

**Address to Arts and Sciences Council
September 10, 2009
George L. McLendon**

It is my pleasure to welcome the Council back into session. By established custom, the Dean addresses the Council on events of the moment and/or visions for the year. This time, however, I would like to begin with a short retrospective. Having spent five years as your Dean, there are a number of things I feel fortunate to have been a part of at Duke. Near the top of that list would be the opportunity to work with you to establish a new relationship between the Dean and faculty, embodied in the recreated Arts and Sciences Faculty Council, with a new (senatorial) representation, new roles, including developing improved curricula, expanded undergraduate research, expanded faculty governance, modified leave policies and compensation among other advances. It has been and remains a privilege to work with you.

One critical role of the Council and our committees is curriculum. Since all non-engineering undergraduates receive Trinity degrees, this body now serves multiple schools which offer undergraduate majors including, for example, Nicholas, Sanford, and the multidisciplinary neuroscience major sponsored by this body last year. I note in passing that there

was an unexpected disconnection when Sanford became an independent school; I would ask this body to do what is appropriate to ensure that each undergraduate major is fully represented in our work and committees which serve our students, regardless of the specific school which houses them. I would acknowledge the particular role that the Dean of Undergraduate Education, Steve Nowicki, can play in your deliberations as he helps us all think about our 21st Century contributions.

Some other highlights of my years include the hiring of 270 faculty resulting in a net increase of almost 50 regular rank faculty, and doubling the number of undergraduates engaged in faculty mentored research and senior theses. We are working with The Duke Endowment to sustain these research opportunities even at a time of constrained resources.

Facilities have seen unprecedented improvements, including but not limited to the Friedl Building, the Nasher Museum of Art, the French Family Science Center, Bostock, and the list goes on.

I am deeply proud of Duke’s commitment to inclusivity and the affordability of Duke through our remarkably successful Financial Aid Initiative, including the Arts and Sciences faculty scholarship sponsored by this body.

Last, but not least, we can continue our business, because of successful reaccreditation, including an engaged ongoing commitment to assessment and consequent improvements in all our offerings.

These have all been positive transformative changes. The resources gained and deployed have positioned us well for the present moment where resources are more limited – Duke has long been a “momentum” school. That momentum can and should continue, although the acceleration of the past few years will not.

The way our generous endowments are stewarded, with a three-year averaging, we have been largely shielded from the worst of the downturn until now. We do face several challenging years, but Duke has met challenges before. Recall – this campus was built at the height of the Great Depression –

in one year the building of Duke was the single largest construction project in the United States!

The magnitude of the current challenge requires removing ca. \$12M from our core (\$300M) budget. At least half of this budget is not fungible for items like scholarship aid. As the remaining budget is overwhelmingly personnel, it is mathematically certain that some personnel changes will occur. An important part of that process began with the widely successful early retirement incentive program. This has, in turn, created vacancies which ripple through the system, requiring re-examination of our historic approaches to staffing, and our staff, faculty, departments, and units are responding creatively. As one example, in some smaller units, combining business can result in improved service for all at a new lower cost.

A critical component of our process within Arts and Sciences has been the establishment of an advisory committee on the budget and priorities process, to ensure maximum input transparency: faculty representation includes Ranjana Khanna (Women's Studies), Keith Whitfield (Psychology and Neuroscience), Suzanne Shanahan (Sociology), Mohamed Noor

(Biology), and Hans Van Miegroet (Art, Art History, and Visual Studies). Ruth serves ex officio as does Steve Nowicki.

In our first meeting, a number of helpful suggestions came from the faculty representatives; I urge you to use them as representatives of your own suggestions and deliberations.

In order to do even better, and pursue the most exciting new opportunities, what old habits and approaches are we willing to give up? [\[Chemistry textbook example.\]](#) At the faculty level, we will continue to hire. Although hiring will necessarily be at a slower pace than the last few years. It will also be in a period of dramatically lowered competition, teaching opportunity needs represent a major (potential) advance, and not a status quo replacement.

I also believe this is a crucial time to examine the roles of non-regular rank instruction. In some units, this has grown substantially, sometimes without sufficient attention to the trade-offs.

At a time when all trade-offs are in clearer relief, we have to examine whether our curricula, and the students we serve, are

best advanced by each of these non-regular rank teaching assignments. In many cases, the answer will unambiguously be “yes,” and we will continue to work (as I recently began) to move such folks where appropriate to regular-rank positions (e.g. lecturer). In other cases, if the answer is “no,” we will find approaches which, in the long run, are better for all concerned.

The critical reality is this: we are each extraordinarily blessed to work at one of the world’s greatest universities with some of the world’s most remarkable facilities staffed with extraordinary students and brilliant and delightful colleagues.

As you know, I have continued to teach half-time while Dean – somewhat by accident this year I am “overloading,” in a remarkable program which combines Fuqua MBA’s as mentors of Duke undergraduates working jointly to explore, and where appropriate, help develop new entrepreneurial ventures. I am serving as advisor to one such team, exploring the implementation of (greenhouse-free emission) wind energy in developing democracies. I had my first meeting with the team members this week. Their excitement and commitment for knowledge in the service of society, using their skills to

build new and sustainable businesses reminds me just how special what we do here can be.

We help equip and guide our remarkable and talented students to create their own futures – and in so doing – all our futures.

Any short term budgetary challenges pale when placed against such a mission and such advantages.

Thank you.