TCP: How have your first few weeks/months as dean been?

Alan Wolf: I’ve been working long days, 7 days a week. I always thought of myself as a hard worker, but this has been a whole new level of busy. I thought it would get worse once school started but fortunately, it’s calmed down. We had lots of issues simultaneously: we are transitioning from Agent, the system that gives us access to student records to a new system called WebAdvisor. Any database change like this is painful, but we made the transition at the beginning of the semester, when we had a critical need to access those records for advising. We’ve also had problems with Moodle, which now seem to be resolved. All of this has been a focus on plans for “reinventing” the institution. So it’s been an incredibly stressful few weeks. It’s probably not easy transitioning to Dean at a normal time in an institution. This hasn’t been normal. I have a new respect for administrators who attend endless meetings and do a hundred things a day that are required for the day-to-day operation of the school, and still have to find time for the really critical large tasks.

TCP: Do you have any long term or short term plans as dean for the engineering school?

AW: Well I’m an Acting Dean so I won’t get to work very long on long term plans, although I hope to start some initiatives. My hope is to be back to full time teaching by next September. The dean search committee will be restarting the search for a permanent dean soon. Filling a position like this generally takes 6 months or longer. Even if we identified someone in the next couple of months, they’re probably a dean elsewhere. Their institution is entitled to a reasonable amount of notice. In terms of short term plans, it’s very simple. The president’s welcome message says that the deans have to prepare by November 15th plans for the trustees. I’m coordinating that in the School of Engineering. What we have done is formed five subcommittees. The five subcommittees are: An undergraduate tuition subcommittee. A graduate tuition subcommittee. That’s a misleading name because that could actually be any tuition-charging-program that isn’t our current four year undergraduate program.

TCP: Can you tell us anything about the short term plans for the trustees?

AW: The president’s primary goal is to inform you of what’s happening at this school. What we will do nothing less than the best we physically can to do so.

Yes, times are tough, but we’ve been in tough times before. The three schools have very difficult tasks ahead of them, but I have full confidence in our administrators that we will be able to pull through.

We are Cooper Union. If any college can make it through these difficult times, it’s us.

Sincerely,
Marcus Michelen (BSE ’14)
Editor-in-Chief

Online System Update
YARA ELBOROLOSY (CE ’14)

As September draws to a close, the new online system that was purchased for the school, Ellucian’s (Datatel’s) data system Colleague, will (ideally) be ready for students to log in to as soon as this week, according to Dean Lipton. The students and staff will go through Web Advisor in order to use the system. At the moment, there is a fair amount of faculty that are already logging on. Once you log on, you are taken to a main screen where you indicate whether you are a student, faculty, advisor, etc. This takes you to another page where you will be able to see your transcript, progression towards graduation, financial aid package, and just about everything else you need.

This system will replace SAIS, which explains why recent attempts to log into SAIS haven’t worked. Faculty will have access to their class roster and will be able to find contact information for their students if needed. Students haven’t been able to log into the new system yet because IT has to ensure that every student has a work number and temporary password associated with their Colleague account. All of the old information is being transferred into the system and has to be double checked to insure there is nothing missing or inaccurate.

Colleague will have all of the offices collecting data from one source, eliminating any disconnect between offices. Every office will also have the ability to edit this one source of data, which may or may not be a good thing. While this ability to edit data may encourage more communication between various offices, it may also muddle identifying who makes edits to certain data.

There are still some details being hammered out, such as how advisement will be taken care. It could involve a student making a schedule they are interested in and sending it to their advisor, who would then offer the student their opinions and suggestions.

Everyone involved in working on the system has been working very hard to make it the best it can be and hope to have all students registered online by November, which at this point seems realistic. Colleague will be constantly updated as the school year goes on, and according to Dean Lipton will be good for Cooper.

Anyone who tried to pick up their financial aid check on Wednesday went through the wonderful process of being told they weren’t ready and to come back the next day, three times. On Friday, not only were financial aid checks not being able to print but almost no check could be printed.

In order to compensate, they did offer emergency loan checks but only for dire emergencies. Datatel, the new system that we are switching to, did manage to find the problem but are still in the process of fixing it. If you attempted to log on to sais, you were pleasantly surprised with the following page:

This is a test for a page where students can go to see any sort of update we care to post.

ACM/IEEE LECTURE SERIES #1
“Electrical Engineering in Finance”
with Irene Aldridge

Date: Tuesday, October 2, 2012
Time: 12 P.M. – 2 P.M. (Club Hours)
Location: Rose Auditorium, 41 Cooper Square
Being an engineer is not just about grinding through calculus. It's about interacting with clients, sometimes finding developing new business, preparing reports that communicate effectively. That means they need to develop their writing skills and their public speaking skills. It's something students have to focus on. A lot of potential employers are looking for people who have people skills and communication skills. That means paying attention to Humanities courses and communication workshops. Are you shocked to hear this out of me?

TCP: I am!

AW: This is a new position for me because I've been sitting in these sort of meetings in recent weeks. In terms of the financial crisis, current students, and even next year's students, are grandfathered in for no tuition. It can't be true that current students will get tuition bills. I think current freshmen should focus on their education and count on the efforts of these committees to fashion a plan for the school of engineering that will make us sustainable. If it wasn't clear from Jamshed's welcome letter, the plans for the three schools are entirely separate. We could have three different routes to survivability. Each of us has a dollar target: the five year target for architecture is 1.2 million and for art it's 1.8 million. For us it is $3 million.

TCP: Is that proportion to total students?

AW: It's actually proportional to the total cost of each of the programs. Our share is half, because it costs half to run the school of engineering. I think it's a good thing, that the fates of the three schools have been disconnected, because what is acceptable to the three schools as a means of survival or sustainability will likely be different. What makes sense for art might not make sense for engineering. But I think freshmen should focus on their education and put their confidence in very hard working faculty and administrators as well as very concerned trustees to pull us through this.

I was thrown out of Cooper in 1976 because we ran out of money. That's when the math and physics degree programs were terminated. Here we are thirty-some odd years later. We're out of money again. This time the financial problem is more serious. But we pulled it out of the fire last time and I believe we will do it again this time. It's going to require some serious reinvention of the institution. The president has emphasized that it's not just about money, that there are also serious quality issues. He wants to ensure that we are not just going to meet our dollar targets, but that we have preserved ourselves to be equal to the best.

TCP: Do you have any comment on professor Uglesich resigning so suddenly?

AW: I am not going to say that is because I've got feedback, to study harder. That's usually what I say. The reason

Best Regards,

Jammed Bharucha President