

October 23, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

As a first step in responding to the Strategic Resource Allocation task force recommendations, I want to address the University's academic organizational structure. The reports, along with subsequent faculty discussions, have raised questions about the advisability of the three-college structure. The two major concerns are the apparent high cost of the smaller colleges, especially on a per capita basis, and the governance challenges associated with the current structure.

In assessing the continuing viability of this organizational structure, it is critical that we continue to think strategically about the University's future. Undergraduate enrollment in business and education programs remains strong, and data suggest that we have considerable opportunity to build on this foundation. It is true that since the start of the economic recession in 2008 we have lost significant enrollments in our graduate programs; however, it is also true that our graduate programs in business and education remain essential to the strategic growth of the University. We are confident that enrollments in these programs will revive as the economy improves and that graduate offerings, especially in our business and education programs, will continue to be an important contributor to our total enrollment (and revenue) outlook. We need to do everything possible to rebuild and strengthen these enrollments, as well as to grow our College of Arts and Sciences graduate programs and enrollments. Not doing so will continue to exert undue pressure on our overall undergraduate enrollment to meet our budgetary needs.

In addition, business and education are programs that must nurture distinctive relationships with their external constituencies—both the business community and the P-12 education community. Doing so is altogether vital to the success of these programs and to achieving our mission as a public university. Experienced deans play a critical role in cultivating these external relationships, from building networks that support appropriate field experiences to identifying and working with community leaders, friends and alumni whose “talent and treasure” can enhance the student experience and ultimately raise the profile and visibility of UMW. In this respect, alumni form a critically important constituency in these colleges, since success in these fields is often built on the networks formed in and around their professional degree programs. Of course alumni are often eager to lend their support to the disciplines they studied, whatever the discipline, but as professional fields, business and education typically have more to gain from ensuring that these relationships are appropriately nurtured. This is a significant part of each dean's responsibility.

Accrediting bodies constitute another important external constituency for these colleges. Achieving and maintaining accreditation is unusually complex and demanding in these disciplines. In education, this is a mandate (and in fact, one of the reasons we combined the programs at Stafford and Fredericksburg to form the College of Education was that the Department of Education indicated it would no longer allow us to seek two separate accreditations). As for business, UMW's is one of only two business programs among the 15 four-year Virginia state colleges or universities without full AACSB accreditation (the other is at U-VA at Wise). This puts us at a significant disadvantage, both in competing to recruit and retain the best faculty and in competing for highly qualified students. I firmly believe that

pursuit of this accreditation already has improved the quality of instruction in our business classrooms and the qualifications of our graduates. Ultimately, the most compelling reason to support the current three-college structure is that it enables us to continue to achieve quality and increase visibility and distinction in these strategically important programs.

It should be noted that the University's investment in colleges of education and business was largely a reallocation from the former College of Graduate and Professional Studies. Some of the investment was also achieved through other internal reallocation strategies. For example, the increase in faculty salaries in the College of Business has been supported in part by a decrease in the number of allocated faculty lines in that college. Recently shared analyses of staffing in the two smaller colleges also demonstrate that these colleges—the College of Business especially—have done a reasonably good job of actually reducing their administrative staffing since the colleges were first established.

Moreover, were we to dissolve the colleges of business and education, we would either have to maintain people in what would be more or less their current functional roles, or we would have to stop doing some of the things we are presently doing. There might be some savings, but these would likely be very limited, and we might well put the quality of these programs at risk.

It should be noted, too, that operating budgets in the smaller colleges are not significantly larger, on a per capita basis, than those in the College of Arts and Sciences. There currently is some difference in funding available for faculty development and research support, but I am asking the Provost to address that discrepancy. However, when all available operating budgets at the department and program level are accounted for, neither faculty nor students in business and education have any more available resources than those in the Arts and Sciences.

I want to underscore that the Provost and I have reviewed other models over the past several weeks—some that would move some departments from CAS to COB and COE and others that would either reframe the three colleges or look to expand the College of Arts and Sciences (in one example we reviewed, turning CAS into three separate colleges). This last model is attractive but it would also add further administrative expense at a time of already tight budgets. This may be an idea to explore further in the future. As for simply moving some departments from CAS to COE and COB, while this would spread out administrative costs across more faculty and students, it would not ultimately change much, including the total expense of operating three colleges. Furthermore, it would not advance our overall strategic goals.

While reaffirming the three-college organizational structure, I also want to encourage faculty to come together to resolve the elusive governance issue. When one UFC member recently looked to me and the Provost to possibly cut this Gordian knot, another quickly insisted that this is a faculty issue that has to be resolved by faculty. Both the Provost and I agree with this view. At the same time, we would encourage faculty in all three colleges to recognize the spirit of compromise in which the current 18-member UFC proposal has been offered. One of the great strengths of our faculty at UMW, across all three colleges, is its wide diversity of thought and opinion. Yet I believe that all ultimately wish to support the best interests of the University as a whole. The fact that all four CAS at-large members of the UFC supported the 18-member

compromise rather than the 25-member proposal seems an acknowledgement of the concerns articulated by their colleagues in COE and COB. The Provost and I both join in encouraging members of all three colleges to accept the compromise 18-person proposal that has been endorsed by the UFC, so that we can all move past this issue and focus together on critical issues of strategic importance to the future of the University.

Now that the forums have been completed, I will continue to review the specific recommendations in the two task force reports, as well as the responses to those recommendations from members of the university community, and expect to communicate with you again within the next two weeks.

Sincerely,

Richard V. Hurley
President