



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Department of Mathematics

The Steering Committee

September 21, 2006

Dean Neil Sullivan
Turlington Hall
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611

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Dear Dean Sullivan:

We, the undersigned members of the Department of Mathematics, strongly disagree with the recently released CLAS Five-Year Plan. Mathematics is a vibrant and rapidly expanding discipline that lies at the foundation of all sciences and engineering. Excellence in mathematics teaching and research is central to our national science and technology enterprise. A healthy mathematics department is of critical importance to every great university.

We are astonished that the Five-Year Plan was decided in haste and without any consultation with our department. It is unclear what data and criteria were used in assessing the department's performance and in determining the reductions to our department specified in the Plan. Therefore we ask that you release the data and methods of analysis that were used in evaluating our department for the Five-Year Plan.

Similarly, we strongly disagree with the Plan's provision to end our chairman's term a year early, given his outstanding service and our department's many significant achievements, as recognized by the External Review Committee and by your own public and written statements.

As you know, the External Review Report, commissioned by Provost Janie Fouke, praised the department for having "achieved a significant increase in national and international visibility over the last five years". The External Review Committee also observed that "the budgeting system at the college and university levels is not very transparent" and reported their concern that our department is already "stretched to the limit" with its current resources. The committee recommended immediate allocation of additional resources to the mathematics department. If, on the contrary, the resource cuts outlined in the Five-Year Plan are enacted, it will undoubtedly result in a significant decline in the quality of our teaching and research, causing irreparable damage to our university.

The Five-Year Plan, by slighting the External Review Committee's well-argued recommendations, sends a dangerous message to the national academic community. The committee consisted of influential scholars and was chaired by Dr. Peter March, who became Director of the Division of Mathematical Sciences at the National Science Foundation in Fall 2006. We are embarrassed that our institution values their efforts so little.

We believe that it is imperative that the Plan be rescinded and the recommendations of the External Review Committee be properly addressed.

As always, we stand ready to work with the administration to explore initiatives for making the most efficient use of the University's valuable resources while maintaining our commitment to excellence in teaching and research.

Sincerely yours,

The Steering Committee
and the undersigned faculty and staff
of the Department of Mathematics

cc: President Machen
Provost Fouke