

CALS Faculty Council
August 10, 2016

Recommendation on Communication within CALS
Submitted to Dean Shane Burgess

As in higher education elsewhere, faculty within CALS are dealing with the transformation in how centralized funds are distributed within the University and College. In order to effectively make this transition and move the College forward, faculty need a clear explanation of these changes and how they may impact the College, its units, and our faculty, staff, and students. In this regard, we consider that this communication has often not occurred, leaving CALS faculty uncertain about the future. The lack of clear communication complicates our efforts to strategically plan our teaching, research, and outreach programs. We often rely on second or third-hand information, and this makes planning inefficient, and ultimately has contributed to reduced morale and heightened levels of insecurity and suspicion among our faculty. This detracts from our efforts and ability to do our jobs well.

As representatives of our faculty, we believe it is Dean Burgess' responsibility as leader of CALS to effectively communicate the changes that are occurring in the College. This communication should be open, clear, and concise. If there is uncertainty in how changes will impact CALS, that uncertainty should be communicated. Effective communication—even of bad news—provides clarity of the future and this knowledge should help faculty to be more productive.

For matters where Faculty Council input is sought, we believe it is important for the Faculty Council to hear and understand the Dean's intentions and opinions on those matters. This also should involve the opportunity to ask for clarifications. Otherwise, faculty assigned to a task are left wondering whether their contributions are appropriate or realistic, and whether they have any chance of even being considered by the Dean. In saying this, we are not requesting that the Dean provide his decisions beforehand; instead, the faculty needs to know what the Dean's plan is, where he stands on the issues, what information and constraints he is aware of, and as a member of the CALS faculty, what his opinions are. Such a procedure would make it easier for faculty to offer meaningful input and to truly feel involved in shared governance.

Suggestions:

1. A monthly "**Dean's Newsletter**" for CALS faculty and staff and produced by the Dean. This could serve as a regular source of information related to all matters of concern to this audience. Emphasis should be on brevity and clarity. Perhaps no more than 500 words of text per issue; and,
2. A monthly open roundtable discussion, "**Questions and answers with the Dean,**" for faculty and facilitated by the Faculty Council. Opening with a *brief* informal statement by the Dean on a topic of his choosing followed by questions and discussions on this or any other matter. No more than 60 minutes long, perhaps held on the first Friday morning of each month in an informal setting with coffee.