

Dr. Alfred L. Moyé
Chair, Information Sciences Board of Visitors
124 Gramercy Drive
San Mateo, CA 94402-1215

Dear Al:

Thank you for chairing the Fall 2015 meeting of the School of Information Sciences Board of Visitors (BOV). On behalf of Chancellor Patrick D. Gallagher and myself, I am pleased to respond to the very detailed and informative report of the October 12-13, 2015, meeting.

This meeting focused primarily on my invitation to the faculties of SIS and CS to develop a proposal for a new academic unit that consolidates their intellectual strengths and expertise to provide a “center of gravity” on campus for computing and information-related research and education. As such, it included CS faculty members and invited representatives from the Dietrich School Board of Visitors.

Your report summarizes a day and a half of BOV discussions and reflections, endorsing the early stage work of the four faculty committees exploring the opportunities and challenges presented by creation of a new school. These committees were (1) Education & Curriculum, (2) Research & Collaboration, (3) Organizational Structure, and (4) Vision & Identity. The work of these committees was informed by the University’s new planning document, “The Plan for Pitt: Making a Difference Together.” The new academic unit is intended to directly support several of the highest priority goals expressed in that plan, and your report clearly cataloged a number of issues perceived by faculty at the time of the meeting (e.g., the scope of the undergraduate program, consideration of a university-wide general education requirement in computing, and clarity on resource availability).

In the closed session we had together, you recommended that the new unit establish research foci on personalized healthcare and education, both of which could benefit from data-driven services. Building on related strengths at Pitt and in the region, you noted that these could serve to provide aspirational goals to establish a globally recognized reputation for the new unit. You also were clear that the Board was unanimous in its recommendation that the new unit be a fully formed school, rather than a center or other academic structure, and you closed our session together by commending Pitt for initiating such a bold undertaking.

You will be pleased to know that a proposal for new School of Computing and Information (SCI) is currently working its way through the various university approval stages, after receiving the approval of both the Dietrich School and SIS. We anticipate launching the new school on July 1, 2017. The BOV’s role in creating this proposal is well understood and appreciated. As I’ve mentioned in the past, I continue to be impressed with the deep insight and broad perspective that Board members bring to their work. Under your sustained expert leadership and advisement, not only is the School of Information Sciences a better school today, but it is also providing the foundation for the new School. Thank you for (another) job exceptionally well done and for your infectious enthusiasm for Pitt. I look forward to the upcoming meeting of the Board and your assistance in bringing the new school from concept to reality.

Sincerely,

Patricia E. Beeson

Cc: Stephen R. Tritch
Patrick D. Gallagher
Kathy W. Humphrey
Ronald L. Larsen