



The Vision for Academic Affairs

This is a slight revision of the remarks delivered by Virginia Horvath, Vice President for Academic Affairs, in a special Academic Affairs meeting on Friday, February 19, 2010. The additions are in response to requests for more information about the processes of consultation and decision-making, the rationale for the new structure, and the issues related to Interdisciplinary Studies. Comments are welcome: horvath@fredonia.edu.

Thank you to all of you for coming here this afternoon and to everyone who has participated in the intense process of discussion and debate that has continued since December. I'd also like to say thank you to Dave Ewing. For weeks, we have been talking about his leaving as an unacknowledged prelude to our discussions, but I want to begin by saying directly that his leaving Fredonia is a loss for the campus and those of us who have worked closely with him since 2005. He has worked diligently, generously, and creatively for the College of Natural and Social Sciences—and I am going on record here to dispel any rumors that he was asked to leave. In fact, if he weren't leaving, we wouldn't have been pitched into so many conversations and decisions! Just as some traditions argue that when bird droppings fall on your head, it's lucky, this has turned out to be a valuable opportunity to have people bring forward the values, principles, and priorities that guide their thinking about our shared work at Fredonia.

It's been a very good process, with many views emerging—some competing, some questioning, all presented with conviction and passion. The process included these conversations, in addition to those that occurred in VP Council and in the Cabinet:

- December 11: Planning and Budget committee and VPAA discussed vacancy, possibilities for replacement, and ways to involve Senate in advising
- December 14: VPAA met with Chairs in Natural and Social Sciences to discuss possibilities
- December 16: VPAA sent message and documents with background to Chairs and Directors and invited them to have conversations with her about this
- December 15 – January 14: VPAA called Chairs and met individually with Chairs who wanted to come in
- December 17: VPAA met with Senate Executive Committee to discuss the possibilities and a process for engaging the Senate in a timely way; email conversation ensued, with many questions and suggestions arising
- December 22: VPAA sent an email message to all faculty and staff, inviting them to be part of the facilitated Academic Affairs discussions on January 22

- and providing background on the possibilities for addressing the vacancy; documents were posted on the Academic Affairs website
- January 8: Senate Chair sent an announcement to all Senators about the documents posted on the Senate website and about the process of discussion on February 1 and a vote at a special meeting on February 8
 - January 22: Academic Affairs meeting, with more than 200 people participating in discussions facilitated by members of the Professional Development Center Advisory Board
 - January 25: VPAA collated notes from the January 22 discussion (group comments and exit slip comments) and gave these to the Planning and Budget Committee and Senate Executive Committee for review
 - January 25 – February 8: Planning and Budget Committee met, discussed comments and perspectives, and prepared its recommendation for the Senate
 - February 8: University Senate met in special session to discuss the Planning and Budget Committee report and voted in favor of its recommendation
 - February 11: VP Council met to discuss again the proposals, comments from January 22, transcripts of the Senate meeting, and comments from emails and conversations with chairs and others. At that time, the VP Council was agreed that we wanted to come forward with a vision for Academic Affairs, not just a way of making do or surviving the budget cuts.
 - February 19: VPAA met with the Planning & Budget Committee to review the decision, share a draft of the remarks announcing it, and respond to their questions.
 - February 19: After input from VP Council members and Planning and Budget Committee, VPAA announced in a public meeting the decision and the plan to have John Kijinski appoint a transition team to work for a smooth shift to the new College structure in June.

Over this time, I also received more than 100 emails on this subject and had informal conversations with many people across campus. I am grateful to the Senate, its Executive Committee, and especially the Planning and Budget Committee for their willingness to be involved in collective thinking about this issue and to make time for extensive consultation.

It has been heartening to see how many people showed up at the All Academic Affairs meeting on January 22 (and to see that FSA could keep the pizza and wings coming). It was inspiring to see people who have been here for years—without knowing one another—as they sat and talked that day about their work and their hopes for the future. The discourse in the Senate, on Proftalk, in the halls, and at departmental and division meetings has been respectful and thoughtful, what I had hoped for in asking members of our division to offer their views. The Planning and Budget Committee also took its role quite seriously, wrestling earnestly with the

questions about the structure in Academic Affairs. And a thread through these discussions was a clear interest in understanding others and not making choices that would hurt others.

