

March 12, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

Since my “all-hands” meeting with you on January 9—and thanks to the work of those leading and serving on the search committees; the staff supporting these committees; the very many people who provided input to the committees and to me during the process and who took time out to watch the presentations and meet the finalists; and of course, the efforts of the candidates themselves—we now have our new CALS Executive Committee.

Our four new Associate Deans have long histories of accomplishment in the college, and come to their new roles from leadership positions where they were asked to make difficult impactful decisions. Their new positions will ask more of them as they work for you, for our students and their parents and guardians, as well as our diverse stakeholders.

Furthermore, because each is an actively serving department head—and because we are currently identifying the structural and directional changes CALS must make to live within its budget and at the same time deliver the most value to the University and thus the state—they have all agreed to maintain their unit head roles for a transitional period. However, each has delegated responsibility and authority to senior faculty leaders within the units and each has done so differently because each unit is different.

I expect this transition period to last only until the fall semester. This transition process is intended to ensure that none of the affected units is relatively disadvantaged during our planning and that new unit leadership can be selected to match and complement what we identify for our future.

You have all begun to think about CALS’ future from within your units—the “12 questions” were just one aid to this—and now we enter the next phase of the process. “**CALS21**” is about reassessing *why* we exist, *what* we must do to continue to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and *what* CALS will look like in 10 years. This is the first step. We then need to identify *how* we are going to make this vision a reality and *who* will be doing what.

Our financial reality also requires that we build fiscal, in addition to philosophical, bridges to the future. Though stimulated by the financial crisis, our evolution truly must be motivated by our desire to continue our history of relevance and impact, taking into account that there is a relationship between strategic priorities and fiscal decisions. As I was recently reminded by CALS’ own Drs. Beattie and Thompson, it is economically impossible to do “more with less”; there are times that we either do “less with less” or we do something differently—maybe even change the rules.

Strategic thinking processes aim to help us seek innovations and imagine new and different futures that may lead us to redefine our core strategies or even our entire “industry.” We may identify and develop unique niches and then find ways to make these a reality; this can necessitate difficult resource allocation choices. We need to be architects of our own future rather than let others define it for us. We must also be able to distinguish between transitory events and genuine fundamental reasons for any changes. The point is to identify where we need to be in 10 years and get there in steady steps. Again, though stimulated by the greatest financial crisis in generations, our purpose is to keep CALS relevant and productive for those that we serve. It is important for you to know also that we do have tools that can help us with a short-term fiscal problem so long as we have clear and defined plans for our future that are financially sustainable

Our faculty is central and fundamental to the university, and also has an essential and unique perspective. That is why I have asked our CALS faculty committee to expand and serve as the *Faculty Consultative Group (FCG) for Effectiveness, Efficiencies and Innovations* at the college level. Our budget issues are due to state funding cuts and so the FCG have started their work with our state budget. In addition, the *Arizona Higher Education Enterprise Plan* has a goal of doubled CALS research productivity within 10 years and the *Dean’s Research Advisory Committee* will be focusing on this mandate—again at the college level and again as faculty experts.

Concurrently, CALS’ Administrative Cabinet will identify key benchmarks and metrics for measuring ourselves against our college peers; comparing units within CALS; and identifying overall college goals. The CALS Executive Council will also do our best to ensure that CALS will remain “at the table” in the affairs of the University and the state and, as importantly, occupy an important seat at that table. The associate deans for academics, co-operative extension and the experiment station will be doing the same for each of CALS’ three mission areas.

However, only at the unit level do we have our domain experts; our faculty. CALS is incredibly diverse (so diverse that it is hard to explain to our stakeholders what we do in a few sentences). Thus, only at the unit level are we well-positioned to identify what opportunities, and threats, are present in your areas. So it is most appropriate for you to determine what the strategy in your units, and the disciplines within those units, should be. The “12 questions” were to help you to start to assess the current situation. The next step is to get more specific in the context of today’s environments and at a granular level, identify positive or essential activities or structures that must be maintained or enhanced, as well as activities that should be discontinued or modified. This is not easy and you may be choosing between the excellent and the exceptional. However, we are facing extremely challenging intramural and extramural funding environments and the directions you choose will determine the future of CALS and the University. You will need to examine as much information as possible to draw conclusions because you will need to make some difficult, thoughtful and impactful choices with long term consequences. You may consider surveying or interviewing stakeholders (faculty, students, staff, and clients), benchmarking, examining past CALS faculty publications or funding data, as needed or appropriate. Please also

think broadly and how you may “strategically align” with others in your unit, the college, the university or broader afield, to put yourself in the best position to be successful.

Strategic alliances between us and our key customers, and even our competitors, may be efficient ways to help us grow beyond our known limits. Strategic alliances are used by businesses to gain access to new markets, develop new products or skills, allow rapid responses to changing market environments, and reduce risks and costs. They can help smaller entities take on much larger competitors. Can we work together with others in areas where neither party currently has a maximized competitive advantage, and where we can share common costs (rather than each of us paying them)? By leveraging against each other’s strengths, entities can identify innovative ways to better fulfill their missions. Strategic alliances can be used to make us more credible and more competitive for large opportunities than each of us could be individually. What are our strength areas and unique attributes that may be valuable to one or more of the other units within CALS, UA or the state? What assets do others have that may have value to you? I am sure that none of this is a surprise to you, as you all think this way every day.

**As part of this process, I will give your unit heads a document on Tuesday March 13, for which you will, as a unit, need to identify:**

1. Areas to preserve, protect, or enhance.
2. Areas to discontinue, de-emphasize, or modify.
3. Areas where totally new activities or structures are needed.

**This will be due to the Executive Committee, via my office, by April 13.**

Following this, our penultimate task will be to work on specific goals. *You will have another template to follow*—not because I want to be proscriptive, but because using a consistent format allows us all to more easily compare ideas and also, no matter where we are in the college, we can easily go to the relevant part of the plan. These documents will then be accessible to all in CALS for comment and the “final” documents will be developed after this comment period. I use “final” because, as I have said before, the point of these is not to gather dust but to actually help us stick to our plans, or identify why what we had planned is no longer the best option and needs to be changed. At this point, I’d like to quote Dwight D. Eisenhower (again): “In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

Finally, I want to remind you that during this process one of our most important guiding principles must be that *we focus on protecting our people*.

Thank you for all that you do, and will do, as we work together through the most challenging financial times since the great depression.



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