

## State of the College

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Welcome to the 2011-12 academic year! Welcome to the new members of our college—faculty, staff, and students—and the new members of the 2011-13 CLA Assembly, and especially to the 16 new tenured/ tenure-track faculty members whom we are introducing to our college this afternoon.

The past few weeks have been full of excitement and impending change. Last week, Professor Eric Kaler, an alumnus of the distinguished Department of Chemical Engineering, was inaugurated as the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the University, and his powerful inauguration speech identified clear directions for his new administration. President Kaler has taken a great interest in our college—indeed in all the colleges that deliver a core arts, sciences, and engineering education, for he realizes that our university can never become the great university to which many of us aspire if the College of Liberal Arts is not leading in research and creative work, and providing an exceptional education to our graduate and undergraduate students. He has already visited with the college's leadership team of chairs, directors, and deans; he has accepted several invitations to participate in CLA

events and programs this fall, and he included CLA's School of Music and Department of Psychology on his inaugural trek across the campus last Wednesday. In addition to these events, many of us have been engaged with the search for the next provost of the University, and we are eagerly looking forward to President Kaler's decision.

These last few weeks have been especially exciting for our college as well. We recently received the last installment of a \$14M gift from the estate of the late Myrtle Stroud, a long-time resident of rural Windom, MN. This gift is the largest contribution towards undergraduate scholarships in the history of the University, and this extraordinary legacy will enable us to significantly advance the financial support we provide our talented incoming students, both first-year and transfer students, who possess strong academic records and financial need. Since we routinely have many more students who qualify for a scholarship awarded at the intersection of need and merit than we have funds available, this gift will expand the number of scholarships we can offer each year and give our students, many of them the first in their families to attend college, a considerable boost to earning a four-year degree.

Two weeks ago we also celebrated the reopening of the renovated Folwell Hall, the home of our foreign languages, literatures, and cultures departments, and of several magnificent classrooms amply equipped with the necessary technology

to deliver a 21<sup>st</sup>-century education to the 12,000 students who take classes there each year. The desire for a renovated Folwell extends back almost 15 years, and during that period there were several failed attempts to advance that building on the University's priority list. It is especially satisfying, therefore, that this goal has finally been achieved. We could never have accomplished this project without the support of the students, faculty, staff, the University administration, the Board of Regents, and ultimately the Legislature and Governor. At a time when state support for higher education is diminishing, it is important to celebrate those moments of partnership between the University and the state that advance our research and educational missions. Folwell is truly the epicenter of international education on our campus, for without the research and teaching provided by the faculty and staff of those important departments, we could never fulfill one of the most important elements of a liberal arts education---a deep and nuanced understanding of the diversity of human cultures through the lens of language, literature and media. At a time when some universities are disinvesting in research and training in these fields, we have renewed the pledge at Minnesota that global citizenship can best be attained through the acquisition of another language at an advanced level, and intellectual engagement with materials originating outside of the Anglophone bubble that many of us daily inhabit.

This afternoon we welcome to our college the largest number of new faculty since September 2008. Despite the hiring pause that the University implemented in the fall 2008, we have been able to make several strategic hires across all sectors of our college to continue to build on existing strengths, increase our research capacity, enhance teaching and advising, and augment the diversity –in all senses – of our faculty. Thanks to the dedicated work of Associate Dean for Faculty Richa Nagar, between July 1, 2009 through August, 2011, we have appointed 42 new tenured/ tenure-track faculty at all levels, and we have so far authorized six searches for 2011/12. We also learned recently that the college will be receiving funding for up to ten lines in the near future to replenish some of the unfilled faculty positions of the past two years. Should our searches this year be successful, and with the additional funding we will receive from President Kaler’s re-investment in the college, we will have rebuilt our faculty FTE to the July 1, 2009 level.

