Restructuring Central Administration

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In response to a significant reduction in state appropriations, the College of Engineering has restructured its central administrative offices and focused resources on the core missions of education, research, and extension. The college took a multi-year planning approach in order to create a business environment that will foster collaboration and ensure the college’s financial sustainability in the new financial norm. Development of the restructuring plan began in January 2010. It has three major components:

**Staffing** has been reduced in the college’s central administration. A total of 22 staff positions were eliminated or remain scheduled for elimination, and 6 positions that became vacant last year were left unfilled. During FY11, several new positions will be created to support growing the college’s research and educational programs.

**Policies** for differential tuition and technology funds have been changed to reduce administrative overhead and empower academic departments to make decisions and allocate resources locally for the benefit of student learning. The policy changes also reduce costs to students by eliminating fees in 22 courses and by creating a new exemption for differential tuition.

**Collaboration** has been enhanced by articulating responsibilities, reporting structures, and points of contact, and by co-locating staff who have related job functions. While the college’s organization chart indicates reporting lines, the restructured administration emphasizes cross-functional teams that span the college, academic departments, and other Iowa State units. The college will be known on campus as a model for efficiency and collaboration.

The eight academic departments have not been reorganized—aerospace; agricultural and biosystems; chemical and biological; civil, construction and environmental; mechanical; materials science; electrical and computer; and industrial and manufacturing systems. No academic departments were merged, and no major degree programs were eliminated. Budgets of the eight academic departments have been protected in alignment with the college’s highest priority: the quality of the student learning experience.
The college’s community worked together to confront the economic challenge and develop a shared vision for moving forward. Ideas, advice, feedback, and recommendations were solicited and received through the Economic Scenario Planning Task Force; the academic department chairs; the Engineering Caucus of the Faculty Senate; the sixty faculty, staff, and students who participated in nine college-wide task forces; the Dean’s Budget and Planning Advisory Council; student town hall meetings; industrial advisory councils; and feedback from other constituency groups.

**Underlying design principles**

- Focus resources on areas where the college can be truly outstanding.
- Improve efficiency and remove organizational silos across the entire enterprise for cost savings and a leaner, flatter, and more collaborative central administration.
- Position the college’s administration as a service provider to its customers, internal and external, and particularly the academic departments.
- Drive the college’s business model with revenue from non-state sources, including research growth and new products and markets for enrollment.
- Enhance and value local control of the academic departments and their entrepreneurialism to facilitate the work of faculty and the learning of students.

**Synopsis of key changes**

*Information Technology* is a partnership where staff members share services within and outside the college for heightened collaboration with the academic departments and central Information Technology Services. This approach reflects the reality that some aspects of IT are best handled at the department level, some at the college level, and others centrally at the university level. The focus of projects in bringing IT value to customers has been sharpened and accelerated. Initiatives like the Faculty and Staff Portfolio System have been discontinued, and responsibilities such as maintaining Exchange servers are shared with ITS.

*Online Education* focuses more than ever on strategic relationships with key corporate partners in order to grow enrollment on- and off-campus. Services will be delivered more efficiently and economically, and with a growing collaboration with academic departments in such areas as online master’s degrees and hybrid instruction.

*Career Services* interacts more closely with the dean’s office in placing students for internships, cooperative learning experiences, and full-time employment, as well as in managing and growing relationships with alumni and corporations. The college’s engagement with, and services to, industry are elevated, as are industrial interactions across the entire college.

*International Engagement* and *Community-Based Recruiting and Transition* are pursued in collaboration with the eight academic departments and others on campus. These changes
provide improved outreach and transparency to students, and ensure that the programs best align with the individual needs and abilities of departments, students, and faculty. Professors-in-charge champion international learning and diversity programs for recruiting, transition, and academic success to graduation.

The office of the Associate Dean for Research focuses on growing the engineering college’s research enterprise, particularly extramural agency and corporate sponsorship. The office directs the new Venture Fund for Interdisciplinary Research Centers of Excellence; promotes industrially sponsored research projects utilizing a new intellectual property structure; and facilitates new grant opportunities for faculty. These efforts are closely interrelated with graduate education, but do not duplicate the responsibility of academic departments for student recruitment. Visits to campus by prospective students are coordinated directly by departmental directors of graduate education rather than centrally by the college, thus eliminating one administrative layer.

Student Services is designed to support students along the value chain that begins with elementary education outreach to build the recruiting pipeline; promotes age-appropriate engineering experiences throughout secondary education; supports enrolled students through advising, classification, scholarships, international study, and experiential education services; and facilitates the transition of students to career employment or graduate study. This model seamlessly draws together recruitment, student services, and graduate studies for long-term relationships that include sustained alumni and corporate relationships.

College Relations focuses exclusively on work for the engineering college and it develops strategic messaging for key constituency groups while significantly increasing the use of and advocacy for electronic and social media.

**Streamlined procedures and policies**

*Differential tuition allocation.* The block budgets allocated to the academic departments now include a component from differential tuition that is based on the enrollments of students who pay it, replacing the previous process by which departments prepared and submitted proposals to the college for central review. The new approach is simple and transparent, and an incentive is provided for the academic departments to maintain robust undergraduate and graduate enrollments, and to deliver high-quality educational programs. This approach further recognizes that the academic departments are best suited to allocate resources for the benefit of student learning, and reduces administrative overhead.

*Differential tuition exemption.* Students benefit from a new four-semester exemption for undergraduate students entering Iowa State directly from high school and a two-semester exemption for transfer students. This policy is more responsive to the financial needs of students, particularly those who entered Iowa State with significant advance credit.
**Technology fee allocation.** After a portion of the engineering technology fee is allocated for central computing that benefits the entire college, the funds are distributed to the academic departments based upon enrollment and the amount of teaching that the department conducts. This approach supersedes the previous model in which departments prepared and submitted proposals for central review, thus reducing administrative overhead and improving the ability of departments to make decisions and allocate resources locally for the benefit of student learning.

**Course fees.** The previous structure for special course fees pre-dates the existence of differential tuition. Course fees have been eliminated in the engineering college for 22 courses, and other fees will not be increased in FY11. The fee elimination applies to all courses with fees of $25 or less per semester. The courses having reduced fees are in the civil, construction, industrial, and mechanical engineering programs. This action eliminates the need to assess and process fees below a nominal amount, thus further reducing administrative workload.

**Academic department support**

In FY11, the budgets of engineering’s academic departments are at an all-time high, $3.8 million larger than in FY10. These budget allocations are contrasted with the cuts to academic departments that occurred in July 2009, when they absorbed 90% of the college’s budget reduction. Now, as a result of the restructuring and increased enrollment projections, the departments seek to hire 13 new tenured or tenure-eligible faculty this year in order to reduce the student-faculty ratio; promote teaching excellence; enhance research in energy systems, biosciences and engineering, information and decision sciences, sustainability and green technology, and infrastructure; increase faculty diversity; support research centers and institutes; and advance the college’s interdisciplinary teaching and research missions.