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MEMO FOR: Academic Deans

FROM: Charlena M. Seymour
Senior Vice Chancellor and Provost

SUBJECT: Amherst 250 Planning

Each year I ask you to participate in a planning process that results in a set of faculty hiring decisions for the year to follow. This is one of the most important activities in which we engage, and sets the direction for the campus's future achievements in teaching and research.

Since my first year as Provost in 2001, the planning process has generally been driven by our need to use very limited resources wisely and maintain the quality of our programs in the face of significant reductions in faculty. I believe the campus met that challenge well, and I want to thank each of you for your resourcefulness and dedication as we kept a sharp focus on quality while hoping for better times.

Happily, better times have come. The Chancellor's "Amherst 250" plan for the rebuilding of the faculty has won wide support, and for FY 2006 the campus will receive millions in new funding to support faculty growth. It is our hope that this sense of confidence in the campus's contributions to the Commonwealth will continue, and that the Amherst 250 plan will be fully funded over the next several years.

As our fortunes have changed, so too must our planning. Where once we focused on limiting damage and preserving key areas of strength, now we must think boldly about the future and make investments that will allow a new generation of faculty to bring the campus to the next level of quality and distinction. One thing, however, cannot change: our insistence that every dollar bring the maximum possible value. This is a long-awaited opportunity, and if anything we need to think even more clearly about our priorities than we did while responding to the constraints of the recent past.

AMHERST 250 OBJECTIVES

The Chancellor has described the overall objective of the Amherst 250 plan as bringing the size of the faculty back into scale with our mission as a nationally competitive public research university. In doing this we will need to consider not only the overall size of the faculty, but also its distribution: years of random attrition have left us with considerable imbalances across programs. It must be very clear, however, that we are not attempting to rebuild the faculty as it once was. Investments will be directed to areas of current and emerging importance, so that the campus will be positioned to compete effectively in the years ahead. Allocations will be carefully targeted to achieve the greatest possible impact. We also need to keep in mind that, as the Chancellor observes in the Amherst 250 plan, this is an opportunity "to diversify our faculty and become more effective in recruiting an appropriately diverse student body."

The Amherst 250 plan as a whole is directed at our dual mission of teaching and research, scholarship, and creative activity. In the first year much of our attention will be focused on instruction, since we need to assure students, families and the Commonwealth that we will address instructional imbalances that have developed over a period of years. As part of this effort we will broaden the focus of our instructional allocation model to take into account not just the number of classroom seats needed to provide students with full schedules, but also to focus on the kind of undergraduate curriculum that can attract and retain highly qualified and motivated applicants in an increasingly competitive admissions environment. The plan anticipates a "dramatic improvement in the quality of the instructional programs," including "better access to regular faculty; greater availability of smaller classes; and increased opportunities for undergraduate students to participate directly in research programs, one of the unique strengths of a flagship research university."

Investment will also be driven by opportunities to increase our research competitiveness. New faculty will be expected to capitalize on areas of current strength and increase our ability to compete in areas of emerging importance. The rebuilding of the faculty will be a long-term process, encompassing both the new faculty made possible by the Amherst 250 funds and the ongoing renewal that occurs as faculty members leave and are replaced on a routine basis. To ensure that we can understand and communicate the impact of these investments, we will implement a research benchmarking process of the kind described by the Chancellor when he arrived, but deferred while we coped with the effects of the fiscal crisis. Each department will assess its research, scholarly and creative productivity according to the accepted standards of the discipline, and measure both its improvement over time and its standing as compared with colleagues at other leading universities. Progress according to these measures will support the case for ongoing investment; failure to show an appropriate return on investment will signal the need to consider reallocation to support more promising opportunities.

While the instructional and research analyses necessarily have somewhat different approaches, it will be important to think of them as two sides of the same process. Every new faculty line that responds to an identified instructional need will also carry the appropriate expectations for research and scholarship, and must be justified on intellectual grounds. Every investment in a unit's research potential also creates instructional capacity, which helps to meet the demand identified for that unit. The purpose of our analyses is not to artificially segment faculty activity, but rather to clearly identify the different components of our mission that faculty work together to advance. As always, the actual division of labor within any unit will reflect faculty interests and capacities, shorter and longer-term trade-offs and understandings, and the shifting balance of faculty as some leave and others arrive. But our goal is to ensure that, as the faculty rebuilds to a level appropriate to an institution of our size and type, we have the aggregate resources in place in each unit to accomplish our mission.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the Amherst 250 plan will involve a number of inter-related steps in which your involvement will be critical.

