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Memorandum

To: Joyce Hatch, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance  
Ernest May, Secretary of the Faculty Senate  
Members: Capital Asset Task Force  
From: Juanita Holler, Co-Chair of the Capital Asset Task Force  
R. Rideout, Co-Chair of the Capital Asset Task Force  
About: CATF Report on faculty review of the Wilson Report  
Date: 2/13/09

At the January 27 meeting of the CATF, members of the campus faculty and administration discussed the Wilson Architects' Report dated 17 December 2008 about Science and Engineering needs on the UMass Amherst campus. The overall impression of the report was that efforts at communication between all parties interested in the report, the process of report preparation, and the sensitivity and expertise of the Wilson Architectural firm are a model for all future studies. Selected comments from members included "great piece of work," "(the faculty) are as excited as hell about it," and "the report is helpful in research planning."

Paul Kostecki, Vice Chancellor for Research, explained the two goals of the campus and faculty review that provided information to Wilson Architects as the first step in the report process, namely A) to provide the campus with comprehensive information to estimate all science and engineering needs in areas such as office space, lab space to include dry and wet labs, and specific platform space and B) to provide guiding principles for use in efforts to propose a New Science Building (NSB) constructed of both fitted out space, as well as "shelled space," meaning flexible space that can be adapted to future use. The initial faculty review of interdisciplinary efforts identified fifty-one possible "clusters" of research activity. Examination of retirement and hiring activity within science or engineering departments allowed for an estimate of faculty, staff and students, and the costs related to retro-fitting space or creating new space for the conduct of research by them. The resulting information was needed to A) improve the campus's ability to attract new resources, B) assure faculty proximity to research platforms, C) estimate return on the financial investment needed over the next decade, and D) to estimate the cost of "back-fill," or retro-fitting existing space to new needs.

After Vice-Chancellor Kostecki's report, CATF members began asking specific questions about plans for the report: questions such as "Can UMass use this report as part of a request to the Obama administration?" "How do we maximize renovation costs?" "What is the effect of the budget crisis on this plan?" "How do we spend our money, new construction or backfill?"

Various university administrators involved in the development process who served as campus advisors to Wilson Architects responded to the questions and noted the following:

1. Until the academic classroom plan is complete and the two reports (Science and Engineering and Academic Classroom) are integrated into a new campus master plan, no specific details about renovation can be announced.
2. Priorities in construction and renovation must be determined by available money and projected revenue sources such as future borrowing, DCAM, Higher Education Bill, etc.
3. When renovation occurs it could be in small “spots and dots,” of space vacated and re-assigned after faculty move to newly constructed space, but it is recommended that larger areas of space be vacated to maximize the use not only of the vacated space, but also the funds required for renovation.
4. Money for construction of new space is allocated through a different process than the campus operating budget and, therefore, may be affected less by the economic downturn.

This summary of the January 27 meeting is intended as an interim report to the Faculty Senate. A final report of the CATF will not occur until such time as the assembled CATF can review the academic classroom report and, perhaps, efforts to integrate both reports into a campus master plan.