

## **Listening Sessions Summary October-November 2005**

On October 19, 20, 25, and 31 and November 2, 2005, the members of the Task Force hosted listening sessions to which all faculty, staff, and students in the CoE were invited.

Each listening session opened with a brief overview of the dean's presentation from September 16<sup>th</sup> on the drivers for change in engineering education. Attendees were then asked to respond to three questions (though the conversation was allowed to proceed as attendees chose).

1. Describe your job, role or place in CoE in the year 2010. How will it be different from what it is now? What changes will have occurred? If you do not plan to be here, please answer for those that follow you.
2. What will cause the changes you described? What are the most important drivers for change in engineering education and in engineering itself?
3. What effect will these drivers have on the CoE as a whole?

A total of roughly five-dozen members of the CoE community attended the listening sessions, and another half dozen who were unable to attend a session provided comments to members of the Task Force via email or telephone. (Discussions are also on-going in various college committees, including the Operating Committee, CASI, and the APC.) Attendees included faculty, academic staff, classified staff, and students, though the mix varied in each session.

The comments in the listening sessions covered a wide range of topics, including curricular design and flexibility, advising, merit and other reward/recognition systems, tenure procedures, communication of expectations, support for young families, student recruitment and retention, and more. Detailed notes were taken on each session. The Task Force has summarized these notes as follows.

Attendees believed that drivers for change will certainly include budget and (on a related note) changes to the student body, and the size of the faculty. Global pressures will be a factor as well, whether through relocated jobs or through increased competition or both. The rate of change in higher education and in the culture around us also seems to be increasing. Some attendees felt that in addition to these broad changes, their own jobs will be changing significantly in the next five years, though this perspective came more often from staff than from faculty. Faculty noted that they will potentially be more involved in financing the college, either through fundraising efforts or through increased research efforts. Increasing discussions of the "relevance" of engineering will force change as well, according to attendees, which may pose a challenge to engineers trained as problem solvers rather than problem framers. The lack of a clear impetus (a la the Cold War or Sputnik and the Space Race) presents a challenge to those who may want to direct

change. And finally, all of the drivers noted above will affect who is drawn to engineering (and who isn't).

The changes described by attendees fall into three broad categories: Environment, Interaction, and People.

### Environment

- Leadership, incentives, and flexibility must exist for students, faculty, and staff to participate in experimentation, change, and choice.
- Faculty and staff must provide an education that prepares our students to enter the world as it will be, not as it was.
- Faculty, staff and students need to be able to work effectively in an environment where diversity is the norm rather than the exception.

### Interaction

- Cross-disciplinary research and education will be the norm, but only if the infrastructure exists to support them.
- Interaction across groups (faculty, staff, students, departments, etc.) will help build community and encourage further cross-disciplinary collaborations.

### People

- Professional development for faculty and staff will enable them to keep pace with changes in the college, the profession, and the world, and thus serve students well.