Because so many people demonstrated strong interest in this subject and offered many suggestions, advice, and concerns, the VP Council and I decided that we should not just send a letter or announcement but should instead present our decision in person and be on hand for your comments and questions. You'll hear me say we quite a bit this afternoon, and I use the pronoun not in the royal or evasive sense but as a reminder that the decisions have been collaborative and their implementation will require a team effort.

This process has demonstrated that any idea or proposal is stronger when a number of voices have worked together to articulate it, and the plan we are announcing today has been shaped so many different ways, so many different times, by so many hands, that we are well beyond recognizing the models or options first offered.

What we have decided to do is no longer any one of the options explained in my email in December. It's not either of the two options presented on January 22 or the third option that was generated in that meeting. And it's not exactly the model that was recommended by the Planning and Budget Committee and supported by a 2/3 majority of voting Senators. It's not even one of the five models that were on the decision-making matrix the VP Council used last week in our meeting. If we started on January 22 with a consideration of Thing 1 and Thing 2, we are up to about Thing 17. What we have decided is certainly different from what I'd imagined. It's a vision for Academic Affairs grounded in the essentials of our mission and identity and shaped by the concerns and priorities that emerged in all these conversations and debates.

In a time of budget constraint and uncertainty, we can feel trapped and frustrated—even adrift—powerless to do anything but tread water, hope someone will throw us a lifeline, and wait out the storm. Especially because each of us chose a career in higher education, this hunkering down and drifting doesn't suit us. A collective identity emerged in our conversations that became an important guiding principle in making this decision. We want to shape our own future, not just make do. We are a community of people who value questioning and learning, not just floating along or going with a solution simply on the basis of familiarity or cost-savings. We seek to make a difference in the lives of students and to engage in research that feeds our curiosity and contributes to the knowledge of our fields. We want to be active artists, teachers, professionals, performers, researchers, social critics, writers, citizens—and to have the work we do give us strength and purpose, not just a

paycheck. Our work is affirmed by reminding ourselves of what we are here for at Fredonia and the values and interests we share with our colleagues.

So through these conversations, other academic leaders and I listened carefully and read your comments and emails and posts. Some of you were even close to running from me in the last few weeks—I saw it in your eyes!—as I pestered you with questions and what ifs and whys. In making a decision about the best structure for Academic Affairs, I was eager to hear not just what a vote would be but what interests lay behind and within each position.

Your voices have been strong and clear in setting down principles for action. Here is what you've said:

- Take time to weigh implications and plan carefully.
- Implement a structure aligned with Fredonia history, identity, and strengths.
- Be fiscally responsible and protect the academic mission, especially given the state budget situation.
- Seize an opportunity to be innovative in the ways we work together and serve students.
- Begin searches at the best times of year to ensure strong, diverse pools.
- Take a strong position and real action to address a national need for advancing the STEM disciplines and social sciences.
- Determine the best way to support interdisciplinary studies.
- Demonstrate the distinctive role of visual and performing arts.
- Seek balances of gains and sacrifices across divisions, not sacrificing one group for the benefit of another.
- Ensure a smooth transition of leadership.
- Invest in faculty rather than administrators.
- Value governance.
- Look for efficiencies and different ways of doing things.

All of these principles and interests have informed our choices for the short-term and the long-term.

Here, then, is our plan to address the vacancy of the Natural and Social Sciences dean position in June. I'll outline the plan first, to end this suspense, and then provide a few further details.

1. We are not going to begin a dean search or hire an interim dean at this time. Just as vacancies in all units are now being left open, we will leave this Management/Confidential line open for two years as a cost-saving measure

and—more importantly—as a way to give the campus time to plan together a phased approach.

