



MEMORANDUM

To: Idaho State Board of Education
Tom Luna, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Paul Agidius, President
Richard Westerberg, Vice President
Kenneth Edmunds, Secretary
Emma Atchley, Member
Rod Lewis, Member
Don Soltman, Member
Milford Terrell, Member

From: ISU Engineering Advisory Council
Chairman - Steven E. Aumeier, Ph.D
Director, Energy Systems and Technologies Division - INL

Immediate Past Chairman - Steve Walker, PE
Walker Engineering

Subject: Administrative Reorganization – College of Engineering

Date: April 21, 2010

Engineering
Advisory Council
Campus Box 8060
Pocatello, Idaho
83209-8060

The ISU Engineering Advisory Council has reviewed the campus reorganization plan dated April 8th as it pertains to the College of Engineering. We believe the plan to be deeply flawed. The potential financial savings are optimistic, and unsubstantiated. The potential damage which could result from the reorganization as proposed is ignored. Our detailed comments follow, concluding with alternative recommendations.

The ISU Engineering Advisory Council is comprised of members of the business, research, and engineering community and is composed of leaders in the engineering profession. Membership is voluntary; duties of the council are to advise the College of Engineering on long term planning, degree offerings and course content. Our objective is to help the University graduate students who will make a significant, sustained and lasting impact on the economy and general well being of Idaho. Organizations represented by the council include: Idaho National Laboratory, Department of Energy, Monsanto, Idaho Power, On Semiconductor and a host of other local and regional firms. We do not dabble in campus politics; our charter is the betterment of ISU and the State of Idaho.

We met with Provost Gary Olson on April 14th; he did an admirable job addressing our questions. That said, we have reviewed the reorganization plan dated April 8th and have the following observations:



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1. ABET accreditation is not addressed. We believe the proposed changes would result in loss of accreditation.
2. The College of Engineering would not be independent (an ABET criterion).
3. Combining nuclear engineering with the physics department is ill advised; it is widely accepted that engineering studies are inherently different than general physics and science studies and must be managed as such to be credible.
4. The proposed costs savings of \$1.5 million are not visible nor attainable. There are no financial data, or models, showing how the proposed cost savings are to be achieved.
5. The administration claims that there are indirect benefits of merger to College of Engineering with the College of Science; however, no financial information or other benefits are provided in the report.
6. The proposed organization structure failed previously, i.e. coordinators versus department chairs. This almost resulted in the loss of ABET accreditation.
7. Though not explicitly stated, we infer that the Dean would be eliminated to save costs – we believe this would be particularly inadvisable.
8. The growth of the College of Engineering over 5 years is 20%; greater than any other college on campus.
9. The College of Engineering has almost 700 students; it is not a nascent program having been in existence for almost 40 years, and its graduates having made a significant impact for the betterment of our local and regional community.

In an effort to cut costs and simultaneously strengthen the Engineering program, we suggest the Board consider the following actions instead of those contained in the draft plan:

1. Focus on areas of clear strength, and thus reduce the present degree offerings from 13 to 6, to include civil, environmental, mechanical, nuclear, electrical and computing.
2. To facilitate this focus, an organizational model that includes only 3 Departments; Civil and Environmental, Mechanical and Nuclear, Electrical and Computing, should be implemented.

Clearly Idaho is at a cross roads in economic development, with opportunities to further expand high-value research and manufacturing in a number of sectors including energy technology, electronics, equipment and components manufacturing, medicine, and more. To all of these fields, the practical application of science is the key to success, and this is the definition of engineering. The value of a credible, identifiable local engineering offering to the development of our regional economy is significant without question. We urge the Board of Education to carefully assess the data provided in the draft reorganization plan and assess the true costs and risks of implementing such a plan to the people of Idaho. We have done so, and have concluded that this is a poor proposition for our community.