

Electronic Memorandum

TO: CHBS Faculty Members
FR: Katherine Hawkins, Dean, College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences
DA: April 5, 2013
RE: Dean's Report of Progress Toward 2012-2013 Goals

As I approach the end of my second year as the dean of our college, I am struck by two impressions:

1. How quickly time passes.
2. How much progress our college has made.

Time passes at its own pace, beyond our ability to influence. While external forces can and often do influence what we can accomplish, I am so very proud of what CHBS faculty members have achieved together since the beginning of the academic year—and we're not finished yet! Please find below my annual report on progress toward the goals I articulated for the college at the Fall Convocation in August of 2012.

1. Complete faculty-led process (begun last year) to undertake any desired revisions to department/school tenure and promotion guidelines.

Most of the units in CHBS have completed this process. Work remains for some departments, but all are scheduled to complete their work by the end of the spring semester. I have been very pleased at the quality of the substantive conversations faculty members have engaged in during this faculty-led process. As I have consistently argued, clarity of expectations for performance is absolutely critical if we are to move forward in this time of change in academia in general, and specifically here at RU.

2. Complete faculty-led process (begun last year) to undertake any desired revisions to department/school 5-year plans.

Again, most units in CHBS have completed their work in this area and the remaining departments are on schedule to be finished by the end of the spring semester. As you may recall from the materials I distributed to assist us in our planning for the future, there are important changes taking place in the political, social, and economic environments that serve as our context. We must strategically position ourselves to take best advantage of these trends or we will suffer as a consequence.

For example, some have argued that MOOCs (massive open online courses) represent a threat to the integrity of higher education. What if we are forced to accept MOOC "credit" in place of traditional means of earning credit? I did some investigation and discovered that at RU, the current policy is NOT to accept MOOC credit. Even if the university changed its policy to allow programs to accept MOOC credit, each program would have the authority to make decisions about whether or not to accept such credit.

My suggestion is to use the established procedure, challenge exams, to determine whether or not a student should earn any credit for participation in a MOOC (or any other means of accomplishing mastery in some subject matter area). That is, if a student can convincingly demonstrate s/he has achieved the learning outcomes identified by a faculty member for his/her class, then that student may earn credit (although not a grade) for that class. Such a process leaves the authority for granting credit where it should be; that is, with the faculty members who establish learning outcomes for and teach the courses, as well as design and grade the challenge exams themselves. In this way, we have reacted to a change in the environment in a manner that is in our best interests. I would further argue such a course of action would be in our students' best interests, as well.

In addition, as I shared with faculty at the CHBS Town Hall meeting, I think the most prudent course of action is to assume we will have no more resources than we currently have to support whatever efforts we undertake. I also encouraged each department or school to think about the choices they would make to enable them to progress as they wish to progress in such an environment. I look forward to working with CHBS faculty members as we continue our conversations about strategic planning for our shared future.

3. Continue process of building advisory boards for CHBS, as well as for our prelaw efforts.

I'm very pleased to report the CHBS Advisory Board officially voted itself into existence during the RU Fall 2012 Homecoming. Board membership is nearing 20 members and we hope to further expand our membership before the next RU Fall Homecoming. You may recall that many members of the CHBS Advisory Board were active participants in the very successful "Speed Networking Event" sponsored by the college during Fall 2012 Homecoming. Given the positive feedback received from CHBS faculty, students and alumni, we'll be repeating the event this fall.

I continue in my efforts to build a strong base of financial support for our prelaw students at RU, including making several trips to visit with RU alumni who might be interested in joining in these efforts. This spring semester, we are offering a cross-listed course in which students stage a Mock Trial. The class was designed by an interdisciplinary group of interested faculty members, and is funded through a private gift solicited for the college.

4. Pass CHBS by-laws (developed by CHBS Leadership Team).

As you may recall, we passed our founding by-laws at the CHBS Fall Convocation in August of 2012. Our new standing committee, the CHBS Honors and Awards Committee, ably led by Associate Professor of History Dr. Kurt Gingrich, has had a very productive year and is already planning its agenda for the 2012-2013 academic year.

