Strategic Alignment and Budget Reduction Review Committee
Response to Comments and Questions
College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences
28 April 2010

“The College is considering several substantive changes, including: creation of a College of Earth Sciences, initially established by merging COAS and Geosciences in the College of Science; development of an undergraduate program in Earth Sciences, founded on existing programs in Geology and Geography; and creation of a two-center Earth System Science Institute. The Committee encourages the College to continue its planning process in these directions, which will include working out the logistical details involved in combining extramurally funded research and undergraduate enrollment-based budgetary and academic systems in the same college.”

• All of the faculty members who are engaged in this planning effort appreciate the support and encouragement of the SABRRC. College leadership will work with faculty to continue to develop these plans, and we will develop an implementation plan for further consideration.

“COAS currently is not organized into departments. Would the proposed College of Earth Sciences need to be organized into departments to facilitate supervision and professional development of the larger number of faculty in the unit?”

• Our present vision is a “School” that would be responsible for the academic programs (undergraduate and graduate education, advising, and research) and an “Institute” that would be responsible for the research-intensive activities and would operate under a “soft money” model. All college faculty would have appointments in the School, and the Institute would have a subset of faculty engaged more heavily in the research enterprise with a lesser expectation for undergraduate teaching. Faculty position descriptions and performance evaluations would reflect these different balances of activities. The School would be organized around curricular groups, much like COAS and Geosciences today, and faculty could belong to one or more groups. These groups would handle teaching assignments, graduate admissions, etc.

“The College of Science organization plan describes a School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, which is somewhat inconsistent with the COAS plan to include Geosciences in a new College of Earth Sciences. What is the current status of ongoing discussions with the College of Science concerning this issue?”

• The two Colleges remain in conversation about developing a College of Earth Sciences to capitalize on our substantial international reputation and strategic opportunity in basic earth, ocean, and atmospheric sciences. There is probably some inconsistency of language, as some of the COAS documents refer to
Geosciences, and the College of Science documents refer to a School of Earth and Environmental Sciences. Faculty representing Geosciences, COAS, Environmental Sciences, and other units are all engaged in the conversations.

The conversations to date are agreed that we seek to create a more integrated entity whose focus is education and research in Earth sciences, an area where OSU has real stature and visibility. How to create that integrated entity remains a topic of conversations. A single merged unit has been suggested. However, the faculty members of the two units continue to work on the outcomes and vision for the “joint venture” and the deans of the two Colleges continue to work on identifying the right mechanism to enable that vision for a “College of Earth Sciences”. There are many models for Colleges or Schools in major research universities that work effectively in structures that are not single administrative or budget entities. It could be argued that we would be well served to figure out how to make a truly “joint enterprise” work than to assume we can only do things in traditional models.

“How would the creation of a College of Earth Sciences and an Earth System Science Institute impact other institutes and centers, such as the Hatfield Marine Sciences Center and the Institute for Natural Resources, and what opportunities would there be for strategically beneficial reorganization of these units?”

- The faculty working group has considered some of the institutes and centers that have an Earth science or environmental science focus. These entities provide a valuable mechanism to engage faculty and students from around the university in interdisciplinary research programs. At present, OCCRI is housed within COAS as the college provides a significant level of base financial support. This arrangement would continue with a new college. INR has recently undergone an external review, but it might be more closely aligned with the natural resource colleges (or a single college, if that path is pursued). However, all of these institutes (including IWW) span both the fundamental and translational sciences, albeit to a different degree, and thus provide opportunities for faculty across the university, no matter where their administrative home is located. HMS is in a different category, because it is also a physical facility rather than just a program. Its unique role is to support research and educational programs that benefit from HMS’s oceanside location and its state and federal agency partners.

“It is not clear from the organization chart that the College meets the administrative system guidelines with respect to levels of management and numbers of direct reports. Please confirm that the College meets these guidelines or, if it does not, indicate how the College plans to bring the College into compliance.”
• The college has a set of professional faculty and classified staff who provide the business and technical services necessary for its successful operations. The chart simply separated these elements by function, unlike other college reports, which aggregated them into a single box of “administrative services” or did not identify them. All report directly to the dean in COAS, although there will be some changes as the business center is initiated. The college does meet the administrative system guidelines. The only exceptions to this structure are the Ocean Observatories and the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute. These are funded by extramural programs and are led by a college faculty member. Each meets the administrative guidelines.

“Budget projections for the next biennium indicate that additional cuts will probably be necessary, possibly in excess of 10%. To what extent will the proposed changes address further decreases in state-appropriated funding?”

• We expect that the research enterprise will continue to grow so that returned overhead will outpace any declines in the small portion of E&G support to the college. Growth in enrollment in the Earth and environmental sciences programs will have a similar impact on the School portion of the college budget.