

Ad Hoc Committee of Distinguished Professors in CLAS

September 15, 2006

Neil Sullivan
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Florida

Dear Neil:

We, the undersigned Distinguished Professors from CLAS, write to convey our deep concern about the recent five-year plan for the College. We object to the process by which the plan was generated, the particularly adverse impact the plan will have on the Humanities, and to the budget cuts for Mathematics. We believe that the best public and private universities have flourishing programs in the Humanities and that a robust College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is crucial to the mission of the University.

The promulgation of the proposed five-year plan, which has had very little input from faculty, pays scant attention to shared governance. The chairs and directors received the five-year plan four hours before the CLAS meeting with the Dean on Friday, September 1. Most of the faculty who attended the meeting knew nothing of the existence of this document.

In place of the current, hastily generated document, we urge the deployment of a long term, well thought out plan of assessment and recommendations, one that includes input from faculty and administration. Hasty, ad hoc measures may have disastrous effects on the Humanities programs, the Department of Mathematics, CLAS generally, and the University as a whole.

The reputation of departments targeted for cuts has already been tarnished on a national level. The departments are perceived as weak and / or troubled by the rest of the University, our peers, and by academic institutions across the country. In fact, however, such a perception is unwarranted, especially as the data used by the college office have been gathered in haste and focus on a very narrow set of criteria.

The current debt and the proposed quick fix measures have also generated damaging media coverage and will, if implemented, surely impede fundraising. Those who work with programs that depend on the UF Foundation and on private endowments have already heard from troubled alumni and potential donors, who are deeply troubled by these stories. These ill-considered moves have already negatively affected faculty and graduate student morale and threaten to cripple recruitment.

The withdrawal of support especially from key disciplines in the Humanities also goes against the University's strategic plan. The current "Five-Year Plan" plan for CLAS and the negative publicity it has generated can only hurt in our effort to join coveted top ten among public universities. Indeed, as the Arts and Humanities Working Group for the Faculty Senate stated emphatically in its preliminary report (presented on April 20, 2006), "[N]o university can aspire to recognition as one of the country's great public universities which is not recognized as a leading center of research and teaching in the arts and the humanities."

We therefore urge that the administrators of CLAS be instructed to produce a budget based on broad-based consultation with the faculty. Doing this properly entails the establishment of clear criteria and ways by which performance is measured. It must also respect the culture of pedagogy and research relevant to the affected units. A new budget, produced with meaningful faculty consultation and sensitive to the distinctive circumstances of Mathematics and of the Humanities, can contribute toward our common goal of enhancing the University's stature at its core.

Respectfully,

Dr. Agresti is on leave and will add his signature later.

Alan Agresti

Statistics



George Casella

Statistics



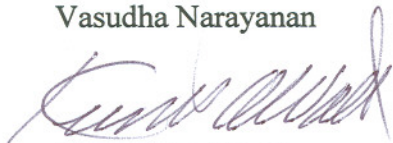
Malay Ghosh

Statistics



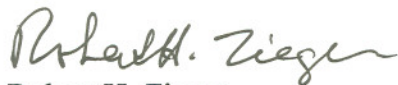
Vasudha Narayanan

Religion



Kenneth D. Wald

Political Science



Robert H. Zieger

History

cc: Pres J. Bernard Machen
Provost Janie M. Fouke