2. Phase 1 will begin on June 1 of this year with the formation of a College of Arts and Sciences, with John Kijinski as dean and two associate deans selected from among the tenured faculty. The current secretaries to the College of Natural and Social Sciences and the College of Arts and Humanities will be in this new College to ensure a smooth transition.

This structure is not a compromise or a simple cost-savings strategy or, worse yet, a cobbled College of Necessity or Randomness. It is a deliberate choice about who we are and where, for some time, our strengths have been. A transition team will be appointed next week to work with John Kijinski and Dave Ewing. There will be some costs to appointing associate deans (salary adjustments and covering courses in their departments), the costs can be funded from the vacant M/C line and still yield approximately \$60,000 annual savings for the campus. There will be no increase in secretarial or staff positions.

3. Phase 2 will occur in 2010-2011, as the campus considers programs and departments within the College of Arts and Sciences. In the January 22 discussion, many of you asked interesting questions about where departments best belong and, repeatedly, how we might better support the interdisciplinary programs that are distinctive at Fredonia and innovative in their recognition of learning across boundaries. I hope that the Senate Planning and Budget Committee will be willing to lead this planning effort, perhaps using a broader group as recommended by the Senate for effective planning.
4. Phase 3 is the establishment of a College of Visual and Performing Arts in Fall 2012. This is not a “someday” promise. In 2010-2011, we will form an advisory board of faculty, staff, and alumni to plan for this structure, and in 2011-2012, we will engage in a national search for a dean to start that fall. This will not add an administrative position, as the vacant M/C line will be used to hire at the same salary level; the President and Cabinet have agreed to commit this line. There will be no additional staff, as one of the secretaries from the College of Arts and Sciences would become this new dean’s secretary. There will be no additional space requirement, as the new dean will occupy the vacated Maytum Hall office.

The proposal put forth for the College of Visual and Performing Arts clarified for many people why such a structure could be effective, and many people

have expressed support for such a structure even if they had mixed feelings about its creation right now. This support came not only from those in arts fields but also from some in other divisions who argued that such a structure is aligned with our history, our strengths, and our reputation in SUNY and beyond.

I know that some will be excited to hear these plans, others apprehensive, outraged, disappointed, curious to hear more, indifferent, cynical, itchy to get started. You have presented your views, and these were instrumental in shaping the decisions and honoring the interests that were expressed so passionately.

Many questions have arisen over the past few months that I'd like to address before inviting your comments and further questions.

What is gained by a College of Arts and Sciences? Articulating this in December would have been helpful, and I'm sorry that we didn't do that. But several of you made very strong cases for this in meetings and other discussions. These are the main points you made which resonated with me.

Much of the operations of curricula and scholarship remain grounded in the strong departmental culture here, and students outside of professionally oriented programs are not likely to know much at all about whatever college houses them. But such an administrative structure affirms something essential about Fredonia: the liberal education at the core of learning. This largest college, a traditional model in academe that is grounded in liberal arts, is a powerful statement about the value of the courses at the foundation of all Fredonia academic programs. This structure also reaffirms the values of majors in the sciences and humanities and social sciences in preparing for a full range of professional work and effective citizenship.

As a modern, public, regional liberal arts university, we've certainly expanded the curricular model of the *trivium* (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy), but the principles are the same as they were in the medieval founding of universities: those who are liberally educated—who have learned to read critically, write well, analyze, understand knowledge creation in a range of fields—have greater freedom and opportunity than those who are narrowly trained. As knowledge and information increase exponentially, only solid preparation in the liberal arts—which include humanities, mathematics, science, social sciences, one clinical science, and fine arts—can prepare us for the thinking and decision-making needed in the world. A College of Arts and Sciences—with the greatest number of students, faculty, and resources in a single college—will emphasize

that. We will have a structure that encourages multiple perspectives and dialogues on campus-wide issues as general education, first-year experience, capstone courses, service learning, writing and speaking across the curriculum, information literacy, and graduate study outside of professional programs. Embracing our roots in liberal education could mean seeking COPLAC membership, closer alignment with the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, and clearer identification within SUNY as a public liberal arts college that values traditional learning and modern knowledge.