As our new academic year begins, we have much to celebrate, but to quote President Kaler, we still “have work to do.” This afternoon I want to elaborate on the work before us, about the ways I think we can take action to respond to some of the challenges confronting public higher education, and specifically about the tasks before us over the next ten months. Two years ago in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008/09, I initiated the CLA 2015 planning process. Given the

economic turbulence and increased uncertainty about the future of higher education, and the ways in which economic considerations were beginning to obscure academic goals, I called for a re-imagination and re-thinking of our strategic direction. Public support for higher education as a common good had been eroding for several years before the Great Recession; but the events of 2008 accelerated the process, and frankly, taking many of us by surprise, shook us out of our laboratories and studies into the harsh reality where our societal value was being interrogated –and being interrogated in a fashion remarkably indifferent to the intellectual mission of our institutions. Suddenly we were forced into a defensive posture and forced to explicate our value—our return on investment—to a public that, in some quarters, seemed already convinced of our irrelevance, especially for those of us in the liberal arts.

A liberal arts college thrives on diversity, on argumentation, and on critique, and in assembling the CLA 2015 planning committee, I purposely chose faculty whom I knew had little in common and, in fact, whom I knew disagreed passionately with each other about ways in which academic strengths should be measured—if they should be measured at all—about categories such as academic excellence and distinction, about the criteria for the distribution of funding, and about our obligations to external communities. Regardless of the myriad reactions, both supportive and critical, that the final CLA 2015 report received since its

appearance last November, I want to acknowledge what a remarkable achievement the report was, given the diversity of the committee membership, and what an outstanding job the committee co-chairs, Associate Dean Gary Oehlert and Professor Chris Uggen, did in facilitating the discussions and debates among the 30 faculty, staff and student members of the committee, securing committee consensus, and bringing the CLA 2015 report to fruition.

The CLA 2015 report spawned several conversations and debates in the college about the potential directions that could be pursued, but it also produced uncertainty and anxiety about the way it would be implemented. Several colleagues questioned the emphasis on distinction, signature programs, and efficiency with the looming suggestion of restructuring and downsizing while others found such categories essential to moving forward. I will speak in a few moments about specific directions that we will pursue—and that can be exciting to pursue—this academic year in the wake of the 2015 report, but I want to state clearly my position on the report and to make clear the core principles that inform my position.

The report originated out of the changed economic landscape of American higher education after 2008/09, but the economic origins of the report, and the resulting use of terms such as “efficiency,” the anticipation of reduced budgets and restructuring, and the call for metrics to assess quality, have occluded the academic

values that underlie the report and that I share. We are first and foremost an academic institution, and the criteria that inform our decisions must be grounded on academic principles. I do not want to be part of any university or college where decisions about academic programs or academic directions are based primarily if not solely on market-based principles. We are a public non-profit institution dedicated to research, education, and outreach, and the intellectual work of the faculty shapes our identity as a research university. At the same time, however, we exist in a public setting in which fiscal support for universities is eroding, public skepticism about higher education is rising (think of the self-made entrepreneurs mocking those high school graduates “fool enough” to attend college), and we are being asked by our funders, both public and private, to explicate and, yes, legitimize the “value” of what we do. On an intellectual level, we can disagree and critique those who would challenge us, or who would even introduce “value” into the discussion, but we must have an answer.

It is difficult to tack between the intellectual world that we inhabit professionally and the extramural communities who question our value, but what will most certainly imperil us even further would be the absence of engagement. In its opening section, the CLA 2015 report makes an impassioned and compelling case for the liberal arts and a liberal education. Many of the arguments are familiar to most of us, and I do not need to rehearse them here. But we do need to move

beyond the familiar utilitarian positions about their value: namely, that the liberal arts teach critical thinking, hone oral and written communication skills, familiarize students with quantitative and qualitative analysis, and attune them to cultural diversity. Many of our students do not know what the liberal arts are when they arrive—many are not even sure which fields they are—or why they are important, and many still do not know about the liberal arts when they graduate. Many believe that English and foreign languages are liberal arts, but they think of them separately from journalism, economics, or psychology.

As researchers and teachers, we are accustomed to the ebb and flow of trends in our respective fields. When I think about change in our college, and about the kind of college that I hope we have made by 2015, I think about the need to make the liberal arts and their role in contemporary society more visible and more central to our societal, political, economic, and human interactions than they are today. We are the largest liberal arts college in Minnesota, and it is incumbent on us to be engaged in animating the liberal arts, that is, in demonstrating their essential place in a 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and in demonstrating the significance and indispensability of the research that we do. We must make clear both through and across our disciplines about the importance of the liberal arts, not in terms of the monetary value that a particular discovery or finding could enable, but in terms of the quality of the life that we lead, or aspire to lead; in terms of understanding



what we as individuals and a society believe, or have believed, and in terms of our relationships among ourselves and the institutions within which we live or choose to avoid. As Governor Dayton reminded us last week during President Kaler's inauguration, we are Minnesota's only research university, and it is incumbent on us demonstrate the value of our research and creative work in the liberal arts to our students and the broader public. We need in short to initiate a Campaign for the Liberal Arts at Minnesota, not a campaign in the fund-raising sense, but a campaign that makes plain through our research, our classroom and studio work, and our outreach and public engagement activities, and on our website and through all our publications the essential place of the liberal arts in the contemporary world.

