



University of Pittsburgh

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

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Patricia E. Beeson
Provost
Senior Vice Chancellor

November 11, 2010

Dr. Alfred L. Moyé
124 Gramercy Drive
San Mateo, CA 94402

Dear Al:

Thank you for sending us the report of the October 19-20, 2009, School of Information Sciences Board of Visitors meeting. The report provides useful summaries of the principal presentations on progress being made in fund raising, student services, enrollment, and governance, as well as within the School's major programs – Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Information Science and Technology, Telecommunications and Networking, and Library and Information Sciences. Another topic was the impressive efforts being made to achieve collaboration among the "iSchools," a group within which our own School has been playing a leadership role, including the impressive grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (then in the proposal stage) to develop programming intended to attract students from underrepresented populations to consider educational opportunities within the consortium leading to careers in the information professions.

I'll focus in these comments on some of the Board's recommendations that emerged during the open discussion and in the executive session with Jim Maher. I agree that the development of a common core course is a desirable objective (as articulated in recent meetings of the Board) since it would serve as a unifying force within a faculty that have grown up within different disciplinary conditions, but also agree that this should probably be achieved as the natural result of the interdisciplinary work that is being encouraged within the School, and thus tabled for now as a formal agenda item for the School. I also concur that the School needs to take steps to ensure that its LIS curriculum has the technological components that Board members cited as being achieved at some of its peer institutions and that the curriculum should emphasize the information technology management of libraries so that, as observed by one of the Board members, the graduates are "equipped proactively to deal with a digital future." The Board also commended the School for its fresh approach toward development and fund raising under new leadership in this area, and I agree that the School seems to be poised for greater achievement, given recent progress in moving toward attainment of its capital campaign goal and high rates of participation among faculty and staff in the School's internal campaign. While the executive session with Jim Maher reinforced the positive comments Board members had made

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during the open sessions, I did want to note my concurrence with my predecessor's and the Board's view that the faculty needs to continue to commit itself to the concept of SIS as a "professional school" rather than as a collection of disciplines, as might be found, for example, in an "Arts and Science" school. This concept requires that the faculty move beyond a commitment to teaching, research, and committee service in the conventional sense to one which embraces a mind-set and activities, both within and beyond the classroom, that is dedicated to the preparation of students for professional careers. I gather from the report that it is the sense of the Board that progress is being made in that direction.

Let me close by thanking you and your colleagues for participating and contributing to what appears to have been a lively and productive meeting, and I look forward to being with you at the next meeting on November 15-16.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PEB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patricia E. Beeson

PEB:lkw

cc: Dean Ronald L. Larsen
Dr. B. Jean Ferketish