

## Comparing the Institution Identities Plan with the White Paper scenarios

Faculty in a number of programs have been working hard to set the stage for the type of science, nursing, and health college that is proposed in the Institution Identities Plan. One example is Pat O'Mahoney-Damon who has been helping train hundreds of the best nurses each year while also advising the biology department's pre-professional students in her rainy office. Pat is superhuman! Unfortunately, the dean of ASET got the idea to move biology and other CAS math and sciences departments into ASET, and as lead author of the Academic Restructuring White Paper he included this new "STEM college" plan in four of the five scenarios. But a STEM college (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) would be weak in several of the same ways in which the Institution Identities Plan is strong:

1) Although there are different numbers of STEM faculty on each campus, our best STEM faculty members are found on all three campuses. Therefore, A STEM college would either be our first college spanning three campuses (Gosh, thanks) or would relocate, eliminate, or marginalize STEM activity on one campus (i.e., L-AC). In creating a STEM college, STEM activities would immediately be weakened.

2) A STEM college doesn't provide much of an identity. It foolishly competes head on with Orono's strong STEM programs (Actually, it is doubly foolish given Chancellor Pattenau's new anti-redundancy statements). In comparison, the Institution Identities Plan focuses our STEM activities on marketable topics for which USM is uniquely competitive.

More generally, the notion that we are serious about STEM doesn't have much bite. Students target topics within STEM (few premeds care if we have an engineering program, few engineering students care if we have a chemistry program, etc). Our business partners also tend to be focused like that (National Semiconductor doesn't care about our psychology program, Maine Biotechnology Services doesn't care about our engineering program, etc).

Every other institution in northern New England, public and private, is also focused on STEM --- It's kind of like saying you are focused on reading. Instead, we can use our unique position and strengths to focus on specific topics within STEM.

3) A STEM college wouldn't include all STEM faculty (STEM grants often include the Muskie School or College of Education). I caught up with a colleague on campus and we noted he has the longest externally funded program STEM program at USM but wasn't invited to any of the STEM college planning meetings. He just shrugged. Obviously he didn't need to be in a STEM college to do STEM work. Since it's OK that some STEM faculty aren't in a STEM college, why do any have to be?

4) There is a dramatic difference in the history of the ASET and CAS science departments with regard to faculty salary, replacement lines, staff support, facilities, infrastructure, etc. In a STEM college someone will be unhappy. Either that disparity will be maintained at the cost of former CAS faculty happiness or it will be rectified at the cost of former ASET faculty happiness.

5) Is Scenario #4 in the white paper an acceptable compromise? No, because it takes the STEM college of Scenarios #1 - #3 with all its weaknesses and glues the College of Nursing onto it. Then, STEM college proponents immediately split the college into two schools. Nothing gained. The Institution Identities Plan builds strong colleges with appropriate STEM activities included in each. The nursing program should be in the same college and school as the biology department. The nursing program should be in the same college as the school of social work, but not with technology or engineering. Indeed, the Technology, Engineering, and Math components of STEM at USM aren't focused on human health and we shouldn't pretend they will be; the biomedical engineering suggested in Scenario #4 is prohibitively expensive except at the largest research universities.

6) Creating a STEM college wouldn't save any money. The dean of ASET is probably proposing it in part simply because some ASET programs have dangerously few students.

7) Perhaps the strongest reason put forth by STEM college proponents is a hope for improved advocacy for STEM within USM. But the hope for increased internal advocacy would be offset by having assembled the most resource intensive programs into one college. The new dean just couldn't garner the lop-sided support within USM necessary to sustain STEM activities. In fact, it's the high cost of the current All-STEM ASET college that is making the ASET dean and faculty anxious in the first place. STEM programs are best supported by distributing them amongst appropriate colleges as in the Institution Identities Plan.

8) So far, no STEM faculty members have expressed criticism of the Institution Identities Plan except a math professor concerned the math program wasn't explicitly mentioned (a clarifying comment has since been added). In comparison, a variety of STEM faculty have expressed a variety of criticisms about a STEM college at USM.

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