It never ceases to astonish me how easily the liberal arts are taken for granted in our society. In earlier times, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, for example, one would look to the liberal arts to impart basic principles of ethics, of human interaction, and of leadership, but such topics have migrated with much fanfare to professional schools where they can be tailored to the specific needs of future physicians, politicians, or CEO's. Yet when a major crisis impacts our daily lives such as the horrific events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the persons most needed and most wanted in the room were those trained in languages, religion, history, politics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and media, and in some cases not enough of

those individuals with the appropriate background could be found. Then, as in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-century, when Western Europeans poorly equipped to understand the Middle East made decisions whose consequences we are still enduring today, we were ill-prepared to comprehend the complex motivation behind this event. When I was asked recently about what I would say to a legislator about why research and teaching in the liberal arts should continue to be funded, I waggishly responded that few politicians would have any hope of acting knowledgeably and persuasively without liberal-arts-trained personnel on their staff.

I have chosen to start with the idea of animating the liberal arts for the contemporary world for that project must inform the practical decisions we will make about the ways in which the college should move forward. I underscored a few moments ago my belief that academic priorities not fiscal or market imperatives will determine our future direction. Were our actions primarily driven by market principles, we would be a college of 12 departments, for almost 80% of our students major in just 12 of our 31 departments. That is not my idea of a liberal arts education nor of a college or university, nor I suspect is it yours. At the same time, however, we do operate within specific constraints: we need to focus on fewer programs since we do not have unlimited resources (no university ever did), and we should not continue to offer programs that we can no longer sustain. We need to have the freedom to redirect funds away from areas in which students no

longer have any interest to fields of emerging significance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will not reiterate the usual litany of fiscal problems currently besetting higher education; you are no doubt as disenchanted as I in hearing such narratives, but we are in an environment, or, more accurately stated, we are in an environment where we are more keenly aware of the need to achieve the right balance between new investments (often synonymous with reallocation) and disinvestments.

The CLA 2015 committee did a fine job enunciating the right categories for advancing the college. I agree with their principles of focusing our academic programs, of establishing connections across the college and University and with external communities, and of prioritizing the needs of our students. We must also ensure that our administrative structures support the academic work of the college, that such costs are minimal and our processes efficient if not exemplary in demonstrating the best way to support faculty and students. When mandated administrative processes impede our research and teaching, we must work creatively and speedily to bring about much-needed change so staff and faculty time is not wasted. And I endorse the recommendation to generate new tuition dollars through, for example, professional master's programs, but only after we have assessed how such programs match our academic priorities, and we have developed a careful business model that ensures a sustainable revenue stream.

Let me comment further about the issue of academic focus and about the committee's position on academic distinction. I believe in academic excellence, and I concur that academically strong programs that foster and support research, exemplary and innovative teaching and advising, and successful community partnerships and outreach programs should be our shared aspiration. I understand that with the movement of faculty across institutions, department strengths shift over time, and that long-standing traditions of disciplinary excellence can quickly unravel if not supported steadily. But as I mentioned earlier, decisions about academic investments cannot be made solely on quantitative measures, but rather through a careful analysis of multiple qualitative and quantitative factors. We must also have a clear vision in mind about what our liberal arts college should be. A college with strengths in one sector, or a few departments, will not advance our collective programs; rather we must have several strengths across the arts, humanities, and the social sciences for which Minnesota is uniquely renowned.

