

December 11, 2009

To: Faculty
From: Committee of Division Chairs
Re: Academic Program Planning Process

This communication aims to clarify the status of the academic program planning process currently under way, and to indicate how the Committee of Division Chairs (CDC) expects to complete that process next semester.

On October 2, 2009, the CDC issued to all department chairs and interdisciplinary program directors a request to submit by November 20 statements of their most “vital curricular needs,” taking into account the relationship of each department and program to other elements of the college’s academic program as well as its larger mission.

During the second semester of the present academic year, the CDC intends to move as expeditiously as possible in preparing a draft planning document; in soliciting faculty comment about that draft; and in composing a final version. It is our expectation that this document, once completed, will provide guidance to the CDC in the coming years, especially as it formulates future budgetary and other recommendations. The more pressing imperative to complete the document stems from the need to provide guidance to the CDC as it prepares whatever recommendations are to be presented to the Board of Trustees in May regarding the most critical staffing needs of the academic program.

With that in mind, and recognizing that this schedule may require alteration as we proceed, the CDC tentatively intends to adhere to the following calendar during the coming semester:

Late January-early February: The CDC will meet with each of the academic divisions, first, in order to revisit the general principles and goals outlined in “Building on Excellence;” and, second, in order to engage in a general discussion of the form and content of the new planning document.

February: The CDC will prepare a draft of this planning document on the basis of the documents submitted in November as well as the discussions conducted with each of the academic divisions.

Late February-early March: The CDC will make its draft available to the faculty and conduct a late afternoon session devoted to soliciting comments about its content.

March: On the basis of faculty response, the CDC will revise and complete the planning document.

In closing, the CDC wishes to emphasize what it believes can and cannot be expected of a planning process of this sort. We recognize that when resources are finite, there will invariably be some measure of tension among the basic elements of the academic program, including “Encounters,” existing major programs, interdisciplinary programs, etc. We also recognize that

it would be foolish to believe that we can or even should seek perfect consensus on the most pressing priorities of the academic program. That said, vigorous debate about these priorities, aimed at achieving whatever consensus we can secure, is key to determining what sort of college Whitman will become in the twenty-first century.