



# University of Pittsburgh

*Office of the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor*

801 Cathedral of Learning  
4200 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
412-624-4223  
Fax: 412-383-9640  
E-mail: beeson@pitt.edu

Patricia E. Beeson  
Provost  
Senior Vice Chancellor

September 18, 2015

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 2014 meeting of the School of Information Sciences Board of Visitors meeting. On behalf of Chancellor Patrick D. Gallagher and myself, I am pleased to respond to the detailed and informative report of the meeting.

This meeting was centered on the SIS branding and marketing initiative being conducted by Elliance. In particular, the first phase of the project, funded by my office, had come to a successful close with the development of a conceptual framework for the branding and communications plan; this meeting provided the kickoff for the second phase, intended to move the project from concept to implementation, reflecting the School's curriculum, research, and personnel. Dean Larsen noted in his opening remarks that advances in information technology and infrastructure were impacting SIS students' professional opportunities, and the School's curriculum needs to continually adapt to the emerging and evolving needs of employers. Many jobs being advertised today didn't exist five years ago, and some of the more traditional jobs that SIS students have sought in the past are in less demand today.

Your report summarizes a day and a half workshop-style meeting that included not only BOV members, but also members of SIS's Industrial Advisory Committee, alumni, faculty, staff, and students. It succinctly, yet comprehensively, reports on the high-energy discussions and thoughtful contemplations generated in the course of the graphically facilitated sessions by Grove Consultants. This novel form of facilitation and recording was clearly effective in enabling all participants to both engage in the issues and understand the perspectives of others. I note, in particular your observations that the School's strengths include the quality of its research, its nationally ranked programs, and its sense of vision. This provides a solid foundation on which to grow. You also noted the challenges accompanied by the changing needs of the professions and the current dependence on international enrollment. Of particular interest to me was the consideration of "what an expanded or unconstrained educational program in *information* might look like." I mention this because not long after this meeting occurred, Chancellor Gallagher launched a University-wide strategic planning initiative. One outcome of

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that work has been an invitation I extended to the faculty members of SIS and the Computer Science Department to develop a proposal to consolidate the University's academic and research strengths related to computing and information sciences in a new academic unit. Your report of the proceedings of this BOV meeting will contribute directly to that effort.

In the closed session we had together, you noted that "Board members observed that they sense their role changing from prior Board meetings, where they helped to clarify and resolve problems, to this meeting, focused on identifying and exploring new directions and opportunities." This is very clearly your role now, and one that I expect will be central to the agenda for your upcoming meeting in October. You also recommended the School establish a "stretch goal." Looking back on your report and the progress currently underway to reimagine computing and information sciences on campus, your recommendation seems quite prescient. A stretch goal is just what Chancellor Gallagher and I have in mind for the new academic unit.

As I've mentioned in the past, I continue to be impressed with the sustained breadth and depth of insight that Board members bring to their work. I recall the recommendation from your 2013 meeting to increase the School's support for internships and related corporate relationships, for example. That recommendation led directly to the School's establishment of a new Internship Coordinator position and development of a team of faculty and staff supporting a year round set of events linking students with local corporations. Under your sustained expert leadership and advisement, not only is the School of Information Sciences a better school today, but the University's perspective on what we might be able to achieve in the future has been substantially enhanced and broadened. 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 shaping a new school.

Sincerely,



Patricia E. Beeson

Cc: Eva Blum  
Patrick D. Gallagher  
Kathy W. Humphrey  
Ronald L. Larsen