Dear Dean Bloomer,

Thank you for submitting your March 15 report describing changes proposed by the College of Science to address the Strategic Alignment and Budget Reduction Implementation Plan for 2009-11. We appreciate the amount of work that has gone into your report, the thoughtful consideration of the guidelines, and the extensive involvement of faculty in addition to your leadership team in the development of the plan. The committee recognized that much planning detail remains and noted and appreciated that discussions are far-reaching and include several other colleges. The Strategic Alignment and Budget Reduction Review Committee has completed its preliminary review of your plans and has prepared the following comments and questions for your consideration:

- The changes proposed would move the college from 13 units to 6 major units reporting through the college. Two additional units (Plant, Microbial and Insect Sciences; College of Education) and one proposed center (Center for Research in Lifelong STEM Learning), though perhaps not reporting through the college would still require administrative input from the college. The School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, one of the six major units reporting through the college, would also require coordination with COAS. The College is encouraged to consider mechanisms to further reduce the administrative complexity of the College. For example:
  - If it makes sense to have positions in support of plant sciences managed by CAS, then why not simply move the resources to CAS permanently, thereby simplifying one administrative component?
  - Similarly, has the College considered moving the education faculty to the College of Education?
  - The Statistics group (12 faculty) is well below the guideline of 20 faculty per group. The potential inclusion of 7 adjunct faculty does not alleviate the problem, unless these faculty are moved out of their current units and into the statistics group. Otherwise they are simply double counted. While arguments were presented for not merging Mathematics and Statistics, some members of the committee urged a reconsideration of this decision. If a merger of the two units is not appropriate, has the College considered distributing the Statistics positions to other units, and then using something like a graduate program in statistics to unite the group of statisticians on campus?

- Physics remains slightly under the guidelines with 18 faculty. Is physics a sufficiently high priority for the college that it is likely to increase in FTE, even as other units are likely to decrease in the next biennium?

- The life sciences departments are clearly undergoing the most change. While recognizing that discussions are on-going, what mechanisms are likely to be in place to ensure that the school acts as one integrated unit, not as a confederation of three or four units? The guidelines call for four administrative layers. The currently proposed structure would seem to add one layer (Head of the School) while retaining the Directors/Chairs of Departments/Sections. Would a faculty member in, for example, the Section of Microbial Sciences report to a section/department director/chair or the Head of the School?

- Microbial Sciences are indicated in two places, the School of Life Sciences and the Department of Plant, Microbial and Insect Sciences. Have there been discussions to determine if this redundancy is necessary or desirable? Will it lead to confusion among students and stakeholders? How will hiring decisions in the microbial sciences be coordinated?
The College jointly administers three departments with the College of Agricultural Sciences (Chemistry, Microbiology and Statistics). Is there a compelling justification for continuing this arrangement and what alternatives could be considered for simplifying administration of each of these units in a single college?

Creating situations where faculty report to more than one department chair/head or where unit heads report to more than one dean generally lead to administrative challenges that are best avoided whenever possible. Similarly, jointly funded positions, or positions funded by one unit and managed by another lead to uncertainties in priority for and expectations of those positions. The current plans have many such shared or jointly funded positions. The College is encouraged to consider more simplified structures that result in cleaner reporting lines.

The COS 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 COAS concerning this issue?

The committee appreciated the College’s thorough analysis of the number of courses under the enrollment guidelines and agrees that the small number not meeting the guidelines is to be expected for a college of that size and complexity.

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?

The Committee is expected to develop recommendations for the Provost’s consideration by the end of May and, therefore, would appreciate receiving your response by April 30, 2010. In your response, please clearly identify substantive changes that would need University approval.

Please let me know if you have any questions for the Committee. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me if you think the Committee can play a facilitating role in development of plans, either within the College of involving other colleges that may advance the strategic initiatives of the university.

Sincerely,

Becky Warner
Committee Chair