

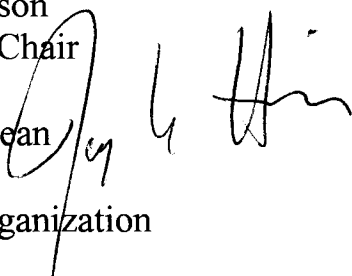
College of Design, Construction and Planning
Office of the Dean

331 Architecture Building
PO Box 115701
Gainesville FL 32611-5701
(352) 392-4836
Fax: (352) 392-7266

April. 8, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Jean A. Larson
Faculty Senate Chair

FROM: Jay M. Stein, Dean 

RE: Report on Reorganization

In reference to our conversation last night, attached is a copy of President Emeritus Bob Bryan's report concerning the different reorganization scenarios for three of DCP's academic units.

Attachment

REPORT

The Department of Landscape Architecture brings in more research dollars than any similar department in any of the public universities in the nation; its enrollment is stable and it offers the only bachelor's degree in landscape architecture in the State. The Department of Interior Design is ranked among the top ten departments of its kind in public universities in the nation (8th, up five ranks from last year), three of its faculty serve on national publication boards, and its enrollment is limited only by the size of its faculty. The Department of Urban and Regional Design is second only to Georgia Tech in research dollars awarded on an annual basis; in the past three years four books have been published by the Department's faculty. Its enrollment of graduate students (it does not offer a baccalaureate degree) is stable. The University of Florida and its College of Design, Construction, and Planning have in these three units good and strong departments. The question has arisen, however, about their status as independent units within the College. As the University as a whole under the guidelines of its new strategic plan tries to find ways to eliminate duplication of administrative costs, these three departments have come under scrutiny. Can the three be merged into one, or can two of the three be united? And if two are merged, what happens to the third department?

This report attempts to answer those questions by presenting the results of analyses I have done with the department chairs (Bob Grist in Landscape Architecture, Janine King in Interior Design, and Paul Zwick in Urban and Regional Planning) and two faculty meetings, one with the combined faculty of the three departments and one with the faculty of Urban and Regional Planning. I have also met with the Dean, Jay Stein, several times. I was provided, of course, with the necessary data regarding enrollment, number of faculty positions, graduation rates, research contract and grant dollars, and awards that affect national departmental rankings. All three chairs were asked to respond to the same set of questions regarding the administration of the department, research activity, faculty-student ratios, department culture, accreditation issues, and operating practices. What follows, then, is a summary of what I have learned.

The Department of Landscape Architecture

The Department of Landscape Architecture has a stable enrollment and research programs that continue to grow. There would be no improvement in departmental administration if a merger with Interior Design and/or Urban

and Regional Planning were to take place. It is important to realize that in the case of a merger with one or more departments, the administration of this department's curriculum and research programs would have to continue to be separate from the larger unit that would be formed by a merger. Accreditation standards for this department, and for that matter, all three departments under discussion, demand that the curriculum be independently managed.

If a merger with Urban and Regional Planning took place, the research activity might be minimally improved. No benefit in this area of activity would be realized if the merger involved all three departments, and the cooperative research activity with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning would probably not grow significantly because at the present time there is already good cooperation in research projects between the two departments. That cooperation, however, could be improved.

There is simply no way to improve the teaching program under a merger with the Department of Interior Design; the subject matters are too disparate. At present the Department of Urban and Regional Planning does some cooperative teaching activity with the Department of Landscape Architecture, and under a merger of these two departments some efficiencies could be realized, but it is important to remember that the former department has both undergraduate and graduate students and the latter has only graduate students. In short, no major improvement would be realized, although, once more, increased cooperation in the two teaching programs at the graduate level would be beneficial.

The effect of a merger with another department on the culture of the Department of Landscape Architecture is hard to predict. Things might continue to move along in the right direction at the right rate of speed. On the other hand, a merger with either one or both of the other two departments might create a cultural confusion that would damage both the unity and rate of improvement of the Department. Merger with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning might not be as risky, but there are no clear and unambiguous signs that such a merger would be advantageous for both departments. If a merger took place with this department, the relationship with Landscape's alumni might be adversely affected; at least it is doubtful that the relationship would be improved. If the Department of Urban and Regional Planning has a strong desire to have contact with undergraduate students, then, of course, a merger with Landscape benefits that Department, but I could not detect a unanimous desire of the part of the faculty of that Department to teach undergraduates. And, if all three departments were merged to form a

school, the direction of that school would quite probably utterly blight the successful operation of the Department of Interior Design; this department is simply not intellectually compatible with the other two.

As noted earlier, all three departments still have to be programs that are independently managed for accreditation purposes; the degree offered by each department has to be independently awarded or no accreditation is possible.

The effect of a merger on the Department's national reputation or national ranking is difficult to predict. While it is not difficult to predict that a merger with the Department of Interior Design would not help at all, it is possible to argue that a merger with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning might help a little. More about this when I discuss that Department.

The Department of Interior Design

The Department of Interior Design, which has the most PhDs on its staff of any such department in the nation, has the highest student-teacher ratio of any department in the College of Design, Construction, and Planning. The Department's enrollment is stable, but if more faculty positions were available, the enrollment could rapidly increase. There would be no improvement in the Department's administration if a merger with one or two of the other departments was effected. The Department's enrollment is stable, but if more faculty positions were available, the enrollment could rapidly increase. There would be no improvement in the Department's administration if a merger with one or two of the other departments was effected. At the present time, the administration of the Department is in excellent condition.

The teaching program would not be improved at the undergraduate level if a merger with one or two departments occurred. There is some possibility that one part of the graduate teaching program would be improved under the terms of a merger, but increased cooperation at the graduate level among the current three departments will achieve the same result.

