



University of Pittsburgh

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Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

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July 30, 2007

Dr. Alfred L. Moyé
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Dear Al:

I have now had an opportunity to review and reflect on the report you submitted on the deliberations of the Board of Visitors for the School of Information Sciences at its November 7-8 meeting. I very much appreciate its comprehensiveness and the attention you and your colleagues clearly accorded to a number of issues confronting the School at this critical juncture in its history. Your report, which can serve as a platform for next year's meeting, is being given serious consideration by Dean Larsen and his faculty colleagues, and it is evident from the School's preliminary response, as summarized in the report, that the School has already begun to address in a problem-solving manner some of the issues that were identified during the course of the meeting. Given its comprehensive nature, I will not try to comment in detail on the report, but will, instead, briefly address several of the general recommendations that strike me as being of particular strategic significance for the School's future.

I agree with the thrust of the report that the centrality of the undergraduate program must be affirmed and effectively implemented, so that its enrollment decline can be halted and reversed. This will entail sharpening the messages relating to program content that are conveyed to prospective students, with a particular eye toward clarifying the nature of the many employment opportunities available to its graduates, who have pursued one of the several educational tracks that are now available within the new curriculum. With assistance from my office, achieving this objective has been a major goal within the School for much of this past academic year, and there are now some early indications that the enrollment picture is looking slightly better for the year just ahead. As suggested in the report, establishing greater centrality for the undergraduate program will also require that the School's faculty go beyond simply staffing the course offerings to embracing all of the obligations faculty members in a professional school have toward students who are preparing for professional careers. For the present, I'll leave it to Dean Larsen and his colleagues to consider some of the additional initiatives with regard to the undergraduate program that are touched upon in the report, and he and I will have opportunities to review them further in our regular meetings.

With regard to the masters programs, where the overall enrollment decline is less pronounced but nonetheless significant, I agree that the course offerings now need to reflect the

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new, more unified, organizational pattern, rather than the previous, relatively balkanized, departmental structure. Such a set of offerings would then convey to every graduate as well as potential employers that he or she is a product of an Information Sciences School that has provided career preparation for one of the fields within the information professions. Dean Larsen and many of his senior and junior colleagues are committed to achieving that objective. The suggestion in the report that a common introductory course be developed for students enrolled in the three masters programs would seem to be an encouraging step in that direction. Related to this overarching master's level objective, I also agree that the Telecommunications program would be enhanced if it could be more effectively integrated into the School's other programming. More generally, I encourage Dean Larsen and his colleagues, as does the report, to continue sharpening the messages at the masters level as well, so that prospective students can clearly apprehend the special opportunities that are available to its graduates, as compared to those from more purely technical programs.

I am most grateful that you and your colleagues have agreed to serve on this reconstituted and rejuvenated Board of Visitors. Your report is a clear indication of the breadth, expertise and dedication that its membership represents. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at next year's meeting.

Sincerely,



James V. Maher

JVM:cwm

cc: ~~Dr.~~ B. Jean Ferketish
~~Dean~~ Ronald L. Larsen
Dr. Andrew R. Blair