

Subject: report on undergraduate office operations

From: Jim Purtilo <purtilo@cs.umd.edu>

Date: Tue, 08 Sep 2009 00:05:22 -0400

To: Steve Halperin <shalper@umd.edu>

Dear Steve,

I attach my annual report on undergraduate operations for your consideration. I'd hope to introduce it first in person, but our schedules haven't meshed of late, and as things pile up I don't want to risk putting it off further. To it I add the following thoughts as preface.

When I started as Interim AD more than a year ago, I was responding to your plea for help in an emergency. The undergraduate operation was clearly under water, so I stepped up, did what needed to be done, and brought us back in line with campus expectations, in some cases attending to tasks that had not been adequately performed in years.

As you know my strategy was quite simple. After carefully studying the PRDs - mine and yours, which you shared - I resolved to:

- * Remain student centered in all things, focusing on promotion of excellence.
- * At all times be cognizent of the ways by which both you and the college will be perceived and evaluated by campus leadership.
- * Accept all requests to participate on behalf of CMPS in the administration of campus affairs.
- * Invite and nurture all opportunities to partner CMPS as an engaged co-equal, if not a leader, in academic and co-curricular initiatives central to the strategic plan.
- * Carefully document the level of effort and costs necessary to perform this job with the desired objective level of successes.

In the last year I have spared no effort to engineer an abrupt and positive change in the college's derivative, both in substance and perception. While we have far to go, I believe others across campus appreciate that CMPS is re-engaging in undergraduate matters. I hope you agree this effort has yielded success.

The cost of my doing what needed to be done was substantial. Whatever gains I won for CMPS in the last year were purchased by nearly 2,000 logged hours of effort in FY09, which is far above what is allocated for my part time role. That figure does not count the over 800 hours I logged in CS effort, nor time spent out of the office but on college duty. Urgent needs may demand a burst of 65 hours per week from a stakeholder now and then, but this cannot become the norm. Now a year into the job, I can say with some authority that except for this unrelenting pace the job would indeed not get done as we want. It is not sustainable.

I have shown you the job can be done right. Now I hope to show you what it takes for it to be sustained. The attached report on operations contains recommendations for change and investment. None of these topics will be a surprise to you, as we have touched on them all at one point or another. Some involve expense and hiring, which I know arise in an austere climate, but I nevertheless believe they will be justified by their value to the college. Other recommendations involve practices, and it is to the latter that I'd like to add a personal note that is not appropriate for inclusion in the main report.

You have explained to me that CMPS's present office policies and detailed PRD system were crafted several years ago in order to break up an undergraduate operation of that era. I am hazy on what problems required it to be dismantled - I'll leave that to history since it doesn't matter - but your measures obviously worked well. The operation was broken up, most staff from it are gone, and today we have people who work largely in isolation, loyal to specific job tasks and not much else besides being out of the office by 5:01PM each afternoon. Across the campus CMPS's office is widely reputed to be an oppressive, if not toxic, work environment. I understand the assessment. We still labor under the weight of the old rules.

I politely suggest it is time to change. I see improving the environment as part of an updated strategy for me in the coming year. We should build a new team - our team - and

through it win some genuine gains in efficiency and service. Investing in people, building a positive work environment and engendering loyalty to a shared mission are worthy goals, all appropriate in and of themselves. Beyond that, we clearly need every tool at our disposal - even ones that take us out of a comfort zone - in order to make the performance from last year one we can sustain.

Looking forward to discussing this report with you soon.

Cordially,

Jim

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