1. The Minutes of the December 20th meeting were unanimously approved.

2. The Academic Priority Council unanimously approved the Special Report of the Provost concerning Schools within Colleges on January 17, 2012. The Council recommends that the document also acknowledge the possibility of Schools that report to more than one dean. This could help alleviate budgetary and control issues that arise when two separate groups of faculty who are affiliated with a Center or School, are trying to work across colleges. Other units on campus, who are now in CNS, faced similar budgetary and control issues but they were resolved with the consolidation of CNS. The Council recognizes that there may be additional discussions related to this proposal that will evolve and that the report is a starting point to enable units to cooperate with one another on various activities.

Background: John McCarthy presented the rationale for the proposal and its origin. Three Arts departments want to be branded together and cooperate with one another on various activities, and be called a “School of the Arts”. There is a precedent for this at other Universities across the country. The partnership can be a loose association of departments that want to work together in a common way. A single department could be a school. The proposal opens the door for departments to work together across colleges. It would allow schools within schools. The proposal is meant to be enabling rather than precluding.

Computer Science is interested in having a “School of Computer Sciences.” The Department of Plant, Soil, and Insect Sciences could be split into two departments, Applied Biology and the Stockbridge School of Agriculture. The Stockbridge School of Agriculture wants its own tenured lines and could be a department in CNS. Another possibility on campus is a “School of the Built Environment” which could include LARP, Building, Construction and Wood Technology. Everyone would remain in their original department but have a common affiliation. Faculty lines remain where they are and all areas could be under one Dean. The Deans of Education and Nursing would like to do this.
Approval of the proposal is a signal that many things are possible. There may be additional discussions that need to evolve.

One concern raised was the situation when two faculty groups are trying to work across colleges. Sometimes there are tensions about who is in control of the center or school, usually because of budget issues. It may be uncertain who is responsible for the care and feeding of the units. It is easiest if the areas are in one deanery but the document should allow schools to report to more than one dean. The proposal can specify how the two deans would operate. The consolidation of CNS helped resolve this type of issue. Multi-college proposals are possible if two deans do not want multiple deans in charge.

Another concern raised was that resources and faculty lines will be requested after the fact. What is not clear is whether at other universities, this is simply an escalation of a name. However, music departments that become schools are distinctive in that they teach classes. Departments do not. At UMass, we do.

Proposals will come to the APC and need to be approved. Departments and schools would need to sort out what they want to do.