I. <u>Updated Faculty Hiring Plans</u>

Last year you submitted three-year proposals for faculty hiring which were extremely important in guiding the allocation of the limited funds available from the campus operating budget. At that time it was impossible to know how much funding for faculty hiring might ultimately be available, but it is interesting to note that taken together the proposals totaled 271 faculty positions, with hoped-for central funds accounting for about half of the total needed. This is not far off from the scale and pace of hiring envisioned by the Amherst 250 plan (250 new positions over five years, with perhaps an equivalent amount of replacement hiring over the same period). While the actual number of newly funded positions to be allocated will depend on the real cost of each position and its necessary support (estimated initially at about $130,000), it is clear that the hiring plans from last year represent an appropriate starting point for the Amherst 250 discussion. I am therefore requesting that you update your hiring plans to include specific requests for the next three years, and a sense of direction and priority for two years after that.

While you are free to modify your proposals as you see fit, it would be helpful to me if you discussed the reasoning behind any major changes from the directions you outlined last year (or which were outlined for you, if you were not the author of last year's plan). As was the case last year, you are asked to identify each proposed position by department, and indicate the year in which hiring is targeted; the type of position (entry level, mid-career or senior); the sub-discipline or specialty; and the breakdown of projected costs and funding sources. You will receive worksheets for this purpose from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment.

A. Costs. Under the Amherst 250 plan we are trying to fully cost and fully fund new faculty positions. It will therefore be important to address all of the following in your estimates of cost:

1. *Salary* (appropriate to level, current market, etc.).
2. *Start-up costs* (all GOF costs related to the offer, including equipment, post-docs or other personnel, moving costs, etc.). Please include here any perspectives you may have on the need for spousal support.
3. *Facilities costs*. It will be very important to develop realistic cost estimates for providing the necessary space for new faculty members. In the laboratory sciences this may be the most important factor limiting our ability to hire, but facilities considerations of one kind or another will likely be common. In recent

years we have sometimes brought on new faculty with the hope that we could "muddle through" in terms of finding suitable space for them, a plausible strategy given that overall faculty numbers were stable or declining. We cannot, however, expect to accommodate a significant increase in the size of the faculty without having a very clear facilities plan in mind. Therefore, for each new hire, you will be asked to indicate the space to be occupied and any costs associated with making it suitable for use. If the necessary space is not currently under your control, you must have filed an appropriate request for space allocation. You will also be asked to indicate the anticipated sources of funding for any facilities costs.

4. *Support staff*. Just as we cannot assume space will be available for large numbers of new faculty, we must be certain that the staff necessary to support the work of new faculty members are in place. This would include any staff to be funded from GOF (vs. direct costs) such as clerical staff, technicians, teaching assistants, etc. on an ongoing basis (time-limited personnel costs should be accounted for under start-up costs).
5. *Library*. If library collections and staffing are not adequate to support the position, you are asked to work with the Library to estimate any related costs.

B. Justification. Your updated hiring proposals, as before, should include justification for each position. Since the conversation is now shifting from preserving strength to building competitiveness, justifications should reflect both the larger context and the specific issues associated with a given hire. In general, the following questions should be addressed:

1. What competitive strength will this position contribute to?
2. How does it relate to AQAD recommendations, accreditation requirements, or other external perspectives?
3. What impact can be expected within the field?
4. How will the position contribute to interdisciplinarity?
5. Will the position move the school/college development plan forward? Will it create new development opportunities?
6. What implications does the position have for outreach? Is it tied to specific workforce needs? Will it assist in opening up new markets, or create capacity, for continuing education?
7. What is the potential for increasing diversity through this hire? What is the recruitment plan? What is the plan for supporting and mentoring new faculty?
8. How will this position contribute to the specific instructional objectives of the Amherst 250 plan (see below)?

II. Instructional Allocation Model

The instructional allocation model we have employed for the past three years will be modified and augmented to reflect the objectives of the Amherst 250 plan. In thinking about these changes it is useful to consider how we currently pay for instruction, how our current system for doing so has evolved, and what kind of a system would make sense under the kind of circumstances envisaged by the Amherst 250 plan.

