

Dean Hal Salwasser's Prelude to College Open Forum, May 4, 2006

After realizing that my actions in response to the Science article by Dan Donato and others in early January were having the opposite effect of what I intended, I have tried to move our College forward in positive ways: to restore a more collegial, respectful environment for our faculty, staff and students. I have been accessible, open, listened intently and responded based on what I heard and on advice and counsel from many on how to proceed. I have tried to respect all views but have become impatient with actions that appear to be more personal attacks than collegial, scientific critique.

I have also accepted responsibility and tried to atone for the negative impacts of private email communications I had with people during the weeks following release of the Science article. We made our first steps on a journey of restoration in late January and we are not through yet. The Academic Freedom committee is now well into its open dialogue on problems and recommended actions. I am quite optimistic about where we will come out in June; we will be a better College for having endured this and learned from our actions, a bit scarred and battered and probably looking and acting differently but better.

Reason for calling this meeting 2 weeks ago:

- Heard from concerned grad students on Apr. 24, 2006 perception in the college that admin was doing nothing about "personal attacks" on Donato et al. co-authors, no acknowledgement of Donato et al. accomplishment, no action on complaint from student about treatment by some faculty

Actions:

- On Apr. 19, 2006, I gave Dan Donato and Joe Fontaine letters of commendation and congratulations for their article and professional behavior under intense scrutiny.
- I communicated expectations re academic duty to cof-all via email on Apr. 24-25, 2006 and called for this meeting
- On Apr. 17, 2006, I talked with Rep. Baird at the American Forest Resources Council annual conference and Rep. Walden a day later and explained that grad student actions and motivations were not the correct focus for their concerns over the Science article; I made a statement to this effect to the entire assembled attendees ~ 250 forest industry and government agency leaders
- I asked Dept. Head Tesch to meet again with concerned faculty; done several times now
- Dan Donato also met with Dr. Sessions and I see evidence of greatly improving relations, both Dan and John are to be commended for their courage to open the dialogue
- On Apr. 26, 2006, I read a statement at Oregon Society of American Foresters annual meeting asking professional foresters to suspend doubt and accord Donato et al. respect and a safe, welcome professional environment (statement appended)
- On May 1, 2006, I visited with Siskyou NF Supervisor Scott Conroy to discuss work environment for students this summer; opened possibility for students to

present seminars to NF personnel as way to get to know one another; Mr. Conroy welcomes visit with students early in field season

Support for work of Academic Freedom Committee

- Survey of perceptions and concerns is done and committee is preparing recommendations; I fully support the work of this group and we will address every concern as appropriate; decisions on recommended actions will be made in consultation with Provost, President and Committee by end of Spring term

College governance

- Last month I asked Paul Axtell, an expert on organizational development, to meet with FLT on May 19, 2006 to begin discussing options for much needed structural and/or procedural changes in College decision making and communications

Personal responsibility for actions

- I accept personal responsibility for private actions and communications that were made public following a Senate work session, including the stupid and inappropriate ones that caused harm to the college and to some individuals; examine my actions and words since January 26 for evidence of regret and changes in actions and communications
- In future interactions with political or legislative processes I will focus on informing rather than advocating and I will make it clear that I represent myself and do not speak for the entire College, except when I am advocating for our budget or our students

College leadership

- I am committed to guide the process underway, keep Provost and President fully informed, communicate as needed with students and College community, take the heat for harm done, make the hard decisions – whatever those might be – for the short and long-term health of the College by mid-June 2006, keep moving forward, rebuild damaged relationships where possible

What happens after June 2006?

- Depends on outcomes from the work now underway
- You will see changes but we can't tell what those might be at present
- Call for independent, third-party review of how the College is doing in January 2007

I want to do everything I can to move us in a positive direction; like all of you, I want what is best for the College and all of its stakeholders. This College has a bright future and we will come out of this experience in better shape than we were when we stumbled our way into controversy.

Statement made by Hal Salwasser, Dean, College of Forestry, Oregon State University at the Oregon Society of American Foresters Annual Meeting, April 25, 2006

Many, perhaps all of you have watched our College struggle with controversy about academic rigor, freedom, responsibility and duty these past few months. The crisis was sparked by the reactions of senior faculty, federal agency scientists, and me to a short article in *Science* on effects of post-fire logging on seedling survival and fire hazard. Some of this struggle has regrettably included my actions that made matters worse, contrary to my intent. For that I am deeply sorry for the impacts they have had on our faculty, students and the College's reputation.

As many of you know, *Science* is the premier scientific journal in the United States. It is a major accomplishment for a young scientist like Dan Donato (and his colleagues) to publish in it and we should congratulate them on that event.

While vigorous critique and debate is essential to the process of science some of the actions moved past professional, collegial debate to questions and allegations about the integrity and motivations of the *Science* article's authors. I have heard them from people inside and outside our College. I think these questions and allegations are inappropriate and without hard evidence they are unwarranted and unprofessional. I have seen or heard of no such evidence warranting the assertions.

I am convinced from personal conversations with the *Science* article authors they are people of high integrity and are motivated by the search for knowledge rather than a particular policy agenda. I ask that all in our Society suspend doubt and accord the authors of the *Science* article an opportunity to do their work and respond to critics in a safe, supportive, and rigorous professional environment.

We have much to learn about the science of post-fire logging and forest recovery. Despite the controversy our work may cause, I want the College of Forestry to play a major role in increasing our knowledge about this subject. Over the next few years, you will hear more from our faculty, staff and students on this subject. I hope the reception of that work shows how much we have all learned from recent experiences.