I want to introduce the additional category of academic rigor to those advanced by the CLA 2015 committee. In recent years, and at our university and elsewhere, the liberal arts, especially but not exclusively the humanities and the fine arts, have been considered avocational, optional fields, that attract students unable to master the necessary skills for a "real" career in the sciences or engineering. There is an attendant bias on campuses, and regrettably in state and

federal governments, that the humanities and arts are soft fields, even ornamental, ideal as places for entertainment and relaxation from the hard work of scientific and technical analysis. I have even heard it said, and I know that some of you have heard it as well, that some of our undergraduate students share such views. I find it inordinately distasteful and anti-intellectual that this opposition between the legendary two cultures of science and the liberal arts—a misreading of C. P. Snow’s famous essay as Don Randall recently pointed out-- has become so deeply entrenched in our society precisely at a time when both areas are necessary to address the intractable problems confronting the contemporary world. We know how interdependent scientific topics and methods are in a liberal arts education, and we must not lose sight of the many opportunities in our research and teaching to dispel this illusory dichotomy.

The liberal arts are certainly not avocational fields, but essential for global citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students searching for an easy major, for programs without challenging requirements, or without the rigorous gateway courses that determine who will major in a given field and who will not, have sometimes been surprised, and should continue to be surprised, by the academic environment in CLA. I am often asked why our college still has a foreign language graduation requirement. (Students frequently complain that “it’s such a pain.”) Happily many of our undergraduates, even those for whom such a requirement is a struggle,

appreciate this opportunity, especially after graduation, when such skills are sought by employers. Last year a working group on foreign languages and literature education (under Professor Ana Paula Ferreira's able direction) reaffirmed the importance of this four-semester requirement, and laid the foundation for expanding connections between foreign languages and classes in other liberal arts fields. Were our university, like others, to back off the task of bringing students to high levels of competency even in some of the world's most challenging languages, we would, as a nation, no longer be equipped to work knowledgeably and effectively on the world stage. Our campaign for the liberal arts must emphasize the rigor of our research, creative work, and educational programs, and our programs must challenge our students, as our most successful curricula do, that a liberal arts education, like higher education in other fields, requires hard work and long hours to comprehend the multiplicity of issues for which there is no final, unambiguous answer.

We are already an academically strong college, and we have traditions of long-standing excellence for at least 50 years in several departments—in psychology, economics, and political science. We have been leaders in innovative interdisciplinary programs in American studies, American Indian studies, women's studies, and cultural studies, and in recent years exciting intellectual homes for faculty and students have been created in the Institute for Global Studies. The

college houses a leading Creative Writing program, has forged an exceptional partnership with the Guthrie Theater for BFA students in acting (now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year), and in strategic communication, we capitalize on our urban location to provide an extraordinary pre-professional training through accomplished industry leaders. We have, in short, a tradition of excellence in this college upon which to build, and though we may have fewer resources than in the past, we must not hesitate to think creatively about the opportunities before us.

Let me tell you about the projects on my list that we should take up during the 2011/12 academic year. Some of these projects are already underway and should be completed this year; some plans have been initiated but require substantial external funding to be fully realized, and some, though just now emerging, should have a clear plan and timeline for completion by summer 2012. I should also add that from my point of view, form follows function. The CLA 2015 speaks of restructuring and reorganizing the college, and in some cases, such changes may be necessary. But let us first agree about the academic goal and the academic program and its feasibility and then build the necessary infrastructure, either from scratch or through restructuring to realize our academic plan.

First, I am committed to strengthening the arts and humanities in this college. I have said on several occasions that my ambition for this college has been to ensure the long-standing distinction of the social sciences, and to bring greater

strength to the humanities and the arts. Last spring I suggested some possible reconfigurations of departments in languages, literatures, culture, and media, and during the summer we continued some of those initial conversations. Colleagues responded with a wide range of views, and some counter-proposals have emerged, chiefly from a faculty-initiated group in the critical humanities, that presented some alternative ideas. I have asked Associate Dean Michal Kobialka to work together with faculty on crafting a plan for strengthening the humanities, especially in the area of the comparative study of literature, culture and media, and for reinvigorating and reimagining undergraduate and graduate education in those fields. As several retirements occur over the next 2-3 years, we will have the opportunity to reassess and expand on the pockets of excellence those programs currently possess. We must, in particular, consider the size of individual graduate programs as we think about ways to maximize our financial support for graduate students, and the best way to train these future scholars for both academic and non-academic positions.

