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International Task Force Report

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Provost's International Task Force Report
Executive Summary: Members, Charge, Reorganization Options, and Recommendations

On February 22, 2007, Provost Peter Nicholls convened a task force of faculty to investigate the current organizational structures at the University of Connecticut that support international programs, faculty and students. The committee was composed of the following members of the faculty, representing the different schools and colleges:

Anne D'alleva, School of Fine Arts
John Enderle, School of Engineering
Betty Hanson, Political Science Department
Lynne Healy, School of Social Work
Mark Janis, Law School
Robert McCarthy, School of Pharmacy
David Moss, Neag School of Education
Morty Ortega, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Richard Wilson, Human Rights Institute
Elizabeth Carol Polifroni, School of Nursing (co-chair)
Jeff Rummel, School of Business (co-chair)

The Provost gave the committee the following charge for its work:

As you know, the academic plan that is under development calls for a substantially increased emphasis on globalization. I would like to ask you to serve on a Task Force to evaluate the University's administrative and organizational structure for promoting and supporting international academic and curricular activities. The Task Force should examine existing programs and units here, as well as at peer and aspirant institutions. Little or no additional resources will be allocated to this purpose in the near future, so the Task Force is charged with suggesting a more effective use of existing resources, including possible re-organization, and to make some recommendations for long term goals.

Reorganization Options

The task force was charged with suggesting a *more effective use of existing resources, including possible re-organization*. Two recommendations are evident. One is a reorganization of current services and programs into different areas and we believe it would improve the international programs at UConn. But in looking at the organization of international programs at our peer institutions, the committee considered a more far-reaching, centralized model for international programs and we believe this is the preferred and most appropriate recommendation.

Reorganization Model:

After benchmarking our peer institutions, it was clear that a centralized organization dedicated to international education was the norm. That kind of model, applied to UConn, is addressed in this

report, but as part of the charge, the Provost requested that the committee investigate a solution that made use of the existing organization and reallocated the responsibilities for international education within that structure.

Our recommendation for a reorganization looks to move the various tasks required to support the academic plan into the appropriate existing organization within the Provost's office. Because this will not tie all of these activities to a single vice provost, this task force recommends the formation of a standing committee that would provide oversight and coordination between these functions. Because international education is a prominent part of the academic plan, this committee probably should report directly to the provost, and should contain representatives from each of the vice provost's offices. The committee could be further strengthened by including faculty members who are leading international activities and could represent different schools and colleges.

Clearly educational programs are the heart of the global focus of the academic plan, and so the two vice provosts for graduate and undergraduate education will have primary responsibilities for international education. And while there is some overlap between these programs, there is also a fairly clear distinction between graduate and undergraduate programs.

The Vice Provost for Research would take responsibility for international scholars, be they graduate students or visiting faculty. The graduate school would coordinate school and college relationships to develop a network of international universities that would produce both graduate students and faculty interactions. There is already an office for international graduate students, and this could be expanded to provide immigration and visa services for students and visitors while they are on campus. These activities would be distinct from the services required of undergraduate students, given their different immigration situations.

Undergraduate international education would fall under the undergraduate vice provost rather than a separate vice provost. This would allow the OIA organization to be more closely coordinated with programs to support undergraduate education, under the direction of a single vice provost. The international studies centers would now be included with the other enrichment programs at the undergraduate level and the oversight and budgets for these would be part of the usual interaction between the vice provost and the deans. Support activities for undergraduate students are different enough from graduate students that an organization focused on their visa issues would be included, perhaps through the new Global House structure. The increasing internationalization of the regional campuses would also naturally fall within the scope of the vice provost for undergraduate education.

Study abroad has a unique role to play in internationalization, and the placement of that office within the undergraduate vice provost's organization should be considered more carefully, especially the coordination between the director of study abroad and the director of OIA. This is especially true as we start to investigate serious exchange relationships with other universities and the potential of expanding UConn "campuses" overseas. Also, study abroad currently concentrates on undergraduate students and a placement within the undergraduate vice provost's organization may limit any consideration of graduate student study abroad.

New expertise in recruiting and admitting international students should be centralized in the vice provost for enrollment management organization, to utilize their expertise. In this way, recruiting activities can be balanced across the different potential student populations. As students are evaluated and admitted, there would need to be a clear handoff between enrollment management and undergraduate education, but that is a process that many universities manage quite easily.

The student affairs organization should add capabilities to work with international students, so that their special needs are addressed. Since Global House could be a primary contact point for students, there should be strong coordination so that each takes responsibilities for different aspects of student needs. Programming for international students could, in a similar way, be coordinated between student affairs and the multicultural centers on campus.

