

August 29, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Sir Peter Medawar believed passionately that brevity, clarity and cogency are core to communicating. As many of you may have noticed, I am still on the learning curve but I am going to keep these letters to one page, of hopefully clear and cogent writing.

You may remember from my last letter, that I have four transition goals. Some of our alumni and other supporters have told me that these goals are "aggressive" for academia. I think they are optimistic, but I think that not only are they achievable but it is very important that we achieve them.

The first of these goals was to provide you with as smooth a transition as possible. Please let me know if it hasn't been the case so far or it isn't going forward. I want to especially thank Kirk Astroth, Jim Davis, Debby Janes, Colin Kaltenbach, Elaine Marchello, Sandy Pottinger, and Bethany Rutledge for what they have done to help me understand what we are doing, where we are, and why we are where we are; as well as making sure I am where I am supposed to be at given times (despite my *Windows 7* and *Outlook* learning curve, me messing up my calendar, and some of my navigating).

Second, I am learning about our college. Since I set foot in my Tucson office on Monday, August 15, I have met with: the HODs, our newest faculty members, the other UA deans (both en masse and some individually), interested extra-CALS UA people and a very few students. I have visited with some of you individually as I have traveled my first 1,500 Arizona miles and some as you came to campus as a group. You have all gone out of your way to inform me and make me feel welcome. The miles many of you put in just to meet with me make mine trivial in comparison and it is an indication of the commitment for CALS that we all share. I would like to reemphasize that as I meet with you my aim is to be as non-disruptive as possible—so please disturb your schedules as little as possible. I would like to mention everyone I have met by name, but space won't allow it. However, please know that I do remember and thank you all individually. Also, the HODs are being extremely proactive in arranging departmental visits that make the most sense for each department.

Third, I have met with a great proportion of our distinguished donors and have others to meet over the next weeks as schedules allow. This has been a privilege and an honor for me; not only are these individuals essential to our college's future, but they are personally inspiring. I have met with many alumni (many of whom are also in the above group) and, again, this has been my pleasure and extremely informative. Alumni have told me of their favorite professor and most impactful courses. This reminds me that we never know the impact we are having when we are having it, that time flies by and memories are long. Finally, I have met with and listened to the concerns of many of our stakeholders. I am still coming to grips with the complex challenges our communities face, but I assure you that what we do daily in CALS is a critical component of their future. We must continue to do what we do best: provide the essential foundation for Arizona's (and thus our nation's and the world's) social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Fourth, the searches for our three associate dean positions are underway. The committees are named and the chairs have been extremely active. These searches may be unique in Land Grant University history: not only are we searching to find new leaders for our tripartite mission at the same time but, like me, the chosen individuals have extremely big shoes to fill: together this new team must live up to 96 years of continuous excellent service. We all now realize we have a new economic reality for the foreseeable future. Our next associate deans will need to be at least equal to the very best in the US to lead us through the next years of fiscal challenges and beyond. This unprecedented time in higher education's living memory means we face very significant decisions. All universities, and the units within, have two choices: come together to jointly make our hard choices or do the opposite—instead of applying creative, innovative and entrepreneurial solutions, descend in dysfunction that no amount of money or personnel changes will fix. I am confident that we will be in the first category and I want to ensure that we keep communications open, that we evaluate every idea thoroughly, and that we make decisions in the spirit of shared governance. I will expect a lot of our new associate deans, and you need to as well. The search committees need to hear from you. I consider it imperative that every voice has a chance to be heard. Now is not the time for reticence on your part and I encourage you to contact search committee members with your unique input.

Go Cats!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Shane