

Subject: ed policy feedback
From: "Andrew G Alleyne" <alleyne@ad.uiuc.edu>
To: "Abbas Aminmansour" <aamin@uiuc.edu>

hi abbas,

feedback from the forum yesterday for your committee.

regarding one comment from the audience. although it was not directly presented, mechanical engineering (in it's future form) is well suited to assume a leadership role in the area of applied mathematics. we are not your parent's era mechanical engineering department. we've got several faculty who've received degrees from applied math programs. in fact, one of our faculty hires (geir dullerud) taught in the applied math department at U. Waterloo before coming to us. i don't want to give a long list but if you check our hires over the past decade we're definitely capable. we've just never been asked to assume that leadership role. I believe that if it was requested of us we would be able to do an excellent job. both from an educational and research point of view.

also, one thing that i did not bring up that puzzles me and I haven't found an answer to. i'd have brought it up yesterday but it would just have sparked a round of debate without conclusions. i'll leave it to your committee to ponder. the claim has been made by TAM faculty that every attempt in the US to merge a mechanics program with another department has been disastrous. I believe the statement made is something like "every merger has failed." if every merger has failed, and we assume that it is critical for an independent mechanics group to exist, then why have none of the other universities where this failure has occurred taken it upon themselves to rebuild an independent mechanics department. If it were so critical to have an independent unit, why haven't MIT and Stanford rebuilt theirs? Why doesn't Berkely or CalTech spin off a separate mechanics department. i would think that at least *one* of these peer institutions would have tried to do so if it were truly so critical to their continued success. could it be that 'failure' on the unit/departmental/faculty level may not be perceived as such at the global/college/campus level? there are obviously pros and cons to an independent unit. however, when taken in total, none of our peer institutions has felt that the pros sufficiently outweigh the other options. not that i believe we need to be followers here but i can't see us ignoring a very clear trend established by some pretty smart & thoughtful people.

good luck with your deliberations. I don't envy you.
Andrew

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"If it's fun then it's not work"