A merger with one or two of the other departments would be of no real help for the Department of Interior Design's research programs. The research program in this Department is beginning to grow, but a merger would not improve the chances for interdisciplinary activity. Nor would a merger with one or two of the other departments be of any help for the Department's undergraduate teaching program. It is possible that some cooperative efforts with the two other departments offering graduate

seminars would be helpful, but departmental mergers would not be necessary for this cooperative effort.

The present culture of the Department is healthy; there is lots of interactivity inside and outside the Department. A merger with one or two departments, however, would damage that culture.

The issue of accreditation is the same for all three departments: the only organizational issue involves the programmatic independence of each unit; each must be headed by a member of the unit and each head must make budget decisions within the unit. Hence a merger with one or two departments serves no real purpose. If, for instance, all these departments were merged, two departmental chair positions could be eliminated, but unit managers would have to be appointed for two of the three former departments and these positions would have to be maintained either as 12 month positions or as 9/3 month positions. Not much in the way of salary savings could be realized.

In terms of national stature, the quality of a program's faculty and students is foremost; the organization of a program does not usually play a significant role in determining a department's reputation. Hence a merger of the Department of Interior Design with another department or placement within the School of Architecture would not help to improve the Department's national reputation. Indeed, a national ranking of eighth is hard to improve on, and that improvement will certainly not come about because of some administrative game of musical chairs.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning is a strong, nationally recognized department with a very well developed research expertise. This Department could be merged with the Department of Landscape Architecture provided, as previously noted, that each department has a "unit manager" who is an administrator; this manager, or his/her summer substitute is necessary for the programs to be accredited by their professional societies. But why do it? Very little administrative cost savings would be realized. It would be extremely difficult to merge Urban and Regional Planning with Interior Design; these two disciplines are too far apart in subject matter to work together; there is no national example of such a merger. But there is precedence for such a merger, in one form or another, of Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning: unions of these two departments in one form or another have occurred at Clemson, Arizona State, Kansas State, and Wisconsin (Madison), all land grant institutions. At

this writing, it is difficult to know exactly what the term, “merger” means as it relates to what goes on in these four universities. For example, at Kansas State, Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning, while joined by one title, seem, according to the testimony of one former UF faculty member currently serving at Kansas State, to “just go their own way, and the planning activity is not very active.”

The union of these two departments might help increase the dollar value of research contracts and grants of both, although it should be noted that only the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Georgia Tech currently receives more research dollars annually than the one at the University of Florida. (We should also remember that Landscape Architecture brings in more research dollars than any similar department in any of the public universities in the nation.) And Georgia Tech’s Urban and Regional Planning Department is independent in terms of administrative structure in its college. In other words, a merger of Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning might increase research activity, but such a merger does not guarantee an increase.

The two Departments, Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning, have established joint teaching programs which are of great help to the students of both departments. This joint activity is quite successful, but it is not clear how a merger of the two Departments would increase the success of the joint teaching program. There are no shared teaching duties with Interior Design nor is there ever likely to be any.

The culture of the two Departments, Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning, are similar. These two departments have a good working relationship, and the subject matter of the two is in some ways complimentary, but, and this is important to note, in other ways it is clearly not. That these two departments can work closely together is seen in the fact that each department uses some of the courses of the other department for requirements for their baccalaureate degrees. But a major difference in the culture of the two departments does exist: every faculty member in Urban and Regional Planning has a Ph.D.; and Landscape Architecture has only one Ph.D., just hired this last year. This is bound to have an effect on the tenure and promotion policies of the two departments, an effect not easily overlooked under the terms of a merger. There is, however, a sense among several of the faculty in this Department that some kind of union is almost inevitable. This feeling is by no means unanimous, and there are at least a couple of faculty members who are opposed to a merger. In listening to the members of the faculty talk about this matter, I think I sense a desire on the

part of some of them to teach undergraduates, while some of them are not at all interested in doing so.

The national ranking of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning might suffer a little with a merger simply because currently none of the very best such departments are products of mergers. This Department has an excellent national reputation; as noted in the beginning of this report, in the last three years four books have been published by the Department's faculty, and while a merger could probably strengthen the graduate programs of both departments, it would put the merged department into a new and different national category with a new set of criteria used to judge national ranking.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it does not appear to me likely that a merger of all three departments would produce anything but intellectual chaos, not a good environment for students. A merger of Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning is, at the present time, not likely to improve the curriculum for the students or the national reputation of either department. Perhaps over a long period of time as the cultures of these two departments become more similar some kind of merger at the graduate level might produce some improvement of the education of students, but I am at a loss to explain how this might come about. As noted throughout this report, mergers of any kind will not produce significant salary savings in administration because of accreditation standards.

My advice is to go very, very slowly in any approach to any kind of merger of Landscape Architecture and Urban and Regional Planning. I am talking about several years of study and experimentation. I would begin with attempting to increase cooperative efforts in introductory courses at the graduate level before I would do anything else. If that works, then move on to the next step. I would make an intensive study of what goes on at Clemson, Arizona State, Kansas State, and Wisconsin (Madison). Even then, I would remind myself that our departments here at Florida are much better than those at those four institutions. Indeed, I think I have to remind everyone that we have some of the best such departments in the country, and that we don't need to imitate anyone. Let people imitate us. Finally, I see no way to merge Interior Design with either or both of the other two departments, nor do I see a way for Interior Design to be sent back to the School of Architecture. Interior Design, as has been repeatedly noted, is not intellectually compatible with the other two departments, and if it went back to Architecture, it would perish from neglect; the faculty in the School of

Architecture are simply not interested in interior design. All this does not mean that the three departments should go their separate ways, isolated from one another. There is plenty of opportunity for increased interdepartmental cooperation, cooperation that can, and should, help reduce administrative costs. After all, that's why this study has been made.