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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

OFFICE FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

April 21, 1997

President Andrew Sorensen

The University of Alabama

Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

Dear President Sorensen:

This is to recommend that the New College become a unit within the College of Arts and Sciences, effective July 1, 1997. The unit, which will be known as the New College Program, will have the status of a department in the College. The unit head will carry the title of Director and will report to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Subsequently, the College may decide to include the New College Program in a larger interdisciplinary unit that is currently under discussion in the College.

I attach my March 6 letter to the Vice Presidents, Council of Deans, and Faculty Senate Steering Committee which lays out the rationale for and objectives of this recommendation.

I am also recommending that the External Degree Program move to Continuing Studies, and that the Computer-Based Honors Program remain free-standing; to become part of a confederation of University Honors Programs reporting to the Provost. The Director of the Computer-Based Honors Program would work with the Director of University Honors to assure the successful coordination of the respective programs.

Permanent funding for faculty, staff, and operational support will transfer with the respective units at the time of the reorganization.

I foresee no adverse impacts on students or faculty as a result of this reorganization. Two of the four New College faculty currently hold rank and tenure in the College of Arts and Sciences. The other two (plus Dean Sloan) hold rank and tenure in the New College. Their rank and tenure would transfer intact into the College of Arts and Sciences. Students will be able to pursue flexible, custom-designed programs of study in the New College Program within the College of Arts and Sciences.

Pursuant to the procedures outlined for the merger of academic units outlined in [Appendix M of the Faculty Handbook](#), I met with Dean Sloan and the New College faculty to discuss the proposed merger and to elicit their suggestions and comments. I have attached a chronology of those meetings as well as the documents submitted as follow up. There has been opposition expressed by Dean Sloan and the New College faculty and students to the merger. Specifically, they have expressed the view that the New College is unique and would not thrive in the more traditional academic culture of the College of Arts and Sciences. Further, they have argued that insufficient time has been given for debate and discussion of the merger. I have received many letters in support of retaining the New College as an independent unit.

My own view of the matter is different. While I strongly support the concept of interdisciplinary study and believe that a flexible, customized program of study should be made available to students, I do not think that the best way to deliver such a program is in a small unit of four faculty, isolated from the rest of the University in a separate college. During the periodic review of the New College that was done in 1993, the external reviewer reported that the New College is not on the cutting edge of developments in its field today. He said that the New College curriculum is not challenging the University in important areas, and that it lacks a clear sense of direction or vision beyond what it is now doing.

As you know, there are exciting new initiatives underway in the College of Arts and Sciences that will promote more interdisciplinary study and innovative teaching and learning opportunities for our students and faculty. Some of the best and most thoughtful faculty in the University are involved in the Undergraduate Initiative, and the New College Program could benefit enormously from being a part of this important undertaking.

Further, the administrative costs of the New College are much too high. Supporting four faculty and 111 students in the residential program are a dean and four staff members in the dean's office. There are another 11 staff members supporting the External Degree Program that enrolls 515 students who are mostly part time and not residing on campus. Surely, in today's environment of budget scrutiny and accountability, these excessive administrative costs cannot be justified.

Following my meetings with New College faculty, having received their comments, and pursuant to the procedures outlined in the [Faculty Handbook](#), I solicited advice and comments from the Deans Council and Faculty Senate. I allowed 30 days for comments, as provided in the [Faculty Handbook](#), and at the request of the Faculty Senate, extended the comment period an additional five days to compensate for spring break that fell within the comment period. With the exception of Dean Sloan, there was no objection to the proposed merger from any of the deans.

The Faculty Senate replied on April 11 with a set of questions ([attached](#)) upon which they asked for clarification, and to which I responded in a memorandum of April 14 ([attached](#)). They expressed the view that the merger should not go forward pending their further consideration of this information. They also suggested further meetings of the parties involved to resolve outstanding issues.

I see no further purpose to be served by delaying this decision any longer. The [procedures](#) specified in the [Faculty Handbook](#) for mergers of academic units have been followed. There has been considerable debate of this matter. I have held meetings with faculty and students, and have heard many arguments in favor of and against the merger. I believe there has been ample opportunity for all points of view to be aired. Uncertainty as to whether the merger will in fact go forward is now impeding constructive resolution of the details of the actual merger. Consequently, I am recommending that you act now to approve the proposal that the New College become a unit within the College of Arts and Sciences, with an effective date of July 1, 1997. Having resolved the matter of the merger, the parties can then proceed to work out the details during the intervening period between now and the time the merger goes into effect.

I fully support the Faculty Senate recommendation that faculty in the New College and the College of Arts and Sciences begin to meet immediately to discuss plans for the merger. Dean Yarbrough has established a faculty task force in Arts and Sciences to participate in these discussions.

I personally see great value in this recommended reorganization, and I urge you to approve it without delay.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Nancy S. Barrett

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

NSB/din

Attachments

c: Deans Council

Vice Presidents

Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee

Faculty Senate Steering Committee

New College Faculty

Dr. Cathy Randall

Dr. John Scott

Posted for information by the Faculty Senate, April 26, 1997.

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