

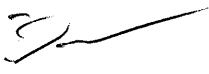


UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

January 22, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bill Ditto, Dean
College of Natural Sciences

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock 
Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Three-Year Progress Report

Thank you for your very comprehensive three year progress report summarizing developments in the College of Natural Sciences. Obviously, your tenure as Dean began after the Program Review to which we are still responding, and I appreciate the effort you have made to establish a continuity of effort with earlier issues and concerns while at the same time striking out in new directions. I also appreciate the complex balancing act in which initiatives to address issues in undergraduate education are balanced and complemented by initiatives in research. I am very impressed with the report and with everything you have managed to do in a very short time here.

I was glad to see the merger of Biology and Zoology as one step towards fewer units in the College, and I look forward to continued conversations about the organization of the life sciences. I agree with the implication of the report that what is particularly needed here are efforts to cut across disciplinary and departmental boundaries, rather than focusing simply on redrawing them, and the initiatives in Marine Biology and Astrophysics are valuable here.

My sense is that there is far more cohesion among the faculty, the chairs, and the college administration than in the recent past, and I commend your initiatives here.

The key to increased research and scholarship in the faculty is hiring and retaining great faculty. The amount and quality of hiring in the College over the past two years has been impressive, and I am confident that great things will come from the great faculty who have been hired. In this context, mentoring and the tenure and promotion process probably emerge as higher priorities down the road.

The university is making a serious investment in the facilities of the College, with the Edmonson and Snyder renovations proceeding. A focus over the near term must be

2500 Campus Road, Hawai'i Hall 209
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-8447
Fax: (808) 956-7115

the future of Keller Hall, given the departure of ITS from most of its space in the building; long term, as you correctly point out, the quality of the space for physical sciences emerges as the major challenge facing the college.

I am thrilled to see the progress on issues in undergraduate education over the past few years. The Learning Emporium is a major breakthrough, and the new classroom in Webster 100, pioneered by Steve Robinow from Biology, is groundbreaking. We need to continue to address the issue of course availability in the college and comprehensively tackle the issue of student success in the key gateway classes. The efforts already underway are a great start, but probably not yet a fully comprehensive approach. The College probably has instructional resources it can redirect in more productive directions since several programs run what we consider an unacceptably high number of small classes each semester. We need to pay attention to the design of the curriculum in all our majors, as well as the actual sequence of course offerings for those majors, to make sure that students are not delayed in their progress towards degrees. The College has made real strides in the past few years in developing a more complex set of majors, and I look forward to new degrees in Astronomy and Astrophysics in the near future. Many of our students transfer from other UH campuses, and a particular need is for multicampus conversations which will improve the articulation among campuses and increase the success of transfer students. Engineering has been in the lead on these conversations, and I look forward to CNS playing a larger role in the future.

Graduate education remains an area less attention has been paid attention to, though this should change at the college level given the recent reorganization which clarifies the roles of the chairs and deans in graduate education. Your report correctly identifies low stipend levels for graduate assistants as "the most pressing and chronic problem," and since this was submitted, the plan to increase GA stipend levels starting next Fall is a major step towards addressing this issue. We will need to work together on other issues affecting the quality of graduate education as we move forward.

I am impressed by the progress the College has made since the Program Review, both in terms of identifying issues raised in the review and in terms of breaking new ground. We have major challenges ahead, in terms of undergraduate student success, the quality of graduate education, the level of external funding, and physical facilities, but I am confident that the College will continue its recent progress.