For decades, instruction was one of the core functions supported through departmental budgets. With some exceptions, the courses necessary to meet students' needs were offered as part of the regular teaching obligations of faculty, augmented by modest numbers of primarily part-time lecturers and a cadre of teaching assistants whose availability was a function of our large and varied graduate programs. Over a long period of years several factors led to variations on this basic system:

- When the campus adopted comprehensive new General Education requirements in the eighties, supplemental funding was provided to some departments which were asked to assume a large instructional load as a result of the new requirements.
- When Commonwealth College was founded, and the need for honors-level instruction increased significantly, funds from the Commonwealth College line item were used to purchase instruction in certain departments, but other honors instruction continued to be supported from regular departmental budgets.
- Shifts in graduate and undergraduate enrollment have changed the supply and demand situation for TAs in many departments.
- As the campus struggled to meet teaching obligations through two successive fiscal downturns the mix of instructors shifted to include more lecturers.
- Long-term, significant random faculty attrition caused a number of departments to rethink the scale and scope of their teaching activities, often with implications for "service" instruction to majors in other departments.
- Conversely, shifts in student interest and new program development often created new demand for service instruction without providing resources to help meet it.
- At various times while budgets were being reduced ad hoc supplemental instructional allocations were made to maintain the integrity of the curriculum.
- Several successive waves of enrollment growth to increase curriculum fee and retained tuition revenue have been accommodated through supplemental instructional allocations at a low, incremental rate.
- Three years ago, an effort was made to partially rationalize this system through the current instructional allocation model, which seeks to identify the most serious imbalances between instructional supply and demand and narrow any gaps through allocations at a low, incremental rate.

As a consequence of all these changes and trends, the instructional program today is reasonably robust in terms of ensuring that enough classroom seats are available to meet the needs of the students we enroll, but the fragmented and shifting nature of the funding mechanism does not promote sound planning. It is not uncommon to see programs pursue multiple requests for funding in the hope that one will pay off. The incremental approach to funding does not promote quality, and does not address imbalances in quality caused by random losses of faculty over the years.

Again, it is important to recognize that, given the very difficult circumstances in which the campus found itself, the approaches described above were a reasonable and creative response to the challenge of preserving the integrity of the curriculum when there simply weren't enough faculty to go around. But we now are planning for a much different — and much better — context, and we must ask ourselves what kind of instructional funding mechanism will best meet our needs in the years ahead.

Certain general principles suggest themselves. First, as we rebuild the faculty, we need to shift responsibility for instruction back to regular departmental budgets. We hope to see the day when the size of the faculty is once again sufficient to handle our basic business needs, including instruction, and allow us to ramp down supplemental funding schemes created to address specific faculty shortfalls. Second, we want to simplify the system, so that the process of providing an appropriate instructional program can be more routine and less of a drain on leadership at all levels. Third, we need a system that focuses not only on instructional sufficiency but also on instructional quality, better able to deliver the kind of distinctive experience our students want and deserve. Finally, we want as much of the instructional budget as possible to be in the hands of the Deans and departments, so that they can manage their enterprises more effectively and with greater accountability.

This shift will not occur all at once, but our planning must incorporate these objectives and move us in these directions. An important first step will be to make certain changes in the instructional allocation model:

A. We will continue to conduct the comparative student credit hour analysis by discipline, and this will now serve as the first stage of the analysis. We have just received the newest comparative data from the University of Delaware study (fall 2003), and the whole analysis will be updated. This stage will reveal whether we have units that seem under-resourced for instruction in terms of having enough instructors of any kind to offer the necessary classroom seats in any form.

B. We will reset the base year for the instructional analysis to 2004-05, since that represents the closest estimate of what enrollment is likely to be over the next few years, and — with the use of all the supplemental funding allocated by the Deputy Provost — we were able to meet the need for classroom seats. We'll then make the usual adjustment to account for the credit hours purchased directly by Commonwealth College. We will not, however, include an estimate of any future enrollment growth in the model. The Amherst 250 plan "focuses on restoring faculty strength relative to the number of full-time equivalent students currently enrolled," so we will be using the model to account for those needs only. The funding implications of any future enrollment growth will be separately calculated. We will, however, be certain that the full costs of current enrollment are reflected in the model (i.e. costs in the upper division as the recent large freshman classes move through the pipeline).