5. Pilot test new method (developed by the CHBS Leadership Team) to present materials for tenure and/or promotion (i.e., the SuperFAR).

From all reports, the pilot test of the new SuperFAR approach to tenure and/or promotion review went very well. I am particularly pleased about two consequences of the use of the SuperFAR. First, I believe clarifying what's required (and what's not) for tenure and/or promotion review removed some of the ambiguity and therefore hopefully some of the anxiety from preparing one's materials for review. Second, I believe the new format made it easier for reviewers to assess submitted materials in a fair and accurate way, as they were more able to identify faculty members' significant accomplishments without having to search through additional files to find what was needed to complete the review. I am hopeful as the new format becomes widely adopted, its use will reduce the investment of time and energy necessary for faculty members to complete their packets for tenure and/or promotion, freeing that time for other pursuits.

6. Establish CHBS Faculty Mentors group.

I am pleased to report the group has been formed and is working to accomplish its agenda. It's my understanding they are considering next steps they will take in establishing the role they would like to play in mentoring CHBS faculty. This is a faculty-led effort, so my role is to provide support as needed to assist the group in moving its agenda forward. I have done so and will continue to do so, as they inform me of their needs.

7. Continue efforts to enhance our contributions to the research mission of the university. In consultation with the CHBS Leadership Team, define "push goal" for scholarly productivity for 2012-2013.

As I have communicated to you, this goal was mandated by the Provost. The first step in identifying a goal for enhancing our contributions to the research mission of the university was to establish the baseline of our productivity. Therefore, the leadership team conducted a count of peer-reviewed publications and creative works produced by CHBS faculty as reported in the 2011-2012 FARs. The number identified was 96. A number of those were books, which in my view should count more than a single article or short-form creative work. Given that, CHBS produced approximately one publication or creative work per faculty member during the review period. For a college that produces the student credit hours and FTE CHBS produces, that is a very impressive number.

In my view, the available evidence suggests research productivity does not need to be increased across the board. Rather, we should seek to identify instances in which there are individual faculty members who are struggling to gain (or in some instances, regain) traction in their professional contributions and provide them with the means to achieve a higher level of productivity. I have already undertaken these efforts, working with individual faculty members to articulate a plan for improvement and identifying funding to support their efforts. I am very excited to see the fruits of these new efforts into the future.

8. Continue efforts to expand opportunities for internal and external grant-funded research and scholarship, broadly defined. In consultation with CHBS Leadership Team, define “push goal” for externally funded grant applications for 2012-2013.

As I have communicated to you, this goal was mandated by the Provost. In my first year as dean, faculty members in the college submitted nine external grant applications. This year, my goal was for college faculty to submit approximately the same number of external grants. Vacancies in some critical faculty areas are putting downward pressure on grant submissions, as is the ongoing shortage of faculty members in some high demand areas. The latter has necessitated a number of research-active faculty to take on teaching overloads. Obviously, time spent teaching overloads is time that cannot be spent producing external grant applications. ***The instructional needs of students in our programs must always be our first priority.*** Therefore, until and unless instructional resources are made available to help CHBS faculty to meet the needs of the growing numbers of undergraduate students in our programs, I do not believe it’s feasible for our faculty to increase production of external research grant applications very much, if at all, beyond the current level.

We were very fortunate to be able to award over \$110,000 in internal research grants at the college level this year. Additional funding was awarded for multidisciplinary grants. Several CHBS faculty members were awarded faculty professional development leave this year, as well. I’m looking forward to the peer-reviewed presentations and publications that will result from this infusion of support for faculty members’ scholarly and creative efforts.

