**CAS DEPARTMENT CHAIRS &
PROGRAM DIRECTORS MEETING
Monday, February 5, 2024, 4 p.m., CRUC 315**
In attendance: Karen Anewalt, Dianne Baker, Rosalyn Cooperman, Julius Esunge, Claudine Ferrell, Kate Haffey, Jodie Hayob-Matzke, Brooks Kuykendall, Don Lee, Jonathan Levin, Betsy Lewis, Miriam Liss, Jon McMillan, Keith Mellinger, Laura Mentore, Melina Patterson, Joe Romero, Anand Rao, Marcel Rotter, Kelli Slunt, Michael Spencer, Gregg Stull, Grant Woodwell.

Agenda items:

* Updates from the Dean Keith Mellinger on three buildings.
* Information on and discussion of the reorganization plan.

Item I: buildings

1. George Washington Hall – While the first floor and Dodd auditorium are fine, the second and third floors are currently empty and marked by closed signs. The goal is to try to fix the water and related damage or to shut down the building and renovate it (which would cost in the millions). HR offices are scattered, with some people working remotely. All will be moved to South Hall (along with Debra Schleef and her staff).

In a “kind of permanent” step, Dean Mellinger is moving to duPont near Klein Theatre. He (and Meredith O’Connell) will be there until the new theater opens and the duPont/Melchers/Pollard complex is shut down for renovations.

1. When Monroe was renovated twelve years ago, steel reinforcements were added, so the building is secure, and no asbestos remains. Wood rafters were sprayed with foam insulation. Water has been seeping in for years; it has hardened the insulation and needs to be chipped off. Of the 40 percent checked, a third shows significant damage. “Roof reconstruction” is required, as is likely a crane. As a result, no people are allowed in the building. It will take two-three weeks to complete an inspection. After that, a plan and timeline will be created. The president is “dead set” that Monroe will be open in the fall; it is his number one priority.

Faculty and classes have moved to other buildings (thanks to the efforts of various “all-nighters”):

Geography (except Caitie Finlayson who is in Farmer) – Jepson

Political Science/IA and Sociology/Anthropology – “Mansion” and Combs

History/American Studies -- Woodard

1. The end stairwells of Simpson Library have pulled away from the building, perhaps caused by the earthquake. The stairwells were inspected, and it has been recommended that steel beams be put through the cinder blocks to the building. No crane will be required. A faculty concern was the effect of the limited egress from the upper floors in case of an emergency. Dean Mellinger indicated that he did not know, but added that one side was apparently worse than the other.

Item II: Reorganization

Dean Mellinger explained that between now and June not much will be different. Faculty should continue in-place processes. Step 1 in the fall will require “getting leadership in place,” a task for this semester. That involves the dean working on the school director positions and the creation of search committees (perhaps three faculty from the relevant departments/school and someone from another area). He encouraged anyone interested in serving to let him know. The director job will be similar to Betsy Lewis’s and Grant Woodwell’s current positions: on a teaching faculty contract but with more responsibilities and less teaching. Betsy’s and Grant’s positions are being eliminated, but the hope is that they will help with the transition, another step that is still to be decided.

After the director searches, all chair positions will be decided, with some current chairs likely staying on and others likely leaving. Dean Mellinger will provide more detailed descriptions of the chairs’ job.

In terms of processes, Dean Mellinger focused on three:

Budgets: There will be some decentralization, with some probably handled at the school director level, e.g., adjunct usage and equipment. Such issues require time to study. Change cannot happen before fall 2024, so budget hierarchy will be the same for a while, including centralized budgets like undergraduate research funds. All in all, the budget shifts will be “a long process.”

Personnel: with the new organization, faculty will report to chairs, chairs will report to their school director, and school directors will report to the dean. The exception will be ARTS as there is too much for one person to do and that work is too complicated. ARTS will have “program directors.”

Governance: There is “a lot to sort out” and most of that is up to the faculty. According to Dean Mellinger, this is an opportunity for simplification and streamlining, e.g., creating one promotion and tenure committee and adjusting structure/membership of the UFC. Changes “will take a long time”; therefore, they will not make the April deadline for changes in the faculty handbook. The process will continue into the fall.

For now--while annual evaluations and promotions (for example) will need work--the criteria will not change. The process for 2024-2025 will probably have to be this year’s because anything else would be unfair to faculty. That said, something needs to be done by December or so for 2025-2026, e.g., related to composition of appeal committees.

