

State of the College of Sciences Interim Report
Some Personal Observations
Summer 2010

[NOTE: This document is intended to be read on-line. The high-lighted hyperlinks contain critical background information not included in the body text.]

Today, July 7, 2010, we welcome our new leader, Dr. Tony Blose, to Angelo State University. His arrival coincides with sweeping changes at ASU; changes which I think will help us build a better, stronger, and more satisfying work environment. With the multitude of changes sweeping our campus, this is a good time to report to you on how far we have come and where we are looking into the future.

A year and a half ago my morale was as low as it has ever been in my professional life. I found myself unable to deliver on many of my basic deanly obligations to you. Our college, though exceptional, was hobbled by an antiquated patchwork of policies, practices, and procedures that had ceased to be functional long ago. “We’ve never done it that way” was all too common. But, as you have heard me exhort many times, every one of our valid complaints is an opportunity. And with Dr. Rallo’s encouragement, your comments, criticisms, and suggestions are now being acted upon.

If you haven’t seen much of me this past year, it is with good reason. I have spent literally hundreds of hours in administrative huddles with our colleagues from the other colleges. In the process, we have created the framework for a real and functional Division of Academic Affairs and built a solid foundation to restore the primacy of the faculty. If you haven’t looked lately, check out the website for the [VPAA](#). Like an academic sausage-mill, everything is posted now. As you can see documented there, we attacked dozens of structural problems and, I think, you will see the fruits of these labors in the months ahead. No, it is not even close to perfect, but it is now in malleable form.

The most critical issues we addressed last year were the [27 Goals](#) created by Jim Limbaugh and the deans when he assumed the Provost’s role. Although many of these goals will not be fully implemented until the 2010-2011 academic year, as of today, every last one of those initiatives has been completed. A final status report, the same one Dr. Blose will receive, can be found [here](#). On a broader scale, many of you participated in creating the [Vision 2020 Strategic Plan](#) for ASU. *If it ain’t in the plan, it ain’t happening*. The point here is transparency. We may be hallucinating, but at least we are all hallucinating together and on the same theme!

The national and statewide economy continues to drag its knuckles. But Dr. Rallo’s emphasis on rewarding winners is benefiting the College of Sciences. The current Summer 2010 term is being funded completely from local tuition and fees with a strong science and mathematics contribution to our biennial formula funding from the state (to be paid out in 2012).

The Fall 2010 term promises to set new enrollment records for ASU with the College of Sciences proudly leading the way (and without the byzantine practice of *teaching overloads*). New programs in Agriculture Education, Computer Gaming and Simulation, Geosciences, and Computational & Applied Mathematics are well underway. Our JAMP program continues to set a statewide example, and extramural funding in Chemistry and Biochemistry is matching all time records. The College of Sciences is one of the leading players in the new DOD-funded *Center for Security Studies*.

We have secured a small (~\$265K/annually) but secure funding source for lab equipment repair and replacement. Dedicated lab support personnel are being hired for the fall. We have secured start-up funding for new faculty hires. The Planetarium is receiving its first major upgrade in 25 years. In the process, it will become a teaching resource for all of our disciplines with the addition of full-dome digital projectors and a dedicated programming staff.

Most critically, we have repaired the structural budget issues in Academic Affairs which will allow us to migrate all of our non-tenure track faculty onto hard money and concomitantly banish the archaic *lecturer* classification from our hallowed halls. This final action will be presented to the Board of Regents at their next meeting.

A year ago Dr. Limbaugh and the deans made a commitment to the president that we would fix many of the long-standing issues before the new Provost arrived. Many of you joined me in making this promise come true. In April I sent [this memo](#) to Dr. Blose outlining our major challenges and opportunities in the College of Sciences. But this is just the start.

The SACS reaffirmation process has already begun. The spearhead of *mission-driven action plans* and *student learning outcomes* you initiated 3 years ago has served as a model for the institution. Our own Kelly McCoy is taking a leadership position in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which will catapult us into an intensive faculty-based accreditation process over the next two years. There are four SACS-specific items we are handing off to Dr. Blose:

- Academic Program Review for every program on campus.
- Total curriculum review for integrated vertical alignment of classes within programs.
- Major new initiatives in Academic Advising to support retention and student learning.
- QEP kick-off.

The truly wonderful news is that none of these initiatives will be ad hoc; all will be built on the work you have already done in defining our mission, goals, and student learning outcomes. As your humble dean, my morale is now bubbling; even joyous! We may be crossing the Jordan River into a new academic promised land. Sure, there are still lots of things to work on, but the fields you have cultivated are ready for harvest. We're making a good institution, a great one! And the state of your college is good indeed.