9. Work with external consultant to develop a strategic growth plan for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

Dr. James Fogelquist from Appalachian State University has been working with the department’s faculty and with a group of graduate students from my applied communication research methods class to gather the information he needs to prepare recommendations for the department as they consider a strategic plan for growth. He will visit campus on April 8th and 9th. I anticipate a draft report by the end of the spring semester and his final report by sometime this summer. I’m am eagerly anticipating receipt of the report so the department’s faculty may begin to identify actions they can take to advance the department toward their shared goals.

10. Work with architects to produce a plan for the proposed new CHBS academic building.

This is perhaps the most important and most exciting undertaking of my tenure here at RU. The notion of bringing all of our college’s faculty members together in a state-of-the-art teaching and research facility is almost beyond imagining. I admit it was beyond my imagining when we began this process in July of 2011, but I was proven wrong. By working together to prioritize the needs of our faculty and students, I am extremely proud to report we have completed the “programming” phase of the planning process. In fact,

we completed it in less than six months. Normally, the process takes twice that long. We are in the final stages of completing the next step in the process, which is the conceptual design of the building, including most of the specific room layout of the five floors of the building. That's a process that normally takes well over a year and our faculty accomplished it in about six months. What a great team effort!

Legislation has been signed by the Governor allowing the purchase of a bond to fund the initial stages of construction for several buildings across the Commonwealth, including the CHBS building. So, funding is now available to begin the next step in the process. I'm looking forward to working with Chris Willis (Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Facilities Officer) and Roy Saville (Director of Facilities Planning and Construction) and the CHBS Proposed Building Planning Team (Lynn Zoch, Pamela Jackson, Carla Corroto, Steve Owen, and Dennis Grady) as we continue to work through the process together. As Chris says, we're not going to slow down to look behind us to see how far ahead we are of the other universities competing for that funding!

11. Engage in professionally related travel outside the contiguous 48 states.

I'll call this a work in progress. My main concern is that I don't believe it's appropriate for me to spend college money to take an international trip just for the sake of taking the trip. As those of you who have traveled abroad can attest, airline tickets for travel abroad are frighteningly expensive. I recently investigated taking a trip to a conference outside of the contiguous 48 states. Even months in advance, the airline ticket alone was still over \$1,300! Even a short trip abroad would cost the college several thousand dollars, which is funding that could otherwise be spent in support of other more important initiatives, such as supporting faculty travel to conduct or present research, or for an instructional development grant for a faculty member to create an online course. I will continue to seek to identify an international trip that promises an adequate return on the investment of college funding it will take to send me there. In the meantime, I am committed to securing a current passport before the end of the academic year.

A closing thought

As you might imagine, my activities associated with pursuing the college goals as articulated in August of 2012 represent but a fraction of the time and energy I've invested serving as your dean this academic year. For example, even those of us who saw it coming were not fully prepared for the magnitude of the crisis that has befallen all of the colleges and universities in Virginia as a consequence of state policy requiring that adjunct instructors no longer serve in a full-time capacity.

I am deeply grateful for the incredibly hard work done by the CHBS Leadership Team in responding to this crisis. I have never before had the privilege of working with such an amazing group of colleagues. In fact, as the crisis continued to deepen, I shared with the team that I could not imagine a better group of colleagues with whom to be up the creek without a paddle. Somehow, miraculously, we found a way to make it work. What a

testimony to the commitment not only of the leadership team, but also to all of the CHBS faculty members who contributed to our response.

During this summer's Quest sessions, incoming students will have an adequate number of seats available in our classes in which to register for the fall semester. That might not seem like much, but to those who worked so long and hard to make it so, in my view, it approaches the status of a miracle. I will be forever grateful to all of those whose sacrifices of time and energy, often under nearly unachievable deadlines, led to our success in meeting what at one time appeared to be an impossible goal. Thank you all so much!

That's enough from me. I'm looking forward to another exciting academic year starting in August, not to mention another fabulous Welcome Back Party in early September. In the meantime, I hope to see you at the Spring Commencement ceremony, if not before then. All best wishes for a successful conclusion to the spring semester!