Dean Mellinger wishes to meet with each school’s faculty and has already arranged dates for some of the meetings. He will email information to chairs to forward to their departments. Important now is brainstorming and completion of short-term tasks to prepare for the fall.

Discussion:

Miriam Liss emphasized the need to share job descriptions before calling for interest in the chairs’ position. In response, Dean Mellinger indicated what he *thought* the position will be, e.g., half-time teaching for chairs and a one-course per semester load for school directors. The former will have a nine-month contract plus supplementary work in the summer (although more concrete than now); chairs will do a little less than today, as some tasks will elevate to the School Director, and will hopefully have “more targeted support.” The directors will oversee academic space, be responsible that chairs’ summer tasks are done, and centralize credit card approval. Recruitment, retention, and promotional strategies will be at the school director level. A goal is to have departments of similar size and with the same stipend (expected to be comparable to today’s). In citing a desire for departments of relative uniform size as motivation for the department mergers, Dean Mellinger noted that there is “a window” to make changes, including shifting programs. In doing so, he added that school names should be under consideration: is “School of Humanities,” for example, the best name? As the proposal to SCHEV has to be submitted in a month or two, there is time for such questions to be addressed.

In terms of academic support staff, the dean expressed a desire to “balance out” needs. That is something that will be done over the next year as it is necessary to see where more help is needed. The location of departments might not be changed because of effect on staff. “Inequities need to be ironed out.” In addition, it will likely take two-three years before money is saved. Dean Mellinger said that he would be inviting staff to a meeting on Monday, Feb 12, to fill them in. He emphasized that they “should not be worried about jobs.” He urged chairs to “put your people at ease.” While “jobs might shift a bit,” it will take time to determine needs.

Rosalyn Cooperman asked about chairs for combined departments. Dean Mellinger clarified that UMW already has one chair for multiple programs, citing Classics, Philosophy, and Religion, as well as Chemistry/Physics and Sociology/Anthropology. Some changes in chairs’ duties were coming, e.g., directors probably signing off on use of Foundation funds. He cited departments with strong alumni support, a situation which he said needed to be respected and supported.

Dean Mellinger then moved back to reorganization process, explaining that SCHEV had provided a bit of “lukewarm feedback.” It will be up to the president and provost to take the next steps. The provost was meeting with governance faculty; the president was going to the Board of Visitors with plans.

Marcel Rotter asked why the reorganization. Dean Mellinger noted that the provost addressed that topic in the fall, with everyone guided by “the best interests” of UMW. The president, cabinet, and BOV were all excited about it. He added that a key point was that there no plans for layoffs of people or elimination of programs.

Melina Patterson expressed concern that a new department was being added to others, i.e., Sociology/Anthropology added to Geography. Dean Mellinger responded that SOAN made that suggestion to the provost.

Jodie Hayob voiced concerns about science departments. Why did the reorganization create two departments? Why not three? Dean Mellinger referred to the importance of communications and streamlining. Plus, he clarified that chairs can (as now) delegate tasks to other people in their department.

In response to Miriam Liss’s question about allowing more department autonomy, Dean Mellinger emphasized “a cultural shift,” acknowledging that there will be “pains” but “we can make it work.” In response to a related question about faculty not being listened to, he noted that those making the final decisions listened but disagreed.

He also emphasized that Computer Science is not “joining Business.” The issue for the new organization is what can CPSC and Math and BUAD accomplish “work[ing] together.”

Returning to the need to identify directors and chairs by the end of the spring 2024 semester, Dean Mellinger clarified that the process for selecting directors would involve creating a job description, creating search committees, and conducting internal searches. Then the process would continue with the selection of chairs.

Related to tasks and deadlines, Dean Mellinger pointed out that the UFC will need to charge committees on what needs to be done, with the hope that handbook changes will be made by December. Full implementation of the new structure (e.g., budget) would come in fall 2025. He explained that budget is driven by Banner and the academic structure. Banner will need to be rebuilt which will then rebuild the budget structure.

Dean Mellinger expressed the desire to receive faculty ideas.

Continuing with the process, he explained that the school director position requires SCHEV approval as part of “a package.” The proposal should get to SCHEV by commencement; SCHEV has indicated that it will act within ninety days. The hope is to have that approval by August and the new contracts.

Concerns about this new position led to final suggestions. After Dean Mellinger explained that directors will be evaluated annually, worries were shared about directors not knowing the discipline of the faculty members in their schools. Suggestions included rotating the position and having a five-year contract, as well as to have chairs and faculty complete evaluations of their director.