, but this is outside my expertise. My main concern about the large-school model is that it will be more difficult for particular constituencies to made policy effectively. Case in point: UCM currently lacks a foreign language requirement commensurate with other universities in the UC system. SSHA recommended such a requirement (though it was rejected by CAPRA), but I suspect it would be more difficult to gather support for particular GE and other policies as schools become more diverse. Nevertheless, the enhanced capacity for interdisciplinary program building, the reduction of administrative redundancy and cross-school competition for resources, and the reduction in cross-school appointments would seem to be worth the risk.
5	The white paper suggests allocating resources in some fashion for use by graduate groups. The white paper notes that UC Davis uses such a model, but does not describe how UC Davis allocates resources. It would be helpful if UC Merced contacted UC Davis to determine how the latter allocates FTEs and related resources, and also what UC Davis would do differently in this regard if it had the chance to start over.

	Comments favoring three schools
6	It seems that one of the main contributions of administration at the school level is the coordinated planning of resources. Thus, the activities within a school should be sufficiently similar with regard to funding models and resource needs so as to allow for coherent planning at this level. With this in mind, I would propose three schools but different schools than those currently established. I would propose a school of engineering (where industrial funding and applications-oriented activities are more prominent), a school of science (incorporating both natural and social sciences, where governmental agencies like NSF and NIH provide the bulk of funding and laboratory space is commonly needed), and a school of humanities and the arts (where funding comes from a myriad small sources and laboratory space is either unnecessary or idiosyncratic).
7	My vote only reflects my opinion that the School of Natural Sciences and the School of Engineering should remain as they are. I have no opinion as to whether or not SHHA ought to remain a single school or not.
8	I can see advantages and disadvantages to any/all models. The key is a structure that allows resource streams that foster interdisciplinarity -- which would argue for the two school model -- while still making sure that some traditional disciplines are not undervalued in any model. The three or four school model could support interdisciplinarity, although this depends on which schools were ultimately defined/established. That is, I think 3-4 schools is probably about the "perfect" size, but I don't know that our current construction is the "perfect" three.
9	I think the current school structure encourages interdisciplinary research and teaching. It could make more sense to me to consider the creation of new schools only when Bylaw 55 units have formed within existing schools and have a sufficient number of faculty, i.e., at least 5 years down the road. Apart form that, I would support the creation of new schools that focus on large disciplines that have relatively little overlap with the current schools on campus, and are needed in the Central Valley, such as a school of health and medicine.
10	Potential savings in administrative burden/cost justify keeping few schools - however the strategic planning process should be well defined (ruled) and equal across all schools. In particular concerning the interaction between the groups under a same school, which will be competing for resources.
11	I believe that the current model is appropriate for the present time. In the future it might be desirable to subdivide into more schools with narrower foci, but this should not occur until we are large enough for each subdivided unit to contain at least several separate, well developed "departments" (Bylaw 55 units). What is essential is that Natural Sciences (and Engineering if it so chooses) be able to split into more than one Bylaw 55 unit for strategic planning and faculty hiring and promotion purposes. My assumption is that each school will have a separate dean and that each Bylaw 55 unit will have an administrative chair who reports to that dean.
12	I do not favor a situation with fewer or more Deans. I think three Deans is appropriate for the current size.

13	I think the current model makes a lot of sense. My second choice is the broadly defined schools such as those at UCB, UCLA, UCD, and UCSB.
14	The school structure doesn't matter as long as the Dean has little power and less money. With no one at the top able to implement a vision (even a vision approved by the faculty), we will not make real progress.
15	From my perspective, in the physical sciences, I see no need to make any substantive changes to the school structure at present.

	Comments favoring four or more schools
16	I prefer either the Irvince model (4 or more) or 2nd choice is the Berkeley model (two schools ...)
17	My second choice is one school. I would like to engineering to be integrated with the other schools. My third choice is two schools. My second and third choices are predicated on the recognition that some narrow schools might occur down the road (e.g. a school of biological sciences)... I would like to see UCM continue to develop multidisciplinary research programs and make as few barriers as possible. UCI provides a good model of a relatively new campus reaching research prominence in disciplinary and multi-disciplinary fields.

	Comments supporting "No Preference"
18	I believe that the structure of the institution is not as important as the clear articulation of goals and objectives, and a concise definition of responsibility and accountability sufficient to reach that vision. In addition, an effective and efficient decision framework is essential, including a reliable monitoring and assessment mechanism that will be used to make transparent adjustments as needed. Assuming such a framework is in place, the academic and administrative structure and function of the university should be that which is (1) best suited to support our research mission, (2) most efficient from a cost and operations standpoint, and (3) insures the sustainability of a quality undergraduate program. Growth of the university should be such that we attain quality in all that we do, and maintain that quality as we grow. We must resist the urge to build new programs that do not reflect such quality from the outset. Depth of quality is much more important than breath of identity.

	Comments supporting "None of the Above"
19	I think fewer schools are better but I'm not sure if the current set of 3 schools is optimal. NS and ENG seem fine but SSHA might not be the best grouping of areas.
20	I object to the assumption of the question that all Bylaw 55 units should be organized around undergraduate majors. I think By-law 55 units should be organized around both undergraduate majors and graduate groups, as faculty see fit. Schools should then be structured to serve these programs in the most efficient way.