



Cornell University

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To: The CALS Community  
From: Susan Henry, Barbara Knuth, Jan Nyrop, and Marge Ferguson  
Subject: Update on CALS Activities with Reimagining Cornell  
Date: December 22, 2009

As you know, CALS and Cornell are involved in a "Reimagining" process to address budget challenges and to position ourselves for academic excellence into the future. On Friday, December 18, Provost Kent Fuchs issued a statement outlining his response to the various task force reports he had commissioned in light of budget reduction and strategic planning goals for the University (for details see <http://www.cornell.edu/statements/2009/20091218-fuchs-task-force-response.cfm#response>). For CALS, the Provost's response included encouragement to (1) proceed with plans to consolidate the number of academic departments within the College, (2) proceed with planning a school of environmental sciences, (3) proceed with planning a plant sciences cluster, (4) conduct a detailed analysis of the future evolution of the Department of Applied Economics and Management, (5) determine the appropriate future size of the College in relation to extension programs, faculty, and students, (6) collaborate with other colleges/schools at Cornell in planning the detailed future of economics, sociology, public policy, and life sciences, and (7) move forward on implementing CALS-specific plans from its Academic Task Force Report. The Provost's response provides an opportunity for CALS to position ourselves for continuing academic excellence in research, teaching, and extension related to our programs in agricultural sciences, food and nutrition, life sciences, environmental sciences, and applied social sciences.

In addition, the University is proceeding with plans to realize substantial cost savings through administrative reforms. This effort is overseen by the Project Management Office, described at <http://www.cornell.edu/reimagining/pmo.cfm>. Concurrently, Cornell is developing a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the future of the University. For more details, see <http://www.cornell.edu/reimagining/plan.cfm>.

We write to update the CALS community regarding actions underway within our college relative to the various Cornell task force reports, particularly the CALS Academic Task Force report which we shared with you in November and which is available at <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/cals/upload/reimagining-cals.pdf>.

### **Geneva-Ithaca Department Mergers**

In CALS, merger planning committees have been formed and charged for the Departments of Food Science and Technology/Food Science, and the two Entomology Departments.

Membership on each of these was based on faculty nominations from within each group of departments:

Food Science and Technology/Food Science

Dennis Miller, Committee Chair

Kathryn Boor

John Brady

Carmen Moraru

Olga Padilla-Zakour

Gavin Sacks

Wayne Wilcox

Randy Worobo

Entomology

Jennifer Thaler, Committee Chair

Art Agnello

Greg Loeb

John Losey

Brian Nault

John Sanderson

Such committees are in the process of being formed for the Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology departments, as well as for Horticultural Sciences/Horticulture. These latter department merger efforts will also tie into the planning processes for a Plant Sciences cluster described below.

We anticipate the work of these Geneva-Ithaca committees will be completed by mid-March, 2010. Each committee's charge includes developing recommendations for the CALS leadership to consider regarding the overall programmatic, governance, and structural aspects of a new, merged, department. The committees have been instructed to be transparent and inclusive in gathering information and ideas to inform the recommendations, and to provide regular feedback to colleagues in both departments regarding progress, ideas, and options being considered, including possible consequences and challenges that may arise during implementation. Each committee will develop an overall vision for the future of the department to guide the merger, but is not charged with developing a detailed strategic plan for the academic components of the new department; the new department, after merging, will develop an appropriate strategic plan.

**Planning for a School of Environmental Sciences and a Plant Sciences Cluster**

Over the next few weeks, we will be soliciting from department chairs nominations of faculty to serve on planning and development committees for a proposed school of environmental sciences, and for a plant sciences cluster. Faculty will be invited to serve on each of these committees, and a detailed charge will be developed and given to each committee. The environmental sciences exploration committee will be formed in consultation with other appropriate deans. We anticipate the committee charges will include some elements similar to the Geneva-Ithaca committees noted above (e.g., address issues of future program, mission, governance, structure), with specific attention to teaching, research, and extension/outreach functions of the possible new units. The overarching goal of both of these efforts is to position

the College (and the University) as strategically as possible for the future to address the complex questions facing society relating to the environment (including human interactions with and affecting the environment) and agriculture (focusing on plant systems in this particular planning effort).

### **Administrative Structures**

Simultaneous with these academic unit planning efforts, administrative managers will be engaged to develop plans for staffing structures associated with these new units. We need to ensure appropriate levels and types of support are provided to achieve academic excellence in our teaching, extension/outreach, and research missions. This planning effort will need to mesh with the efforts of the Project Management Office noted above.

### **Applied Economics and Management, Sociology, Public Policy, and Life Sciences**

We will also be working with AEM, with guidance from the Provost's Office, to articulate its strategic future. We will build on the very strong and positive recent reviews of AEM by both its accrediting body and an external faculty program review committee, which recommended AEM build on its unique strengths in meshing applied economics with business and management, with a particular focus on issues of sustainability, emphasizing that the tripartite mission of AEM in research, teaching, and extension, and its strong focus on applied economics (including Food and Agricultural Economics, Environmental and Resource Economics, and International Development Economics) sets it apart from other standard management schools. In addition, we stand ready to participate productively and collaboratively, as requested by the Provost, in planning the future of economics, sociology, public policy, and life sciences at Cornell and anticipate a strong and continuing CALS presence in each of these areas.

### **Department of Education**

We have asked the Department of Education to refocus its efforts on ensuring a strong Cornell Teacher Education Program, particularly in agricultural and life sciences education. In addition, we are encouraging faculty to explore additional linkages between the agricultural science education major and the agricultural sciences major. Other undergraduate majors across the college may be asked to explore greater synergies as well.

### **Department of Landscape Architecture**

We will work with the Department of Landscape Architecture to identify an appropriate future vision, in relation to other planning efforts in the College (e.g., a school of environmental sciences) and in other areas of the University (e.g., linkages to a proposed college of design).

### **Next Steps**

As these discussions and planning efforts move forward, and as we learn more about the university's strategic planning themes, we will seek specific engagement among other departments in CALS, as well as with our stakeholders. With anticipated additional budget reductions from New York State and a new university budget model, we are certain of the

need for additional strategic planning for CALS as a whole, with associated decisions about what programs and activities to strengthen and build for the future, and which to reduce or eliminate. We will not have specific budget information from the University regarding our FY 11 budget until March, 2010. We will strive to be as open, transparent, and inclusive in all of these discussions as possible, and will take responsibility for the decisions that will need to be made. We will also ask departments to examine their current strategic plans and revise as appropriate, particularly to identify programs and focal areas that should continue or grow, and those current activities which should be ended. The latter will require particularly tough decisions, as we realize all activities provide some benefit to some group. Priorities will need to be set.

We recognize that this time of planning brings with it both excitement about the possibilities of a vibrant future as well as unease due to the uncertainty associated with analysis and change. We pledge to provide regular communications about progress on these efforts, and to listen to ideas and concerns from the CALS community. We encourage submission of suggestions, comments, and concerns to [future-CALS@cornell.edu](mailto:future-CALS@cornell.edu).

Best wishes to you and your family for the holiday break. We look forward to starting the New Year with fresh and productive ideas about the future.