How can the planning include attention to Interdisciplinary Studies programs? One of the themes that emerged in the January 22 meeting was the need for good discussion about the role of Interdisciplinary Studies and about supporting these programs. Several ideas emerged about looking for an appropriate structure and home for these programs. In 2010-2011, as the campus engages in thinking about the structure in Academic Affairs, conversation about the best ways to support these programs would be in order. Clarifying the issues is an important first step.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, how will the associate deans' roles differ from that of the dean? Because of the size of this unit—a concern expressed by many people—we will appoint two associate deans from among the tenured faculty in the new College to ensure that the routine work done at the College level will continue to be done in a timely way. The transition team will be working on the specific responsibilities and advising on such details as the compensation, term of appointment, selection process, and protection of departments from which associate deans come. Please know, however, that the associate deans will not be intermediaries between the departments and the dean or representatives of particular disciplines; their roles will be to assist the dean in specific assigned responsibilities, such as curriculum development, assessment, program review, report writing, and recruitment.

The dean will continue to focus his attention on the most pressing matters of the College: all personnel and budgetary matters and representation of the College internally and externally. Working with University Advancement, the dean will represent the college to community partners and donors, particularly as we have several naming opportunities and considerable excitement about new buildings. The dean will work closely with Project Shepherd Holly Lawson on the next critical stages of planning for the new science building—an important role over the next 18 months and one I was hesitant to entrust with an interim and then a new dean. He will also work with Stephen Rees, Project Shepherd for the addition to the Rockefeller Arts

Center. These are more than building projects: they involve collaborative discussion about designing spaces for the kinds of learning, scholarship, performance, and public engagement activities for which Fredonia is known. These deserve the immediate attention of a full-time continuing dean, with the experience, intelligence, collegiality, practical wisdom, knowledge of Fredonia, and respect for others that John Kijinski brings to this role.

It will embarrass him to have me say this, but John's presence on our campus is a gift we should not overlook, and his willingness to take on the challenges of this role attests to how hard he works for the good of this university. Since he has come to Fredonia, he has demonstrated what is best in a servant-leader, a person of high integrity who sees his leadership not in terms of personal power or advancing his own agenda but in terms of providing vision and practical assistance in helping faculty, students, and departments. Those of you who don't know John well yet will understand my hyperbole when you have the chance to work with him. I am very confident in his leadership and thank him for his generosity in assuming this new role.

What is the rationale behind a College of Visual and Performing Arts? The 2008 proposal from Karl Boelter, Stephen Rees, and Liz Lee identified these common features among the units in such a college:

- The strong reputation of the programs in Music, Theatre and Dance, and Visual Arts and New Media and the need to “sustain quality, energy, and distinction”
- Similar challenges managing resources to deliver these programs
- Focus on academic programs that prepare students for presentation of work
- Similar approaches to highly selective admissions processes
- Recruitment of students
- Fundraising

A number of people offered persuasive reasons that faculty and programs in the arts would do well to work more closely together in a separate structure. As several humanities chairs pointed out, arts units have more in common with one another than with humanities and other liberal arts departments. They face similar issues in recruitment of students, auditions and portfolio review, adjunct hiring, definitions of faculty work, accreditation, creative use of visiting artists and performers, and an expectation of public performances/exhibitions.

I see a number of other reasons to have this professionally oriented division focused on the arts. Faculty members are often recruited from professional

roles and are expected to maintain professional activity as performers and artists; their transitions from professional to educator may be marked by some of the same challenges that could be addressed together under the leadership of a dean. In addition, each of the arts fields faces similar challenges of pedagogy: other than imitation of skilled professionals, how can arts faculty foster the development of students? and although many students may aspire to careers as professional musicians, dancers, actors, visual artists, and other roles, how can the curricula prepare them realistically for a full range of careers that rely upon transferable skills? These are the kinds of challenges that deserve the attention of an arts dean, who can lead the units to collaborate on these issues and continue to build on the strength of instruction here.

