January 8, 2010

Humanities Faculty, Staff and Students

Re: Advisory Task Force on Reconstitution - Report

Dear Humanities Division Faculty, Staff and Students,

I am pleased to communicate the findings of the Advisory Task Force on Reconstitution, whose final report can be read and or downloaded at http://humanities.ucsc.edu/ATFR. I first want to congratulate the members of the task force who have so diligently and creatively taken up the mission of rethinking what the Humanities Division should be like in a climate of diminished resources while also addressing workload inequities in the division and finding inventive solutions for long-held divisional aspirations.

The next phase of our process requires taking these ideas, suggestions and options into a wider arena of consultation and debate. The urgency of these discussions is hastened by the ongoing budget crisis of the university but the reconstitution effort is not simply to be understood as a passive response to financial uncertainty. The current crisis is far too great for further trimming or for shrinking with or without dignity. Rather the challenge involved is how to think and organize ourselves differently in a rapidly changed world, how to reclaim the relevance of humanistic investigation in a society that all too often thinks only of the bottom line, and to reposition the division for maximum success down the line.

To proceed with concretizing and consolidating a vision for the humanities future, I have asked the department chairs to serve as the primary agents for collecting and synthesizing your responses to the document. I have proposed a model whereby the undergraduate advisor in each department would solicit input from the department’s undergraduate majors while the graduate advisor would consult with the department’s graduate students and the department manager would seek the advice of departmental staff but I leave it up to chairs to make the appropriate assignments. The chair should collect the responses of faculty in the department and consolidate the input of undergraduates, graduate students and staff into a report due to me by February 15.
I also invite faculty to write their concerns and suggestions independently, especially as related to issues that reach beyond departmental or even divisional bounds. A separate faculty committee to be determined will collect and interpret these submissions.

I also invite staff to write their concerns independently. Anne Callahan, the division’s academic human resources manager, has agreed to receive and coordinate these responses.

By copy of this letter to Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, David Kliger, I invite him to distribute this report to any and all relevant principal officers, whose responses should reach me likewise by February 15.

By further copy of this letter to Academic Senate Chair, Lori Kletzer, I invite her to distribute this report to any and all relevant senate committees for consultation and response. I will gladly visit and discuss the report with any interested senate committees, but I in turn ask for their formal response no later than March 1.

In consultation with the Council of Chairs during the month of March, I will begin the task of consolidating this wide net of responses into a revised document that will serve also as an action plan to guide my decisions regarding the direction of the division through and beyond the cuts. By April, I hope to achieve sufficient consensus on the way forward. I earnestly hope we can resolve or mitigate substantive objections.

If we fail in this endeavor, I fear we shall face a future of the most grievous kind. We will have no choice but to return all current open faculty FTE held in the division along with virtually all faculty FTE vacated by retirement or separation for the foreseeable future. This will be followed by the layoff of staff and lecturers. Tragically, these actions will occur without planning or forethought. And when the cuts have finally been made, the division will find itself having to grapple with the very same challenges and problems we now face. I hope you agree such a scenario is the least desirable option from among some very difficult choices. Your constructive involvement in the future iteration of the reconstitution process is essential to the survival and success of the division.

With thanks again to all those who have so far been involved in this reconstitution process and to all those whom I hope to see become involved as we move forward.

Yours,

Georges Van Den Abbeele
Dean, Humanities Division
cc.
Chancellor George Blumenthal
Campus Provost and Executive Chancellor David Kliger
Academic Senate Chair Lori Kletzer
Assistant Dean Dario Caloss
Academic Human Resources Manager Anne Callahan
Financial Resources Manager David Symonik
Academic Program Analyst Carrie Clark
Humanities Development Officer Liz Sandoval
Department Chairs and Managers
Labor Relations Manager Suzanne Purcell