

## VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

### A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

#### *In Joint Sessions With*

### B. Finance, Audit and Facilities Committee

#### College of the Environment

The goal of this information item is to bring you up to date on our plans to found a College of the Environment at the University of Washington. When more details of our plans are in place, we will bring an action item for your approval to establish this College.

For the past several months, we have undertaken bold steps to consider how the University of Washington can organize itself most effectively to provide solutions to the world's most complex environmental problems. We have tremendous depth and breadth at the UW in certain environmental fields, such as climate, water, and conservation, and great opportunities in energy, urbanization and the environment, environmental policy, and law. Our diffuse organizational structures do not always allow us to maximize our impact or to project our depth and breadth as well as we could.

Our goal is to act on our vision statement in the area of the environment, including: (a) to provide a stimulating, challenging, and coordinated interdisciplinary learning experience for our students, preparing them to be global citizens and world leaders in environmental issues, and (b) to discover timely solutions to the most complex environmental challenges through non-traditional alliances among our faculty and with external stakeholders in business, industry, government, nonprofit foundations, and funding agencies.

#### Steps taken

1. In the spring a small group of faculty, staff, deans, and I began exploring alternative models for optimizing and projecting the University of Washington's formidable resources across all areas of environmental science and policy.
2. We held a "charrette"\* to bring together 30 people from the UW community and external stakeholders for an intense two-day discussion. Background materials included a synopsis of previous interdepartmental efforts in environmental education and research at

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\* The word "charrette" refers to an intense, usually multi-day collaborative event in which participants draft a solution to a design problem. It is commonly used by architects and urban planners. In our usage, each participant first stated, without interruption, his or her preferred solution. The group then divided into sub-groups, with each sub-group presenting its work to the full group for dialogue. The charrette serves as a way of quickly generating a design solution while integrating the interests of a diverse group of people, and provides a way of consulting with stakeholders. A successful charrette promotes joint ownership of solutions, and defuses confrontational attitudes. (Wikipedia.com definition)

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the UW, an overview of the strengths and successes of the UW in environmental discovery and leadership, and benchmarks set by other institutions in this field.

3. The charrette participants concluded that what we create must be recognizable to external partners—we must use language and structures that speak to the communities we are to serve, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. There was substantial support to call the new organizational structure a “college,” and to redefine what that means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century academy. It was clear that any organizational structure must be flexible, dynamic, interdisciplinary, and intimately tied to the disciplinary strengths we already possess.

The participants clearly articulated that the new College had to be configured differently from any other college, to bring together, empower, and resource a major push to organize and build on our strengths. We talked about the need to fulfill the academic missions of discovery, undergraduate and graduate learning, and engagement. We must serve the needs of our students through rigorous, interdisciplinary undergraduate- and graduate-level curricula. We discussed the need to be nimble, to allow faculty to have joint appointments and teaching/research appointments in the new College. We discussed the urgent need to meet the expectations of the community for partnership, advice, give and take. I was deeply impressed with the fervent desire of the group do something bold, unique, different from the routine in the area of the environment.

4. A subgroup of charrette participants met with President Emmert and were encouraged to look critically at successes and failures of programs at other universities and to learn from these examples. He enthusiastically supported our pursuit to explore this further.
5. Over the summer, I met with approximately 150 faculty in groups of six to eight to introduce the concept of founding a College of the Environment and to enlarge the circle of faculty who understand what we are doing. We listened to their suggestions, made modifications in our plans, and invited them to join the army of people who will support this new drive to bring together energy, wisdom, and time to make a College of the Environment a reality.
6. On September 5, we held a Concept Workshop to discuss in much greater detail how a new College might be constructed, what its mission would be, and how it should connect with the world outside the institution. The attendees included UW scientists and other faculty members, administrative leaders, and a select number of community

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and organization leaders who bring an important perspective to this conversation.

#### **Current activities**

1. I am meeting with faculty and staff groups across the UW to discuss the potential impact on their units of founding a college.
2. We have identified four grand challenge areas that will serve as core foci of the College. They are:
  - Climate, water and energy
  - Global environmental and ecosystems health
  - Conservation and urbanization
  - The human dimensions of the environment
3. We have organized working groups to critically evaluate next steps:
  - Vision statement
  - Budget and financial resources needed
  - Organization and structure
  - Curricula and learning goals
  - Communications
4. We have developed a set of frequently asked questions and provided answers. (See accompanying pages.)
5. We have developed communication and marketing tools to use in approaching partners and donors.
6. I have spoken with the Scientific Director of the Nature Conservancy about partnerships with them similar to those they have with Stanford. I have met with potential donors.
7. You will recall that we have submitted, as part of our FY 2008 supplemental budget request, a request entitled “Ports, People, and Puget Sound” that would advance College planning.

#### **Future activities and timeline**

1. We are at a unique moment in history:
  - The lay public know that the environment is in crisis. They understand pollution, climate change, energy, the inextricable relationship between human health and the environment, the tensions between conservation and the built environment, and the political, cultural and legal ramifications of environmental policy.
  - The Washington State Legislature and the Governor understand the importance of preserving and enhancing this wonderful place in which we live. The Puget Sound Partnership emphasized that there are

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ominous signs of decline of the ecology of the Sound and that actions must be taken now to prevent irreversible damage.