I spoke a few moments ago about strengthening the humanities, but we must continue to build on the successes that we have had in the performing and creative arts. The highly competitive BFA Acting programs with the Guthrie serves as a template for collaboration with other theatres, and, as I pledged at last February's celebration of Penumbra Theatre director and retiring Theatre Arts professor Lou



Bellamy, the time has come to build a similar partnership with Penumbra. Our arts departments are deeply dependent on their relationships with local arts organizations to enhance the training of our students on their stages and studios and at the U, and to stoke creative synergies between our faculty and professionals in the community. In the year ahead, I look forward to working with the Department of Art to advance its collaboration with the Walker Arts Center, and with the Department of Art History to explore ways of expanding educational opportunities and pre-professional training for graduate and undergraduate students with the Minneapolis Institute of Art. I support the School of Music's promotion of community engagement projects to bring the School's expertise to underserved communities and to expand the training of future musicians beyond the studio. Together with external partners, we have an opportunity this year to explore the possibility of reinventing museum studies at the University not only for arts students but for those in anthropology and history, and in other colleges as well. In the spirit of the CLA 2015, we must continue to stoke these relationships, for they are vital to the project of animating the liberal arts and the promotion of the arts as a disciplined way of seeing, understanding and shaping the world in which we live.

Let me address another priority for the year: Building research capacity in the college. There is important research and creative work underway in all quarters of the college, but we need to take additional steps in the next year to ensure that

our faculty and graduate students remain competitive for external funding. For the past six years, the CLA Grants Team has provided outstanding support for principal investigators, especially those for whom applications for sponsored funding is a rare occurrence. The amount of sponsored funding received in the college has continued to rise, and in 2010/11, researchers garnered \$18.5M, a new record in sponsored funding for the college (since the departure of the Minnesota Population Center). Last year, thanks to the efforts of Associate Deans Jo-Ida Hansen and Gary Oehlert, and the excellent work of many colleagues, our college received five research infrastructure grants (I-3 grants), the most of any single college, from the Office for the Vice President for Research. In addition to funding from the college, these grants will be used to purchase equipment and renovate laboratories to enhance social and behavioral science research in magnetic resonance imagery, multi-sensory perception, multi-source X-Ray computer tomography, and in spatial/temporal sciences. But it's not just science: The I-3 competition also provided support to the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance to renovate and transform the Kilburn Theatre into a state-of-the-art multi-media facility for work in design/ technology and the performing arts. Under the leadership of Vice President Mulcahy, the University's research office has been an enthusiastic supporter of research and creative work across our college, and our

fine arts departments have benefited several times in the past three years from that office's infrastructure initiatives.

Last year was good, but what's next? We must continue to build the research capacity of our faculty across the college and across the disciplines. The outlook for increases in federal funding is not promising. In some quarters, such as the Title VI programs that support international research and outreach and advanced foreign-language instruction in less commonly taught languages, the harmful cuts of 45% of previously allocated funding have already been made and will remain, at best, flat in FY12 with little prospect of returning soon. NIH and NSF funding will remain at similarly low levels, and the competition for grants, now that the stimulus dollars have expired, will be keener than ever. We must prepare now for an even more challenging environment. I will therefore provide collegiate funding to continue to invest in research infrastructure and to help our researchers and their graduate students complete the necessary surveys and pilot studies so that their sponsored applications have a higher chance of success. Associate Dean Alex Rothman will work with faculty and staff to advance this project this academic year.

Coupled with the project of advancing research capacity and infrastructure in the college is our highest capital priority, the renovation or replacement of Elliott Hall, which houses our distinguished Department of Psychology, the

Institute of Linguistics, and the university's Center for Cognitive Sciences. Anyone who has explored the inner recesses of Elliott knows about its many shortcomings in heating and ventilation, in acoustics, and the maze-like disposition of the laboratories and offices. The current Elliott Hall was built on top of an older Elliott, and the inadequacies of such structures for 21<sup>st</sup>-century research in behavioral sciences is apparent with each passing year. We hope that the journey for the replacement of Elliott will not be as Homeric an odyssey as the renovation of Folwell, but with its 1500 majors and several prominent research programs, a reimagined Elliott could become the cornerstone of a behavioral sciences district that would include linguistics, speech-language-and-hearing sciences in Shevlin, and the related departments in the College of Education and Human Development, educational and child psychology and the pre-eminent Institute for Child Development.

Let me turn now to our research centers, an area of the college that is often overlooked despite the key role they play in nurturing the interdisciplinary work of the faculty, creating unique opportunities for students to work alongside faculty researchers, and sponsoring several exceptional outreach programs. Some centers have long-standing endowments while others are funded primarily with collegiate dollars. CLA has certainly not been the site of runaway "center-itis," for which our university with its 300+ centers (and counting) is notoriously famous, and which is

prompting a review of centers this academic year by central administration. But we need to tie the work of our 14 centers more closely to academic programs of the college. Our centers are primarily research centers, and if they are not fostering faculty and student research on a regular basis, or publishing the work of the researchers associated with the centers, and securing sponsored or private funding (whenever available) to promote their work, then their role in the college must be re-examined. We know from some widely successful initiatives such as the Institute for Advanced Study, which originated in the college in 2005 primarily as the heir to the Humanities Institute but with a new interdisciplinary focus, the interdisciplinary setting that our centers provide can transform research directions and incubate new projects that in some cases may ultimately impact our curriculum as well.

This past year we initiated conversations among center directors on the West Bank about building an administrative hub to serve multiple centers. The idea behind such a change was to increase administrative efficiency, reduce duplication of services, and direct more of the collegiate investment in centers toward programming rather than infrastructure. This project will be completed this fall, but there are additional steps that should be taken by centers to create opportunities for Minnesota faculty to be resident scholars for a term within them, to seed new research and educational initiatives, and to fashion external programs that not only

showcase the work of the center, but that animate the liberal arts. The centers should not simply be end-receivers of collegiate support; I invite them also to be engaged participants in revealing the indispensable role of a liberal education in our community and beyond.

This expanded role for research centers is informing the emergence of our newest center, the Heller-Hurwicz Economics Institute, which, with the exceptional generosity of several donors and the enthusiastic logistical support of the University of Minnesota Foundation went public this past winter. The Center's founding director Professor V.V. Chari has delineated multiple ambitions for the its programs: to support and communicate the work of the Minnesota economics faculty; to meld theoretical research in economics with the work of policymakers; and to address some of the most difficult policy issues such as climate change, the social safety net, and financial regulation in the context of the latest theoretical advances. But there is even a higher aspiration: to move economics and economic theory from its limited disciplinary ambit into dialogue with researchers from multiple fields across the campus and beyond, from government and industry, and to share that work more broadly with both professional and general audiences. The idea is to remove economics from that solitary space it has held as the "soulful science"—to use Thomas Carlyle's unhappy phrase—to its position within the

nexus of the other liberal arts and as an active participant in contemporary debates about possible resolutions to pressing social, political, and economic issues.

I have spoken so far about my ambitions for humanities and the arts, and about building our research capacity and research centers in the college. But there are also important, indeed urgent, projects in undergraduate education. Last year, under Associate Dean Jennifer Windsor's leadership, and with funding from central administration, we were able to establish a program to support transfer students. Over the past few years, the ratio of newly matriculated freshmen to transfer students has moved lower than 2:1. Our incoming first-year classes have stabilized around 2500, but the number of transfer students generally fluctuates around 1800 each year. Much attention is paid to incoming first-year students—and there is much to celebrate about their academic preparedness—but given the number of our transfers--many of whom come from under-represented communities or are the first in their families to attend college--we aim to take a much more active role in recruiting them and in advising them even before they arrive. Our goal is to identify the likely transfer students at institutions such as Minneapolis Community and Technical College and Normandale Community College, and work with them in advance of their transfer to smooth the students' path to the U without loss of time or money. We are just as committed to helping

them to complete their degrees in a timely way as we are with students who begin their studies here.

Associate Dean Windsor and Assistant Dean of Student Services, Chris Kearns, have also taken several steps to improve the academic success and retention of our students once they have started here, to help them plan early for their postgraduate careers, and to guide them towards courses that enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge, explore diverse fields, and graduate in four years. We know from careful analysis of feedback from students and from monitoring their academic behavior where some of the pressure points are in advising or in the curriculum that impede their progress. President Kaler has expressed his concern about improving the four-year graduation rates for undergraduate students, and we know that we can provide an outstanding education to our students within that time frame. Thanks to our dedicated cadre of advisors and to our faculty and instructional staff, we have made some progress in the last few years in improving our 4-year graduation rates, but we need to do more. We remain committed to preserving access to the courses that students need, and I ask for your help as you plan your curricula and work with your undergraduate advisees to support them as they aim for the timely completion of their degrees.



In the coming year, we will also complete the establishment of the new infrastructure to support graduate education and graduate student services in the college. The devolution of many of the functions of the former Graduate School, now the Office of Graduate Education, to the colleges has understandably generated much concern and confusion among graduate students about the respective responsibilities of the central and collegiate offices. We are committed to clarifying the new collegiate role as quickly as possible, and certainly by the end of the current academic year. Should unforeseen circumstances intervene that retard this process, we will work speedily with the Graduate Education office to resolve them. Our students and graduate directors have waited an inordinately long time, and we are eager to complete the transition. In addition to these administrative matters, we will begin to regularize the collegiate distribution of funding for graduate education from all sources this fall, and develop a plan for the distribution of funds for multiple-year (i.e., two-to-three year) periods in FY13.

I have deliberately not spoken, as I have in the last two years, about the fiscal constraints within which we must operate. I think you all know that the economic environment remains uncertain, but I believe we need to look beyond the fiscal fog and redirect our energy towards what we want to build and achieve. As mandated by the CLA constitution, I am pleased to report that our FY12 budget is balanced, thanks to the financial planning of our able Chief Financial Officer

Karen Dewanz. We still need to identify an additional \$2.8M in reductions over the next ten months, about 1.3% of our \$222M operating budget, but I am confident in our ability to close this gap. Some of those reductions will be realized by the smaller cohorts of matriculated graduate students, a process that we began two years ago, and that still continues; some through reducing administrative costs through hubbing administrative support services, where feasible, for multiple departments or centers. We are also planning on some programmatic reductions in areas that are no longer departmental priorities where faculty and staff have retired or departed. Throughout this process, we are trying to preserve as much recurring funds as possible not only as a cushion against future downturns but as a reserve from which we can increase graduate student support and hire the faculty and staff for advancing some of the initiatives I mentioned earlier. Finally, we will continue to work with selected departments for which a professional masters degree is academically sound and is likely to generate new revenue over time for the program and the college.

This past year we asked our academic and administrative units to engage in a planning process that identifies in what areas they wish to focus and build, and to identify possible non-core activities or programs that could be discontinued. In contrast to previous years, we have moved this process from the spring to the fall so that departments will have the following year's budget information available

several months before the start of the fiscal year. The earlier time will enable units to plan their curricula for the upcoming academic year with a budget in hand, and will help us in the college to identify the academic priorities that may in turn inform our annual budget request for strategic investment from the University. I anticipate that there will be overlapping interests across several departments about investing in new research and curricular directions and in faculty hires. For example, we have several faculty scattered across the college working on topics such as human rights, Middle Eastern history and culture, demography, and global ethnicity and migration, and we may well want to consider ways of coalescing these diverse areas of emerging strengths. At the end of the unit planning meetings in early winter, we will construct a collegiate plan (to be updated annually) that will clearly enunciate our shared goals and identify the areas for future investment.

As we launch a campaign for the liberal arts, we must reaffirm the common mission of our college and acknowledge the interdependency of our very diverse community. In the past, departments have generally vied against each other for resources without thinking about those places where they might best collaborate with colleagues from another department in shaping a shared aspiration. In our research and creative work we freely exist in an environment where the boundaries are porous, and our work has often profited greatly from such interdisciplinary interactions. We must now take the additional step of realizing our

interdependence institutionally. We must work collaboratively to ensure that university students grasp the foundational role of a liberal arts education, and that they choose our college and remain in it because of a shared belief in the advantages of a rigorous liberal arts major. We need to look beyond numbers of students that our home departments are attracting and realize that if our college in the aggregate is not enrolling students well, the consequences affect all of us, and we need to work harder. To be sure, fewer students in CLA, especially fewer of those who initially chose our college, means lower tuition revenue, but, more importantly, a further diminishing of a liberal arts education. Be we Hispanists, geographers, or statisticians, we must animate the liberal arts daily in our research and our teaching, and ensure that our actions manifest the interdependency of our intellectual lives.