C. We will make an effort to better integrate enrollment planning and the instructional allocation process. The campus has a number of enrollment goals (promoting diversity, increasing the academic profile, growing revenue), and there is often a tension between these goals and our capacity to teach students. This is most clearly evident in the restrictions we impose on the number and/or quality of students we will admit into certain majors. From an admissions standpoint, every restriction of this kind increases the difficulty of meeting our enrollment goals. On the other hand, certain kinds of academic preparation are necessary for student success in many fields, and even under the most optimistic resource scenarios it may not be possible for us to accommodate every applicant's first choice of major. We can, however, examine unmet student demand for majors and consider whether it makes intellectual and financial sense to broaden access. We will therefore ask Student Affairs to prioritize currently restricted majors in terms of their impact on the admissions process, and we will see whether convincing arguments can be made to expand capacity. In such cases, we will adjust instructional demand in the model accordingly, and calculate the additional resources needed. We will ask the "Class of 2010" group, to which I asked you to appoint a representative earlier this year, to look at these issues more closely.

D. In calculating school/college instructional needs we will not automatically assume that a "surplus" in one department can be reallocated to fill a "deficit" in another within the college. We have made, and will continue to make, instructional allocations to promote both teaching and research. It is not sensible to make an investment in a department's research potential, but then assume that funds can be siphoned off from that department if its teaching capacity is on the high side.

E. If the first-stage analysis reveals units with an instructional shortfall, we will not, as we do now, immediately convert that into a dollar amount using an arbitrary cost/student credit hour. Instead we will proceed to the analyses of instructional quality and research strength. If these factors argue for allocation of tenure-system faculty lines, then the teaching power of those positions will be applied to any instructional gap. If not, we will apply our current system of calculating the cost of closing the gap with lecturers or TAs.

F. The second stage of the instructional analysis will look at two factors related to the nature and quality of the educational experience: how instruction is delivered (the mix of class sizes experienced by the student), and opportunities for contact with tenure-system faculty (the mix of instructors). Our research and our experience in the admissions marketplace indicate that we have room to improve in both areas, and our allocation of tenure-system faculty lines through the Amherst 250 plan provides the opportunity to see a significant impact. In terms of class size, we will use the Delaware data to calculate norms by discipline for student credit hours per organized class section, a reasonable proxy for overall class size. This will allow us to establish some baseline data and identify any units that seem to be significantly higher than we would like them to be. We will also look at the actual experience of our students in terms of their course-taking patterns. These different views will help us determine where allocation of new faculty lines could improve the educational experience of undergraduates, especially in the lower division.

G. In terms of instructor mix, we will look at the distribution of instructors by type by discipline. If a unit has a relatively low proportion of tenure-system faculty in its overall mix, and its overall instructional resources seem low, then we would look to see if some increase in tenure-system lines should be made to achieve a better balance.

H. Finally, all our instructional allocations need to occur in the context of transitioning away from ad hoc and supplemental funding, and toward adequate base funding. We will develop a much clearer picture of specific instructional demand for each unit, including General Education instruction, other service instruction, and enriched instruction offered to Commonwealth College students. As the faculty is rebuilt, we will either build these obligations into regular base budgets or, if necessary, identify a specific alternative mechanism (e.g., purchase of enriched instruction from the Commonwealth College line item).

III. <u>Research Benchmarking</u>

Over the course of the coming year we will be launching the research benchmarking process, in which each department will identify a small group of widely recognized measures of quality and productivity relating to research, scholarship and creative activity. A year from now, when the second round of Amherst 250 funding becomes available, we will rely heavily on those data to make allocations that can advance our stature as a major research university.

Implementation of the research benchmarking process will be addressed in a separate message, but it will be important for you to alert your faculty to the overall plan and have them begin thinking about the kinds of measures that would be appropriate to each discipline.

Obviously, we have much to do over the coming weeks and months, but it is all directed at a very positive purpose: getting our campus back on track and planning for a period of growth and development that we have not seen in many years. It is an exciting time, and I look forward to working with each of you as we move toward realizing this wonderful university's full potential.

cc: Chancellor Lombardi
Vice Chancellors Dale, Gargano, and Hatch
John Dubach, CIO
Deputy Provost John Cunningham
Vice Provosts Fross and Kostecki
Graduate Dean John Mullin
Jay Schafer, Director of Libraries
Associate Provosts Harvey and Pearson
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