Finally, the responsibility for international faculty issues should be more carefully focused. Since this has serious ramifications for the university and requires careful management as the rules from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) evolve, the vice provost for academic administration's office should develop the expertise to manage this process. Because some of the rules include restrictions on the way recruiting is done, the vice provost should be responsible for making sure recruitment is in compliance, in a similar way that the Office of Diversity and Equity monitors hiring activities. Since visa issues for faculty are different from those for undergraduate or graduate students, the vice provost for administration could develop the expertise to manage this process, rather than focusing the responsibility on the hiring departments.

The apparent benefits of this reorganization and reallocation of existing resources may be offset by the fact that it is still diffuse, somewhat uncoordinated, and may not be possible to achieve due to the workloads and areas of responsibilities of the people to whom this additional work would be assigned. With a diffuse organization, the construction and operation of a coordinating committee will be difficult. In some ways, what we are offering here is 'more of the same but with different players'. Yet, our data suggest that the structure is the issue, and the diffusion of international affairs to multiple individuals does not address this concern. This means that in practice there is likely to be continued lack of coordination and integration between offices and a spatial separation of the entities. Most important may be the difficulty in creating a common plan and set of goals for international programs. So this option, while it may improve existing practices, does not address some of the central weaknesses and, most importantly, may not lay the foundations for the kind of growth envisaged for the future.

Centralized model:

As the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to current and potential structures are examined, the Task Force concludes that a strong centrally organized and academically connected structure is best for all international affairs, activities, education, students and scholars at UConn. The Task Force concludes that international endeavors and multicultural affairs are best served in separate and distinct structures. The breadth of both multicultural and international affairs requires two different organizational structures. Furthermore, a distinct need for

coordination of the many separate but unconnected components of all UConn system wide international activities is essential for success.

The ideal structure would resemble that of some of our peer institutions and those identified as successful in international arenas while tailored to the UConn system. This system would be one of a combined Vice Provost and Dean for International Initiatives. The Vice Provost title establishes the leadership for the international initiatives in the same line and structure as current Vice Provosts for graduate education, undergraduate education, multicultural affairs, library, enrollment management and academic administration. The role is one of vision, coordination, oversight, strategic planning, resource allocation, and leadership. The title of Dean is similar to that of the current Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School model. This is not without its challenges, but the title of Dean is particularly important for the academic integrity of the international initiatives, the tie-in to existing programs and structures, and the establishment of a cadre of faculty expert in international affairs and appointed to the International Initiative through mechanisms similar to graduate school appointments in our current structure. The role for the dean is one related to academics, negotiation of faculty appointments, connection to the greater academic landscape for UConn, ability to interact with and influence colleagues on a peer to peer basis for enhancement of international initiatives in all schools and colleges, and leadership at the point of initiative delivery.

Within this overarching structure for international initiatives reside several areas of specialization: international education (area studies), study abroad, international scholars and students, international outreach and programming. All would be organized under a single umbrella with a vision and mission that asserts the role of international initiatives in a major research university.

The Task Force believes that the efficiencies of this centralized model are well worth the limited fiscal investment to achieve the model. Current resources would be reallocated within international activities to achieve effective and efficient service delivery. The new leader would be the most significant additional cost for this centralized model. The Task Force strongly believes that if this model is not selected any other alternative, including our first option, will be fraught with the problems of lack of coordination, lack of importance and a sense that UConn is not really interested in international activities and programs.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Beyond the specific organizational recommendation noted above, the committee identifies several areas which require concentrated attention once a structural decision is made. They are:

1. Develop a mission and philosophy statement for UConn International Activities and Programs;
2. Develop the area studies program in order to reflect the major areas of the world and provide strong academic oversight, rigorous programming, strategic coordination, and interdisciplinary involvement;
3. Provide reward and recognition to faculty for involvement in the Centers within international affairs (area studies);

4. Create an environment for interdisciplinary education, scholarship, and PTR processes with individuals from all schools and colleges;
5. Review and strengthen the current model of majors and minors within international education;
6. Institute a strategic coordinating committee comprised of members of all schools and colleges to oversee minors;
7. Evaluate the revised international structure with specific criteria (consistent with the Academic Plan and mission/philosophy) as part of the university's assessment measures;
8. Locate all international services, programs and centers in a central physical space on the main campus of UConn while ensuring coverage of regional campus needs;
9. Implement the recommended structural change and these recommendations as soon as is fiscally possible.

In conclusion, the University of Connecticut has engaged in a series of forward and backward movements in regard to international affairs, services and programs. For two major reasons this process of back and forth needs to stop and a strategic plan for international activities created. The Task Force believes that a centralized model for international programs is the best way to achieve the level of international activities consistent with that of our peer and aspirant institutions, and is necessary for UConn to move forward as a great university that is able to provide a liberally acquired education for all who choose it.