Strategic Planning Process

College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences

August, 2008 through August, 2009

When I began my first year as Dean the summer of 2008, one of my primary goals was to work with faculty to develop a strategic plan for the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences. I was concerned with both product and process: I wanted to have us develop a plan, clearly aligned with RU 7-17, that could guide our decisions and help us plan our future over the next five to ten years; at the same time, I wanted to engage faculty in serious reflection, drawing on our wide range of expertise while building a consensus about our common priorities, values, and aspirations.

Throughout the fall semester of 2008, I worked with Department Chairs on the initial stages in this process. Because the Chairs clearly agreed that it would be best for us to begin on a Department level, we drafted guidelines, in September, to provide a common framework for Department discussions. Each Department, as well as the School of Communication, then developed and submitted its strategic plan by December 5.

Just before the end of the semester, I met again with the Department Chairs to discuss the Departmental strategic plans, especially looking for common interests, and to plan the next stage in the process. We agreed that the next step would be to engage the College faculty at large in discussions through working groups that would consider eight main themes. We also invited faculty volunteers to serve as “contacts” for each working group and to organize the initial discussions:

1. **Scholarship.** Given our University’s mission as a comprehensive university committed primarily to teaching, how can we best support scholarship—by our faculty, by our students, and by our faculty and students in collaboration?

   Contacts: Renee Dickinson, Department of English, and Jeanne Mekolichik, Department of Sociology

2. **The Radford Model.** How can we articulate, and promote, a compelling “Radford Model” of undergraduate education? What is the role of the liberal arts in this model? What is the role of student research? How can this model distinguish us from other universities?

   Contact: Kurt Gingrich, Department of History

3. **Graduate Education.** What is the role of graduate education in the College? How can we effectively develop and support graduate programs? How can we effectively recruit graduate students?
Contacts: Graduate coordinators from CHBS programs. Paul Witkowsky, Department of English, Convener

4. **Interdisciplinary Collaborations.** Where do we already have strengths in interdisciplinary collaboration—in teaching, in research, in service? How can we build upon these strengths? What new collaborations should we explore?

Contacts: Grace Edwards, Appalachian Studies Program, and Matt Oyos, Department of History

5. **Internationalization.** How can we most effectively “internationalize” the curriculum, increase students’ abilities in foreign languages, create additional opportunities for study abroad, and critically address globalization?

Contacts: Jim Radford, Department of Political Science, and Grigory Ioffe, Department of Geography

6. **Sustainability and Environmental Studies.** How can we best address issues of sustainability, across the disciplines, in our College and through collaborations with other Colleges? How can we integrate education and practice?

Contacts: Rick Roth, Department of Geography, and Rick Van Noy, Department of English

7. **Community and Regional Partnership.** How can we best utilize our local and regional partnerships to enhance the education of our students—through internships, service-learning, practica, etc.—to expand course options, and to provide opportunities for our faculty? What new partnerships should we develop?

Contact: Jim Werth, Department of Psychology, Melinda Wagner, Department of Sociology, and Matt Oyos, Department of History

8. **Life after Radford.** How can we best prepare our students for future careers, graduate and professional schools, civic engagement, and a meaningful life?

Contact: t.b.d.

By early May, three of these groups—The Radford Model, Interdisciplinary Collaborations, and Scholarship—submitted working drafts on their topics. On April 27, we held a meeting of the College Faculty devoted largely to discussion of the strategic planning process, particularly the identification of the next stages, which will involve discussion across disciplines and departments. The consensus of the faculty members present at this meeting was to hold open discussions on each topic through the course of the 2009-10 academic year. Perhaps two meetings can be held on each topic, at different times of the day and week, to allow as many faculty members as possible to participate. Other suggestions were that the faculty members who have developed the working draft on each topic might lead these discussions, and that faculty
might present different background information or points of view on each topic, in order to allow for debate and to assure that we consider different options.

In the meantime, faculty are invited to submit further thoughts on any of these topics, or any other issues they consider relevant to the identity, the priorities, and the future of our College.

Brian Conniff, Dean
College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences