

**Provost's Response to
Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee Recommendations**

**University of Kentucky
February 22, 2009**

On November 14, 2008 I received a report from the Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee which I had appointed in fall 2008. Their task was to review existing portfolios under the purview of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and recommend any changes which might help sharpen the focus on undergraduate student success in light of UK's Top 20 goals and aspirations. The Executive Summary of that committee's report is reproduced below:

Executive Summary of the Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee (UEPC) Report

The Undergraduate Education Portfolio Committee recommends creating an undergraduate college led by an academic dean. The newly-formed undergraduate college (the University College) and dean (Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies) will be responsible for:

- Facilitating campus-wide discussion and action to enhance undergraduate education;
- Coordinating and enhancing the academic success of all undergraduates (as defined through retention and graduation rates), meeting the particular needs of exploratory students (a term we prefer to the rather pejorative "undeclared students"), and granting inter-disciplinary baccalaureate degrees;
- Creating quality, out-of-class academic experiences for undergraduate students; and
- Enhancing instructional-development efforts.

The Committee strongly believes that the long-term success of the newly-formed college and dean depends on adequate funding and staffing and a central presence on campus.

Reaction of and Advice from Stakeholders

I consulted with the Council of Deans, the University Senate Council, leadership of the Division of Student Affairs, the Advisor Network, the leadership within the Division of Undergraduate Education, and others. It is fair to say that while there was support for a greater focus on student success and for some portfolio changes, there were a lot of reservations expressed concerning the primary recommendation of the formation of an "Undergraduate College" and the installation of another Dean. Reasons ranged all the way from budgetary concerns to semantics ("can there be a college without faculty?"), along with concerns about increasing centralization. As the UEPC Report documented, many of our benchmarks have already answered these questions and concerns in the affirmative. However, I accept the fact that UK's redoubled effort to enhance undergraduate student success is still young, and this

particular structural change does not have as much support now as the substance of specific initiatives and programs that affect student success. Besides, the UEPC specifically recommended that “A new college should only be established if and when adequate recurring resources are secured to underwrite its success.” Accordingly, I have decided not pursue the formation of an “Undergraduate College” at this time.

Provost’s Response/Proposed Actions

I will list below (in paraphrased form) recommendations contained in the UEPC Report and my response and proposed actions in light of advice received from all stakeholders.

Recommendation: Create a new position of Dean of the University College and Undergraduate Studies.

As mentioned above, I will table this particular structural recommendation for now. Instead, I will heed the committee’s concern about too many tangential responsibilities assigned to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (APUE). One suggestion from the committee was to the creation of an Associate Provost of Academic Services to assume a number of important functions that are not centrally related to the mission of Undergraduate Studies. While this, too, is difficult under current budgetary circumstances, I will suggest below an alternate, less pecuniary solution.

I take the UEPC’s recommendations concerning additional resources for UE, and a central, high-visibility location for the various units in the UE Division, seriously. In consultation with the Deans, I will do my best to continue to make progress on these goals. On the other hand, there are sufficient reservations about two of the Committee’s resource suggestions (embedding a development officer and an assessment officer in UE) that I will not act on them.

I also accept the Committee’s observation of the need to create and articulate a holistic vision for a collection of fairly autonomous and well-established student-centered offices (*e.g.*, Academic Enhancement, the Honors Program, and the Chellgren Center, among others). The new APUE will be given this as a priority task. Indeed, the items mentioned in the UEPC report as the primary tasks of the Dean of the Undergraduate College will become the primary tasks for the APUE; in fact, some of them already are:

(a) *Promoting academic success*; developing ways to promote faculty involvement in retention efforts, such as UK101, Academic Readiness, Summer Reading Programs, Academic Alert, House Calls, etc.; including all tutoring and support services.

(b) *Serving the needs of exploratory students*: be responsible for all undeclared undergraduate students (naming the cohort “exploratory students”); creation of a Transfer Student Advising and Resource Center; foster a strong partnership between the Exploratory Student Advising and Resource Center and the Stuckert Career Center;

(c) *Promoting quality out-of-class academic experiences (undergraduate research, experiential learning, etc.)*: This calls for improved coordination among multiple divisions of the university. Currently, I am conducting a review of the portfolio of the Vice President for Student

Affairs. Any changes in the portfolio, the selection of a new Vice President for student Affairs, and a new APUE will be made with this goal in mind.

Recommendation: Many current (e.g., Topical Major) and future interdisciplinary baccalaureate programs (e.g., Sustainability) should reside within the University College.

I believe this is the strongest reason for establishing an Undergraduate College. A program like the Topical Major, currently lodged in the College of Arts and Sciences, could be of great value to high ability students from across the campus to construct challenging individualized interdisciplinary programs of study. Presently, students from other Colleges would have to meet the Arts & Sciences degree requirements in order to take advantage of the program. It is clear the pressure for such programs will only increase. We will revisit this question in due course. If not an “Undergraduate College,” we still must find an appropriate home for inter-college interdisciplinary degrees. I will make sure this discussion continues.

Concomitant Administrative Changes

In the spirit of the UEPC Report, some other administrative changes and realignments are necessary. In order to lighten the managerial burden of the APUE, I would like to remove the responsibility for Teaching and Academic Support Center (TASC) out of the APUE portfolio. This is also appropriate from the perspective that TASC services go beyond undergraduate education. Also, oversight of the Women Writers’ Conference will be removed from this portfolio. With these changes I believe the APUE portfolio will consist of a coherent set of units and functions focused on exploratory students and their academic achievement, and specialized undergraduate academic programs.

For some time now the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and (on some issues) the University Senate Council have pointed out several major functions are not receiving the coordination they deserve at the Provost level: (1) oversight of academic course/program change processing through the system (including the CPE); (2) systematic utilization of academic program review results for academic improvement (now with the added element of student learning outcomes); (3) oversight of Evening/Weekend Program and Summer School (currently housed in Enrollment Management) and Distance Learning (currently in TASC). Our students and faculty would definitely benefit from closer academic oversight and coordination of these university-wide functions.

With the hiring of a new chief for Information Technology at the university (who reports jointly to me and the Executive VP for Finance and Administration), I would like to see a closer alignment of the academic IT support functions in TASC and university IT. This is yet another function which receives more Provost level attention (jointly with the Chief Information Officer).

Frankly, these items (and the oversight of some other smaller units) could easily become the full-time portfolio for another Associate Provost; indeed, at many other institutions, there would be such a position. In light of the current budgetary circumstances, and with the

indulgence of Jeannine Blackwell, a devoted servant of the University, I am proposing the assignment of this additional portfolio to her as she returns to her position as Dean of the Graduate School. Under my proposal, she will serve as Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Provost for Academic Administration.

With these changes in place, I would like to conduct a search (internal to UK) for a new Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. I will be looking for someone with a full professor rank, significant experience in university administration (at the level of a department chair or higher), and significant involvement in undergraduate education and familiarity with local and national undergraduate issues.

Recommendation: Enhance instructional-development efforts.

In addition to the UEPC, many faculty members have expressed the sense that instructional development resources for faculty are inadequate at UK. I believe the need is broader than that of undergraduate education, and will address it accordingly. More broadly, it is a faculty development issue. In response, I will appoint a faculty committee to consider the creation of a **Center for Instructional Development**, with a faculty director, encompassing and expanding on the faculty development piece of TASC. I would propose adding the administrative oversight of such a Center to the portfolio of the Associate Provost for Academic Administration (perhaps jointly with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education). This Center should collaborate closely with the Chellgren Center for Undergraduate Excellence on undergraduate instructional issues.

Please let me know, by March 1st, if you have any serious concerns regarding my planned actions. Thank you in advance.