

ECC Chair Meeting Notes October 21-22, 2010

1. General Observations

- Overall reaction to the meeting was very positive, and the energy level among members was high.
- ECC members continue to think that it is critical for CoE to improve both its ability to attract industrial contracts and its ability to enable entrepreneurial activities; and the members are somewhat impatient to see progress.
- There was some confusion about how the results of the member survey and the reports from the breakout groups will actually be used in developing the new strategy. In the discussion of the strategic planning process, questions such as
 - Who do we view as our competition?
 - How do we truly differentiate the COE from those with whom we compete?
 - What are the metrics or measures of success that we will use?were raised; these topics are certainly deserving of consideration in forming the plan.
- The Kessler Fellows presentations were very moving, and reaction to the program was extremely positive. Comments in the breaks about how to sustain this and similar programs once the immediate funding runs out may be worthy of discussion in a future ECC meeting.

2. Key Points from the Executive Session

- Fund raising: The subject of whether ECC members should be expected to give to the Annual Fund again came up, as it has in the past. Examples were cited of other advisory councils where this is the case. There is not consensus among Council members on this topic; however, there was some sense of disappointment that the results for AY 2009-2010 were not very good, especially given the effort that went into encouraging participation. Again, as in previous meetings, the subject of what was termed “bucket anxiety” – that is, having to figure out how to get gifts to be placed in the “bucket” that the giver intends – came up. There is a strong feeling that the University and the College need to help make the giving process for targeted and Annual Fund giving easier to understand.
- Classroom Upgrade Project: There was considerable interest expressed in pursuing this project as an ECC focus and the Council asked the chair to send an email letting everyone know how to designate their gift. That has been done at this writing.
- Industrial / Entrepreneurial Interaction: As noted above, this subject is intensely interesting to the ECC, and members are encouraged by the apparent sea change in the attitude of the University’s leadership and by the support of Dean Collins for moving ahead aggressively. Council members appear to be willing to spend some serious time

on this topic between meetings. There were a couple of concerns raised in the executive session discussion however:

- Apparently relatively few of the College’s faculty have industrial / entrepreneurial experience. The Council members felt that the lack of such experience could dampen enthusiasm for spending energy on making change happen, particularly among senior faculty. Members wondered if delegating leadership on this initiative to younger faculty might be desirable.
 - It was suggested that the University’s complex and varied budgeting / accounting systems may make it difficult to track and measure whether the changes contemplated are actually having an impact, particularly since the benefits to the University are likely to go well beyond the traditional focus on licensing royalties / fees – for example, economic development in the region, equity returns, and positive impact on faculty retention.. This topic is one that may deserve further discussion at the next ECC meeting, as part of the broader agenda on the industrial interaction process.
 - While the strategic planning goals and objectives discussed at this meeting did include a mention of industrial interaction, the Council members felt that a stronger message on the importance of this topic was needed in the new plan.
- Strategy: There was a lively discussion (in the context of the strategic planning effort) about whether the classic department / major / degree labels still make sense. Most felt they did not, but recognized that accreditation was part of the reason for maintaining them. One thought was that traditional departments might still be a reasonable organizing model for administrative purposes, but that undergraduate degrees granted might more usefully specify fields of specialization, as is apparently the case in the graduate program (i.e. “nanoscience”). Further discussion of this topic as the strategic plan comes together would be welcomed. There was some strong sentiment among Council members that Cornell has a sufficiently strong reputation that it could consider initiating a wave of change in academic institutions by declaring that it was abandoning outdated department names for more strategically relevant names for both organizational and degree purposes. Clearly the Council’s view on this topic is far less important than that of the COE’s leadership and faculty. However, the members felt that it is a topic that will continue to surface and will need to be confronted head-on at some point in time. The strategic planning process might be an opportune time to do so.
 - Admissions Yield: This topic came up in the main portion of the meeting and was touched on again in the executive session. It was strongly suggested that the College and University as a whole gather and display data showing our competitive position on admissions yield and then take steps to understand why our regular admissions yield is so low, and what we could do to improve.

3. Action Items

- Update on Classroom Project: Clearly for the next meeting a summary of additional contributions and status of the project would be valuable.

- Invitation: The suggestion was made by Bob Shaw to consider inviting Stanford Professor Tom Byers to discuss the entrepreneurial activities conducted by Stanford's engineering college at the next meeting.

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To help insure continuity relative to action items discussed and recommended prior to July 1, 2010, the minutes from the executive session at the previous ECC meeting are attached for review, in case they had not been forwarded earlier.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Shaw
Sarah Fischell

Attachment: ECC Meeting Notes, April 7-8, 2010