

Key tasks are held in limbo for months for want of a decision.

- I have proposed the idea of running a three week high school program in summer for rising sophomores and juniors on “How to do research.” We would organize a variety of CMPS faculty to talk about interesting projects, lead students in modest exercises and generally promote our field. An important aspect of this would be to use the course as a way to vet students who seek individually mentored projects from our faculty during either their junior or start of senior year. In this way we increase local outreach, but focus on students who make best use of faculty time. Naturally we expect this will give us a strong connection with very good students when they make decisions on college. The Office of Extended Studies was very enthusiastic about this idea, and has awaited our decision to proceed with it, which has in turn has awaited your permission and resources to organize it.
- As you know I have championed our creation of a Computer Science Education degree, and last year (with my counterparts in EDUC) got a small grant from USM to build a case for it through a series of workshops and activities. The next step for CMPS is preparation of extensive outcomes documentation for NCATE accreditation, that would need to advance in lockstep with PCC materials. This is a large task which we have no capacity to perform. The effort has been blocked since last summer when I sought your permission to use funds from our grant to pay an overload for someone to handle this task. (The use of these funds may be off the table now. It would be a shame to have lost them for want of a decision.)
- I remain eager to promote research, internships and graduate school options for our students. Our pilot event (in Physics last spring) was a success in this regard, and since then I have sought to know what level of resources would be available for such promotions this year. Planning has been blocked for want of this accord. We have conducted only one event this semester, arranged to promote McNair scholars. At least the staff in AAP has budget and authority to hold events.
- Recognizing that the college’s present web site is inadequate for this purpose, you promised us last summer an on-line mechanism for accepting and managing student applications for scholarships, corporate scholars internships and similar. We agree that the cost (in printing, staff time and disruption to other activities) from the manual processes employed in yesteryear simply cannot be sustained in light of office reductions. Our advertising of scholarships remains in a holding pattern pending this service being in place. (Absence of such a service will likely not be a huge issue until January as we get closer to most application deadlines.)

Outreach or quality improvement activities remain blocked.

- The college should play an active role in P-20 missions, BRAC activities and science advocacy in the state. Policy decisions on science should not be made without the flagship's involvement. Lacking staff, we sadly watch opportunities go by, big and small. As example, the college had no presence at Montgomery County's technology day for middle school students, held at Shady Grove earlier this month. UMBC and JHU, along with a number of companies with which we are partnered, had a corner on that market in promoting science, mathematics and computing. With no office capability for science outreach, one person carrying solitary duty for recruiting, and an office policy that denies us cross-training on tasks, it took only one conflict – a campus ATP event – to consume our capacity.
- I have proposed that the college invite from area high schools project proposals for experiments that could be conducted in conjunction with CMPS field research. Our undergrads who participate in the trips could perform the experiments (with more good experiences) and we would arrange for live-feeds between scientists and student classrooms, linking them with Antarctica or our sites in the tropics. This would seem to make for both good events and good delivery of content. It is blocked for want of our having capacity to organize the science outreach activity.
- Similarly, we have no idea who will organize cross-discipline team projects for top students, as we have claimed we would do in the strategic plan.
- Our CSEM (Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics) grant from NSF, that funds scholarships for students (especially those who are from traditionally under-represented cultures, first generation in college or having strong financial need) is concluding this semester. When it does, it will be the first time in memory that the college operation has no federally sponsored projects to promote science outreach and education. We should be filling agency queues with more proposals for ways we can make a difference and champion science; lacking capacity to even keep up with day-to-day firefighting, or your authorization to pursue funding for a science czar based on soft-lines, this is obviously not happening.
- I would like to expand our offering of UNIV100 (or similar) courses to all CMPS majors. Presently we have only one section and almost no promotion of it. It is handled exclusively by one GA who lacks credentials related to any CMPS field. My counterparts in other colleges credit orientation by field-knowledgeable staff with reducing demand for college-level handling of exceptions and for improving retention. Connections that Engineering makes with all new students improve the overall experiences, again with retention and graduation benefits. We are blocked from even piloting our own versions of this.
- Faculty – or at least a science outreach person having credentials in a CMPS area – should run Corporate Scholars Program courses. It isn't clear what value we add to student plans by having development officers relate internship experiences to the students' majors. Today we do not have resources to organize this task, nor broker CMPS-specific career development efforts, become involved with student professional organizations or create/manage a CMPS student advisory board. I would like to recognize at our commencements the student leaders of professional societies. Without resources for engagement, we don't even know who they are.

