

## ECC Summary and Executive Session Notes

March 26, 2009

The meeting this spring was dominated by budgetary considerations. The economic outlook for the university and college has gotten worse since our meeting last October. Both the university and college have taken steps to reduce expenses going forward, so the emphasis of the ECC meeting to look at revenue opportunities to help offset budgetary reductions is exactly what is needed.

### COLLEGE OVERVIEW

We commend Chris Ober for taking on the job of Interim Dean and for maintaining his research group at the same time. His dedication is admirable. Chris' report on the college contains much good news – excellent new faculty hires, successful launching of CCSF and KAUST-Cornell to focus on energy, the environment and the economy, continued increases in faculty and student body diversity, increasing numbers of qualified applicants, and improvement in Cornell Engineering graduate ranking.

The primary concern is budget decreases and the possibility that this will force reductions in the number of faculty. The college has worked to increase faculty FTE and improve the faculty-student ratio. We are glad to see that six of the twelve faculty searches are continuing.

We are also concerned that the outstanding strategic focus for the college could be defused by budgetary constraints. This time offers unique opportunities for engineering, and these opportunities need to be aggressively pursued.

### CORNELL CENTER for a SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Jeff Tester gave a good summary of the status of the Cornell Center for a Sustainable Future (CCSF). He communicated many laudable goals for the center. The next steps will be providing focus and the next level of detailed plans.

The Council recognizes the importance of new work in energy, the environment and economics at this time. These are the critical problems of our age. The challenge for CCSF is to identify the areas where Cornell's strengths will distinguish CCSF and to focus on these areas. We recommend that Jeff create an advisory board to assist in the identification of the areas of focus and to provide additional perspectives on related initiatives at other institutions. This outside team could help identify potential partnerships and opportunities for consortia to proactively solicit stimulus funds, particularly in the area of energy.

### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We thank Tim Dougherty for his contribution to Alumni Affairs and Development and welcome Jessica Traynor into her new role. Jessica summarized the status of the Capital Campaign, which has reached 49% of its goal in Engineering. Tim and Jessica encourage Council Members to give to the annual fund for Engineering as well as to participate in the fundraising process at this time of great need for the college. We can also help with

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March 26, 2009

the campaign through identification, cultivation, solicitation and stewardship of engineering donors.

#### DEAN SEARCH UPDATE

The search is going well with 232 prospects identified thus far. Quality of the potential candidates is high. The plan is to interview the top candidates and identify the finalists by the end of May. Final interviews will be conducted in early fall. The new dean will be chosen and start as soon as possible after the completion of the selection and approval process.

#### BUDGET

Last Fall, we discussed four factors that are contributing to the budget reductions, decreases in the endowment and associated income, decreases in philanthropy (gifts), decreases in the New York State budget, and the increasing need for financial aid. The result of the reduced budget is curtailing of many of the university's plans made when the outlook was brighter.

The budget impact in Ithaca is being absorbed in two stages, half this year and half next year. Many of the cost cutting suggestions we discussed last fall have been implemented. These adjustments will get Cornell through this year. Next year will be more difficult because the "easy" reductions will have already been made.

The detailed budget numbers and associated actions are not being distributed in written form, but Cathy Dove will provide us with a summary of what she can distribute. The bottom line is the university and college are taking the steps necessary to maintain financial viability, but not all parts of the strategic plan can be executed without additional funds. Identification of additional sources of revenue can help the college greatly.

#### REVENUE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

The results of our four breakout sessions on revenue growth [(1) government sources, (2) industry and foundation sources, (3) undergraduate and graduate degree program sources, and (4) non-degree program sources] are summarized in the individual session reports.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

We have a strong desire to help the College through this crisis. The energy level exhibited at our meetings and our enthusiasm to serve are indicators of this desire. We recognize the college is resource limited, so if we can help with additional studies or with implementation plans, we encourage the Dean to give us work to do. We can man task forces, particularly those that do not require face-to-face interaction. If our input is desired in specific areas, we can create a secure blog for the Council to discuss specific subjects. Possible areas for contribution include the following:

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- Space management – data gathering, analysis, and recommendations
- IP management – good initiatives have been killed by IP disputes. What is working, what is not working, and what are the key activities that inhibit trust and collaboration? What suggestions can we offer for changes?
- Restructuring – how has this been done in industry to save money and simultaneously maintain strategic initiatives. Engineering needs to focus on growth at this time. Today's unique opportunities will not wait.
  - Council can also help with expense analysis, open contracts, spending limits, consolidations, cost cutting measures, and can even provide third party leadership for negotiations.
- Analysis of infrastructure for new revenue streams
- Suggestion for creation of proactive government (Washington DC based) liaison group
- Faculty bandwidth – what can free up faculty time for new revenue-generating activities?
- What support could faculty use in areas like financial planning, business planning, and proposal writing?
- Cornell has great assets – great students, great faculty, great research, and great research centers. How can these assets be proactively marketed to prospective funders, collaborators and partners?
- The accounting system at Cornell is unfathomable from the outside. This lack of transparency can discourage donations since individuals and companies want to know their money is being used well. What can be done to make the accounting system more transparent?

Other suggestions and concerns:

- Invite someone from government to join the Engineering College Council.
- The overview of CCSF did not include any mention of IT management. Any comprehensive approach to sustainability must include IT management.
- If faculty lines are reduced, how will the faculty/student ratio be maintained? Will the 3:2:1 ratio be abandoned? We hope not.
- The common look and feel in engineering marketing literature is good. We encourage the college to create common marketing messages that all faculty and staff share. The key to successful marketing is repeating a consistent, clear message.

Bill Shreve  
ECC Chair  
3/31/2009