

## Building Community Committee Notes for December 18, 2007

Committee members present: Adams, Davis, Cordova, Johnson, Li, Parson  
Others: Manuela Huso, Marty Roberts, Angelo Gomez, Jennifer Almquist, Jim Males

Jim Males, Department Head in Animal Science and Angelo Gomez and Jennifer Almquist from Affirmative Action visited with the BCC to discuss a process they went through to improve communication in the Animal Science Department. This meeting was in response to the work of an ad hoc College ("Communications and Leadership") committee that has been addressing issues impairing communication and personal well-being in the College and willingness of College faculty, staff and students to participate in decision making processes. Below is a summary of this meeting that was prepared for the ad hoc committee by Manuela Huso and Marty Roberts, the committee co-chairs.

*The College of Forestry is entering into a decisive phase during which the structure of the college for the next decade or two will be determined. No matter what form the college takes on administratively after the reorganization, the change will leave us with different sets of people with whom we will interact on a daily basis and different pathways of communication and governance. While some people thrive on change, for others, change can be difficult and destabilizing. During the transition period, small oversights can lead to unfounded accusations, inadvertent omissions can lead to unnecessary resentment and ill-chosen words can lead to animosity. The need for open, respectful communication is particularly critical during this time of transition.*

*On the other hand, the reorganization of the college also provides an opportunity to examine what our current modes of communication are, how they are colored by our past interactions, by our relative positions of power in the dialogue and perhaps by our unintentional biases. The reorganization provides us with an opportunity to not only restructure administratively but to restructure our professional relations as well so that we can emerge from the transition with a stronger sense of community.*

*The Building community committee met today with 2 representatives of the OSU Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity as well as the head of the Animal Sciences Department, Jim Males. The AA develops programs tailored to the needs of administrative units on campus. The AA has worked closely with the ASDept to develop two workshops to address issues the dept was facing. As Jim Males put it, a faculty comprised of aging white males, from rural backgrounds with little exposure to minorities, who traditionally viewed animals as food commodities and who traditionally taught classes in optimizing food production to young white males from rural backgrounds, found itself faced with a rapidly changing student body, comprised of 80% women, often from urban rather than rural backgrounds, with interests in companion animals rather than commodity animals. The department was experiencing the tensions arising from the "birkenstocks" vs the "belt buckles" and even had vegetarian students, now! This changing demographic led to increased sensitivity to issues the 'elderly white males' were not sensitive to. Jim said "We don't think of ourselves as racist, but once it was explained to us, we saw that we were." The dept head and Assoc Dean of Ag approached AA for help in dealing with these issues. They developed two workshops that were held in association with faculty meetings to address issues of bias and how differences in backgrounds and perceptions can lead to differences in expectations that can influence the climate and direction of the department. From Jim's perspective, they have resulted in on-going discussions that have done much to ease the tensions and improve the climate in the department.*

*The issues we face in the college and those faced in AS are, as Tom put it, "eerily similar." But they are not identical. We would like to use their experience to help us develop a list of issues and pathways for dealing with those issues in the college. Perhaps a small set of cases can serve as a catalyst for formal*

*discussions held in the college. The AA can facilitate workshops that will provide us with communications and leadership tools to help us make the transition as smoothly as possible and to maintain open communication as the new administrative structure is implemented. What we need to do is develop a finite set of issues that we would like the AA to help us address, figure out what approach we might take to addressing the issues and a set of concrete goals for these approaches. \*That\* is what we hope to accomplish at the next meeting of the Communications and Leadership Committee.*

Angelo Gomez and Jennifer Almquist provided a follow-up to our December 18 meeting in the following. The document, "On Change," is provided as an attachment (separate file) to these summary notes.