- Finally, the UW Capital Campaign is currently at \$2.5 billion. The environment was one of the original “pillars” or emphases of the Campaign. We have never put significant concerted, coordinated effort into building a compelling message and identifying friends (individuals, foundations, industries) in this area. We are confident that work in this area will bear great fruit.
2. We expect a draft implementation plan to be developed by January 2008 so that we can begin to take action in a concerted effort throughout the next year.
  3. I am working with our Office of Development and Alumni Relations to identify people and foundations who would be interested in turning these goals/plans/dreams into a reality. As I am sure you are aware, our ability to do anything as ambitious as this will be determined by whether we can get funding beyond the normal channels of state support. What we create must be resourced by the University and through gifts and grants from federal and foundation funding. It is clear that there is no one waiting in the wings, but it is also clear that this should resonate with many people who are deeply committed to the success of the UW and foundations who are interested in supporting the research and teaching missions of the UW.

#### Summary

The creation of a college sends the strongest possible signal, internally and externally, that the University of Washington is going to be a leader in the environment. Make no mistake, this college will be unlike any existing academic structures at the University—preserving academic excellence while promoting the flexibility necessary to meet the complex demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century environmental issues. Our aim is to be a world leader in discovery, learning and engagement in the environment, and thus we are not interested in half measures or small incremental steps. Our path requires bold, decisive action, allowing us to amplify and organize our strengths, and to combine these strengths as we seek solutions.

## **UW College of the Environment**

### **I have heard the UW is planning a new College of the Environment. Tell me more!**

We are taking bold steps to create a College of the Environment at the University of Washington because of great need and great possibility. The need is well known. Our ability to respond to the need is inherent in our tremendous array of programs and talent in environmental research, scholarship, and teaching. We have the potential to lead the way in environmental problem-solving and we believe the College will catalyze that potential. The exact structure of the College has yet to be determined. Faculty, staff, students, and community members are working right now to explore novel structures. What we already know is that the College will encompass the full range of academic inquiry, from the acquisition of basic knowledge about environmental systems to practical environmental problem-solving. The College of the Environment will nurture connections among students, faculty, and staff inside the University, and enable dynamic partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders outside of the University. We believe that this College will not only increase the University's ability to conduct leading-edge research, but will facilitate proactive solution-driven work while simultaneously producing informed, environmentally conscious citizens and leaders.

### **Why are you investing in the area of the environment?**

Pollution, the impacts of climate change, the future of energy, sustainable harvest of natural resources, the built environment, human health and the environment, and the impact of environmental policies pose some of the most difficult, critical questions of our time. The University of Washington is a premier research university, home to one of the strongest collections of environmental intellectual talent in the world, and located in one of the most resource-rich regions of the country. We have a special responsibility and opportunity to engage students, faculty, and community partners in a collaborative effort to articulate and act on environmental problems, starting with those in our own region.

**What will be different? How will this new college address the complex environmental challenges we face?**

Discovery is at the heart of the University's mission. At the core of academic discovery is curiosity-driven, fundamental research about how the world works. The College of the Environment will build on, strengthen, and extend this mission. Through a novel College structure we can promote and reward interdisciplinary collaboration, create institutional partnerships with stakeholders outside the University, and give undergraduate and graduate students hands-on opportunities in problem-solving exercises that connect knowledge to practical application. On an operational level, the college will be a place where environmental responsibility is pervasive, in the built environment as well as the academic environment.

**How will students be engaged in this college?**

We will continue to provide our students strong disciplinary foundations. Understanding the fundamentals of their disciplines will equip students to understand and solve complex problems within a dynamic environment. The new college will then take students further in providing them with basic knowledge and respect for all disciplines involved in environmental problem-solving. The College of the Environment will engage the entire UW community by promoting environmental literacy in all our students. At the same time, students specializing in the College will receive training in skills, concepts, and practical experiences that will allow them to tackle a full range real-world problems. We aim to educate and train our students to become responsible global environmental leaders.

**Haven't other universities been doing this for years?**

Yes, and no. Many universities around the world house environmentally related faculty together. The college we envision is unusually porous and flexible, able to respond adaptively to emerging environmental issues. Specific interactions among relevant students, faculty, staff, and partners will address specific research or policy questions, develop solutions for specific environmental problems, and develop curricula to bring environmental research and problem-solving into the classroom. By incorporating partners and community members into the University and sending

our faculty and students to work outside the University, we will enlarge and strengthen the learning process, create respect for all stakeholders, and enable the university to become a much more relevant contributor to the environmental dialogue.

### **Where will the resources come from to create this new college?**

New resources are required to truly transform the University. While we will look for opportunities to maximize administrative efficiencies and leverage existing investments, we will also seek new and innovative ways to engage our partners so the value of the university's role and contributions is recognized and supported. We believe that an investment from a combination of local, state, federal and international governments along with NGOs, industry, private donors, and other stakeholders will be necessary to succeed.

### **How do I participate?**

We are encouraging as much participation as possible through an open planning process that involves a great many volunteers who are interested in building the world's most innovative and influential College of the Environment at the University of Washington.

The planning materials and logistics can be found at <http://www.washington.edu/provost/coenv>. The website is host to an online discussion board and collaborative forum so that you can submit your comments, questions and suggestions directly to the working groups tasked with developing the implementation plan. Specific questions may also be addressed to Stephanie Harrington at 206-543-0878 or [stephah@u.washington.edu](mailto:stephah@u.washington.edu).

### **What is the timeline?**

The UW administration will present the broad vision of the College to the UW Board of Regents in the Fall of 2007 based on the preliminary discussions of the working groups and the input of other faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders, which has been going on since June. We expect a draft implementation plan to be developed by January 2008 so that we can begin to take action in a concerted effort throughout the next year.