October 21, 2014

Dear Mines Community:

In the fall of 2011 we departed from our traditional flat organizational structure in academic affairs and opened our first college, the College of Engineering and Computational Sciences. In the following year, we opened two more colleges: the College of Applied Science and Engineering and the College of Earth Resource Sciences and Engineering. These colleges are an important step in the evolution of Mines as an institution. We are no longer a small technical school that serves a select set of industries. Our evolution as a campus has made us the number 22 producer of Engineers in the nation; in the sciences we are a significant producer of undergrad physicists and chemists.

Even though we are a relatively small campus in terms of students, faculty, and staff, we carry a large and important footprint in the fields that we serve. As we grew in the breadth and depth of degrees, as our students became increasingly talented and accomplished, and as our faculty expanded in both number and research impact, an expanded administrative structure was put in place to address the increased complexity and scale of the institution; this structure was the implementation of colleges.

The transition to colleges, like all significant organizational changes, has challenged our traditional operational processes. The difficulty for some has been a sense that the colleges have moved individuals one step farther from decisions that are important to them. In fact, an important part of the traditional culture of Mines is that most decisions were made by a faculty or staff member’s immediate supervisor (department head) or at the next level of authority (provost). This is a part of our culture we have always intended to preserve, but with which we have struggled as we work to better define the roles and responsibilities of the Provost and College Deans. We must further empower the new College Deans as fully responsible decision makers to preserve this important part of our culture. With Deans carrying more responsibility, we will once again find that most decisions that affect an individual will be made by their immediate supervisor (department head) or at the next level of authority (their dean). Further, we must embrace the Dean’s important role not only as key members of the executive team, but also as critical leaders for their college. Each Dean must help define and then advocate the college’s strategic vision and plan and, in effect, serve as the Chief Academic Officer for their college.

Over the course of the coming year, we will actively increase authority, responsibility and accountability for the Deans and communicate these to the campus. A focus for the Deans will be to formally empower Department Heads/Division Directors and define appropriate levels of responsibility and accountability for them as well. Immediately, we are formally announcing that College Deans now carry the following responsibility and authority:

1) Full authority on authorized untenured, non-chaired faculty hires
2) Full authority on authorized Administrative and Research faculty/staff hiring
3) Full authority on faculty/research/administrative salaries
4) Full authority on operating, student labor, TA, and adjunct budgets
5) Full responsibility for budget monitoring and forecasting

As our operating model matures to fully embrace colleges, this purposeful definition of College authority is one of the next important steps in our evolution as a campus. This evolution has brought us in a small number of years to a campus that attracts truly great students largely due to our outstanding faculty.

We also acknowledge that effective communication from faculty to administration is critical for the long term health of the institution. Please do remember that the administration operates with an open door; email addresses for Provost and Deans are next to their signatures on this message.

So, as always, we thank you for all that you do for Mines.

All the Best,

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