*From: Gomez, Angelo  
Sent: Friday, December 21, 2007 4:49 PM  
To: Huso, Manuela; Roberts, Marty; Adams, Tom  
Cc: Almquist, Jennifer; Gomez, Angelo  
Subject: Follow-up*

*Attachments: On Change.pdf*

*Hello Manuela, Marty and Tom,*

*Jennifer and I appreciated the opportunity to meet with the BCC. As follow-up to the conversation, we think that the attached document entitled "On Change" is directly relevant and succinctly states a lot of what we tried to convey in the meeting. Although its focus is on institution-wide change, the principles certainly are applicable to change at the college level.*

*Additionally, recognizing the enormity and amorphous nature of the challenge before you, we thought the following synthesis and recommendations from the discussion might be helpful. Please take the following simply as suggestions that might serve as a beginning point for dialogue and provide some direction. Here goes:*

*1 - We suggest that the BCC develop a compelling case for change. Some things we heard in the discussion that might serve as part of a case for change are:*

*a - Changing values and views within society and the discipline as to the relationship between humans and forests, i.e., the emerging emphasis on the spiritual, cultural and aesthetic value of forests*

*b - Tensions within the discipline and the college between those with differing values with respect to forests*

*c - Tensions among departments within the college particularly regarding the proposed realignment*

*c - Declining financial resources*

*d - Emerging global issues relevant to the discipline (e.g. global warming)*

*e - Differences in how the college is experienced related to identity status such as gender*

*2 - We suggest that you create opportunities for real dialogue on both the need for change and any change agenda, engaging leadership and faculty*

*3 – We suggest that you craft for discussion purposes an agenda for change that addresses comprehensively the factors in number 1 above*

*a - Part of the proposed agenda would be efforts to develop an inclusive vision for the college and a college culture that is inviting, welcoming and that works for people from a wide range of identity backgrounds*

*Again, we can assist with the design and facilitation of the conversations that need to take place.*

*Happy Holidays!*

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The ad hoc committee met on January 2 to address more specifically what the “issues” might be and craft an approach for addressing them in the College. It was decided that what is needed initially is to inform the College leadership on the communication issues and get their help in designing a process that might be utilized across the college. The group discussed promoting a half-day “retreat” with the FEC in late February to have this discussion. The following is a summary of the January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting prepared by Marty.

*From: Roberts, Marty  
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2008 7:56 AM  
To: Adams, Tom; Bond, Barbara; Ganio, Lisa; Huso, Manuela  
Cc: Roberts, Marty  
Subject: Minutes from January 2nd Issues meeting*

*Forum Planning meeting, January 2, 2008.  
Present: Tom Adams, Barbara Bond, Lisa Ganio, Manuela Huso, Marty Roberts*

*What can we do to avoid polarizing camps? Many were mentioned and these are a few examples:*

*green/brown  
admin/staff  
faculty/staff  
faculty/student  
male/female*

*We agree that we need to hold respectful dialogues but we also must define what 'respect' means*

*As work becomes more international, cultural definitions of respect can be very confusing*

*Rationale for dialogue has to be somewhat self-generated by the leadership of our college*

*FEC must understand the issues and how ingrained they are and then must spread the gospel of change*

*Information is power - dissemination can be anywhere from hierarchical to transparent*

*Hierarchical dissemination often serves to continue the disenfranchisement of the powerless*

*Intentionally open or transparent information methods can be used to empower the minority*

*Manuela and I will get the view of Angelo and Jennifer to help with the mechanics of the workshop and also invite them to attend in some capacity (moderators, mediators?)*

*Our small group along with a few others we can think of to include must decide:*

*What are the issues and where do we want to be*

*How to get people to the 'aha' moment by using examples such as failures of the past and why they were failures*

*Work to place no blame but help raise awareness of communication problems (failure through ignorance and not malice for the most part)*

*The goal of the workshop is to get to the point where the FEC along with selected others can come up with a plan to include the entire college in workshops or training sessions to raise awareness of the issues outlined (once we figure them out).*

*Please let me know if I've misrepresented or omitted important points. Marty*

*After consultation with Manuela, I will be setting up a meeting including Manuela, myself, Lisa Ganio, Jim Kiser, and Melanie Stidham to work out cases and the issues they represent. Steve Hobbs talked to me yesterday and is very supportive of our efforts but he and Hal would like to see an agenda. I think we can devise an effective one with the help of the Affirmative Action people.*