

**From:** Wilcox, Ralph  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 12, 2008 5:23 PM  
**To:** Acad-Chairs  
**Cc:** Acad-AAPG  
**Subject:** Follow-up to the Chairs' Council meeting of April 12, 2008



Dear Colleagues,

I thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule yesterday to participate in the monthly meeting of the Chairs' Council. While we will likely bring two agenda items back for discussion in the future (*Task Force on Faculty Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards*, and Professional Development Workshops for Chairs and Directors), I did want to follow-up on yesterday's exchange that grew out of my budget update. At the outset, please allow me to reiterate that, short of receiving news of larger-than-anticipated cuts (i.e. more than a 15% base budget reduction), we are committed to retaining and supporting all tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members and preserving all degree programs. Second, I was deeply disappointed to learn that discussions related to budget reduction planning, program consolidation, and prospective academic realignments have, in some corners of campus, been introduced only within the past week or two. As I shared yesterday, such matters have been under discussion by the leadership of Academic Affairs for some time (at least since January and, in some cases, dating from last semester) and I had wrongly assumed that these considerations had been openly communicated to chairs and faculty in more timely fashion.

I now have a better understanding that, at least in some colleges, you have only begun to consider the possibility, and associated advantages/disadvantages, of exploring structural and strategic realignments. While it is quite clear that, particularly in the case of the consolidation and/or merger of small units, decisions will need to be made shortly to ensure that we realize much needed operational cost savings by the beginning of the new fiscal year, it is equally apparent that some other conversations might benefit from an extension of time. My earlier commitment to decision-making before the end of this semester was guided by a sincere belief in collegial communication and the sense of responsibility I felt in announcing changes (that will need to be effective at the outset of the new fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2008) before so many of our faculty and students leave campus for the Summer. That having been said, I am amenable to extending the time for deliberation beyond the end of this semester, with the understanding that you will help communicate the reason for the delay in announcing decisions to your faculty. Accordingly, I suggest the following:

- Recommendations for the consolidation and/or merger of small academic units (including schools, departments, centers and institutes), effective July 1, 2008 – actions leading to direct operational cost-savings (for budget-reduction purposes), should be received in the Provost's Office, no later than April 21, 2008.
- Recommendations for other realignments, effective July 1, 2008, that (a) may result in cost-savings through reduction of administrative overhead, elimination of curricular duplication etc., (b)

will create an increased critical mass of faculty in a particular discipline or field of inquiry, at a time when new state funding for faculty positions is unlikely in the next 2-3 years, (c) promises an acceleration of strategic progress through increased synergies in times of diminishing state resources, and/or (d) suggests an enhanced likelihood of success in receiving competitive, federal grants, providing an alternative source of revenue to offset losses in state support, should be received in the Provost's Office, no later than May 12, 2008.

Beyond these two scenarios, I do recognize that some conversations may continue without timely resolution and recommendation (i.e. in advance of the beginning of the next fiscal and academic years). Of course, as I pointed out yesterday, I had fully intended that such important matters would be introduced much earlier through open and thoughtful dialogue, all the time recognizing that our responsibility to balance the budget (with an anticipated shortfall of \$34 M, in Academic Affairs) by July 1, 2008 did not, perhaps, provide the adequacy of time needed for fruitful discussion. Moreover, it is clear that while broad decisions to restructure will need to be made shortly, the resolution of detailed matters associated with such change will take much longer and likely into the next academic year. Of course if, in advance of the next fiscal year, we are unable to identify sufficient budget savings through present strategies, then we will have no option than to resort to levying even deeper cuts across every department in Academic Affairs.

In conclusion, we must all recognize that the State's diminishing investment in higher education (which, I think we can all agree, is unlikely to turnaround at least in the foreseeable future) challenges us to critically examine and, when appropriate, reform our academic structure and practices of today. In the coming years we will each be judged on our unit's performance in delivering a high quality and meaningful education for our students, together with improvements in federal research expenditures, total research expenditures, postdoctoral fellow counts, faculty citations, doctoral degree production, national academy members, NRC rankings, faculty awards, and our student profile and success. Like so many universities, USF must explore innovative strategies to successfully navigate the barriers to interdisciplinary expansion both in the classroom as well as in creative, scholarly and research productivity. To this end, I am eager to work with our deans, chairs and faculty to identify and better understand such initiatives that have been successful elsewhere. Quite simply, we cannot continue to be stymied by structural and behavioral impediments to institutional growth. Meanwhile, I thank you for your continuing leadership and I look forward to your participation in the upcoming "Campus Conversations".

Best regards,

*Ralph*

Ralph C. Wilcox  
Provost and Senior Vice President