- A modern web site, besides being cheaper to manage than our present commercial arrangement, would likely be more responsive to our needs and, in combination with science outreach staff, be a strong force multiplier:
 - We might reasonably pilot science outreach or content delivery by novel media (e.g. Webcasting) as was suggested to us by Steve Walker so long ago (for which preparation of content has been on hold pending resource availability.) Jeff Huskamp has fairly recently announced his intention to explore this arena; lacking resource in the office, I have suggested to you that Jeanine Worden might at least monitor this for us.
 - We might go forward with the ‘brag site’ for undergraduate activities and achievements as I have recommended, with fast paced refresh of content (“content is king”) that gives a basis for visitors to come back, and more to the point, invite prospective students to concretely visualize what it would be like to join us (instead of only see our programs as sterile text.) For our branding needs, we would also transmit good news about specific students to their home high schools and teachers. (Today we are blocked on your permission to do so.)
 - In the same spirit of providing an involvement mechanism, we would offer a ‘success portal’ revolving around an enhanced version of MyPlan for use by prospective students (not just our majors to have graduation plans.) As we have discussed, this portal would invite students to start thinking about how well their preparation in high school can get them on their way here. A Wizard can suggest likely graduation plans based on interests, and we can showcase premier courses accordingly (e.g. Marquee.) Of substantive value to them, we can debunk some of the myths about what it takes to be adequately prepared for various tracks, helping align students earlier rather than later. They can start working on *our* degree plans while there is still time to improve their *high school* plans. It would advise parents (through the soon-to-be on-line MARY-EMPT service) about student progress towards a STEM degree here, and inform teachers/counselors about best practices for transition of their students into CMPS degree paths. In other words, we can do more than just talk about P-20 alignment. We should be in this game.
- We would revive the Ambassadors program that you dissolved a few years ago, and send our good undergraduates to become involved in high school science classes (helping integrate their content and improving communication skills.) It would be coordinated through our science outreach advisor (since it involves the delivery of our content) but at the same time it would give recruiting efforts a strong force multiplier. Strong ties with content providers out in the high schools that feed us are strategic for us. Today we lack both capacity and permission to cultivate these ties.

Inadequate office capacity and failing infrastructure impact student services.

In the months that I have awaited a dialog with you on how to improve inadequate office resources, old computers that I flagged as a serious threat to operations have continued to degrade the quality of our services to students.

As you know, all computers in the undergraduate office are decade-old boxes running an old version of Windows no longer supported by Microsoft, and lacking software to read or manipulate documents commonly used by students in the ordinary course of business today. We do not enjoy the leverage of using modern tools, what old tools we have run with painful sloth, and, because they have not been professionally updated or maintained in anyone's memory, these systems are especially prone to disruption due to malware. We are assured that the only way we get a replacement computer is for someone in our Faculty or Development offices to get a new computer, which allows their old machine to trickle down to us; the history shows this to be true.

Example consequences:

- A combination of configuration issues and failed computers used at our reception desk left our hourlies unable to read mail to the generic undergraduate address of the college (*cmprsqe*) for seven to ten days last month. We were off the air.
- Except for me (I use my own computer, purchased out of my own pocket, since this job could not be performed without modern tools) each person in our office has lost one or more days of productivity this semester for want of a functioning computer after malware needlessly took their machine out of commission.
- Each staff member has lost days of productivity due to problems with the antique Novell file server (whether being unable to access files when it locks up or check in files if it has filled, or from re-doing work after files are lost in same.) Half of the server's capacity (which is small – on my Apple, I have more iTunes space for classic rock than the college office has for all its operations) is consumed by files having a time stamp earlier than 2005, which suggests that nobody on the admin side is paying attention to what we are spending funds to save for all time.
- In the last two months alone, we have apparently spent more for OIT to repair the antique computers at our front desk than it would have cost to buy a new machine that could actually do the job for them in the first place – including warranty.

As I have observed to you, even with working infrastructure we would not have adequate staff capacity to process all the demands of this operation without dropping some through the cracks and load leveling others – stretching out responses to student requests to what I feel is an unacceptable level. We now advertise that students should expect no less than a month turnaround on some requests. As I reported to you earlier, often this is optimistic. I am confident that the quality of our decisions and advising remains high, but I'm equally confident that students notice the delays and take it out on, e.g., NSSE scores.

We have more people in the CMPS office responsible for development (Ron, Larry, Al) than we have full time people delivering student services (Amy, Ritzie and – part time – me.) Students notice this level of engagement – or lack of it. Regardless of a big picture, my immediate fear remains: we are one Byzantine system failure away from being unable to perform graduation clearances in a timely fashion this semester.