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Patricia E. Beeson
Provost
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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 2011 meeting of the School of Information Sciences Board of Visitors. On behalf of Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg and myself, I am pleased to respond to the report of the October 31 – November 1, 2011, meeting.

In its 2010 meeting, the Board acknowledged the continuing progress the School was making on enrollment and research funding, noting, in particular, that the School was nearing steady state with respect to its physical and institutional capacity. As such the Board advised the School to develop a longer term vision to articulate the School's aspirations five years out. The report of the 2011 meeting documents progress in the development of this vision, noting that the meeting itself was, in fact, part of the process. Prof. Michael Eisenberg from the University of Washington Information School led the Board members and SIS faculty through a visioning exercise. Your report provides a detailed account of that process and the Board's conclusions.

The Board endorsed the School's proposed signature research areas of big data, spatial information, information assurance, and web science, noting, in particular, that the School already has notable strength in information assurance and spatial information. These have since been articulated in the School's 5-year plan submitted to my office in March 2012, and I know that they have already influenced hiring decisions for new faculty.

The 10-year anniversary of the FastTrack online MLIS program also provided the opportunity to consider its future. Given the University's recent investment in the newer Pitt Online infrastructure, the School appropriately took the opportunity to propose a 5-year transition of the MLIS online courses to Pitt Online, which the Board endorsed. The School's proposal was favorably reviewed by me and this transition is currently underway. I should add that the School has just hired Jeffrey Lawson to direct its online programs, and you will have the opportunity to meet him at the 2012 Board meeting.

Your report also identified the undergraduate program as poised for growth, but that such growth will require additional resources and faculty. Dean Larsen and I are currently taking a closer

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BETTER LIVES

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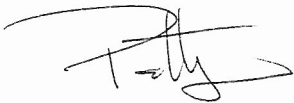
look at the undergraduate program's potential in light of student experience and institutional capacity. We want to assure that any changes to the existing program advance Pitt's stature as a provider of top tier residential undergraduate education.

Your report recommends attention to the building and physical facilities of the School. Since the Board's last visit, an environmental scan of the building has been conducted and some near term improvements have been made to address the most obvious problems, such as water leakage. Also, the 3rd floor of the Information Sciences building is being repurposed from a branch library of ULS to academic space for the School.

In the closed session we had together, I was pleased to hear your positive assessment of the progress the School has made, and I was particularly taken by the Board's sense of "buzz" among the iSchools. The potential for new career paths such as the "embedded informationist" to take leadership positions in the management of big data is compelling. These career paths require an increasingly collaborative workforce that operates seamlessly across disciplines. The School has experimented successfully in developing several of these collaborations, most notably with the Graduate School of Public Health and the Department of History.

I continue to be impressed with the breadth and depth of insight the Board members generously contribute under your leadership. You continue to provide an exceptionally useful assessment of progress and an outline of the issues facing the School that I know Dean Larsen and his colleagues value highly. All in all, I thank you for your work and share your enthusiasm for both the progress the School has made and its prospects for the future. We look forward to the upcoming fall meeting on October 31 and November 1.

Sincerely,



Patricia E. Beeson

PEB/plj

cc: Stephen R. Tritch
Mark A. Nordenberg
Ronald L. Larsen ✓
B. Jean Ferketish