The creation of this College could also be an advantage in fundraising. Although each division of the University is now engaged in such efforts, the arts programming is one of the pillars of the Doors to Success campaign, and opportunities for endowments and program sponsorship are unique. An arts dean can assist the College in seeking creative ways to support creative programs, including naming opportunities and working closely with the well established and successful programming for the Rockefeller Arts Center. This will be especially important as the addition for this structure is planned and built.

How do the College of Education and the School of Business fit in?

By 2012, we will have a structure that affirms the central position of the sciences, humanities, interdisciplinary studies, and social sciences as the foundations for learning in all fields. The other units—Education, Business, and Visual and Performing Arts—are smaller and more specialized and professional in their focus. The Deans of the College of Education and the School of Business are not on campus today, but don't worry: I haven't sequestered them! They were part of the discussions last week and passionate about the importance of defining their programs in the context of a strong liberal arts core.

How can we ensure the advancement of the STEM disciplines and social sciences?

SUNY Fredonia has made significant commitments to the natural sciences, with support for grants development, fundraising for scholarships and undergraduate research fellowships, and a new \$60 million science center—the first new academic building on this campus in decades. To ensure that the building project meets student and faculty needs and to engage departments in thinking about the teaching and learning in these new spaces, Holly Lawson has been working for several years to advance the entire agenda for sciences

on this campus. We are fortunate that she will continue in this role, although working with a different dean. John Kijinski has considerable experience as a dean overseeing science and social science departments and will be meeting with current NSS chairs soon to begin the process of getting to know them and their needs. He has been working closely with Dave Ewing for several years and can use the next few months to plan a smooth transition. Like other universities, we are challenged to recruit more majors in natural sciences, to provide appropriate labs and resources for social sciences, to engage donors and external partners, and to continue the invaluable services provided through such strong traditions as the Youngerman Center for Communication Disorders. We are committed to building on the current momentum and continuing to focus attention on these critical fields.

How does this change, at this time, fit in with other broad initiatives on campus?

In the months ahead, we will be involved in several important efforts and having a clear plan for our structure will be useful. With a likely change in the SUNY general education requirements, we'll have an opportunity to redefine the CCC program, and the collaborative possibilities in the College of Arts and Sciences and in the College of Visual and Performing Arts will be valuable. The Middle States visit in March would not have provided an answer to our questions about the best structure, but it's likely that the team will leave with some recommendations for us to explore as we engage in the next strategic plan, a process that will begin here next fall. That process will also be based on the emerging ideas of the SUNY Strategic Plan. The development of the Fredonia Campus Master Plan, a process of imagining the space of the campus based on programmatic needs and goals, will encourage us to think about our identity and the ways we use buildings and exterior spaces to enhance our culture of learning. Although we are waiting to hear about state funding, SUNY has approved our request for another new academic building—not devoted to any particular department or division but focused on flexibly designed, interactive classrooms with capacity for international connections. Securing our structure and knowing clearly how it demonstrates our mission will enable us to focus on these broad issues.

As we see the new science building rise at one corner of campus and the addition to the Rockefeller Arts Center rise at the other, we will be reminded of a vision we share for our students: that they understand the elegance of both a quadratic equation and a concerto, that they master techniques of photography and microscopy, that they understand data and dance, that they speak another language and connect with the richness of other cultures. The conversations on structure and the discussions on personnel policies over the past year have revealed that the walls of our silos are sometimes thick

barriers: people may not know one another well enough to understand or value the work done in other divisions, but we all should. We have to model for our students the broad thinking and capacity to work together that will lead to their success.

Although we don't know the answers to all the questions at this point, this process has demonstrated what we can accomplish by asking good questions, clarifying the principles that guide thinking, and finding good solutions. I thank you for your commitments to this university and for the gifts that each of you brings to the planning processes. I am looking forward to working on the details and answers with you as we build, together, not a quick fix but a shared vision for Academic Affairs.