

To: Faculty Senate
From: Dean Cammy Abernathy
Date: November 22, 2010
Subject: Formation of the Engineering School of Sustainable Infrastructure and Environment

The faculty (tenured and tenure-track) of the Departments of Civil and Coastal Engineering and Environmental Engineering Sciences agree by a vote of 22 in favor, 4 against and one abstention and 13 in favor, 2 against and one absent respectively to form an Engineering School of Sustainable Infrastructure and Environment. The final memorandum of understanding that was approved is attached to this request.

In brief, the school is an administrative structure. The departments will continue to exist and have control over their own curriculum, T&P, degree certification and accreditation. Each department head will report to the School director. The School will have a single budget and staff overseen by the School Director. Most engineering colleges do not have distinct civil and environmental programs, so this will move us more toward the mainstream. The enrollment, faculty numbers, and research expenditures will compare favorably with top institutions such as Illinois, Berkeley, and Texas-Austin. This may help with external program rankings. There are additional advantages in administrative flexibility and efficiency.

In addition to administrative advantages gained immediately, we anticipate over time additional academic advantages. We anticipate faculty will begin discussion of coordination of the curriculum and this may result in changes to degree programs. We expect research collaboration will increase and we anticipate co-locating faculty over time. New hires are more likely to be interdisciplinary and will help bridge the research areas of the departments.

Discussions began on this change almost one year ago. A committee of faculty from both departments was formed to develop a consensus structure. Meetings of the faculty in each department were held to discuss the proposal and refine it. Input from the faculty council (the college shared governance body) was sought at two different meetings. Concerns were addressed about budget impact and whether a merger of the departments should be sought instead. Budget implications are not a problem, there is a potential for savings and not additional costs. A merger was considered and found not acceptable as some thought their identity and programs would be threatened. Final voting came from both sets of faculty in the spring with over 80% approval.

We request that the Faculty Senate approve this change as required by senate by-laws. There is no change to current degree programs. As required, both the University Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council have approved the change.