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Memo

To: Faculty of Engineering Community
From: Adel Sedra
CC: Members of the Task Force on Women in Engineering
Gosia Brestovacki, Editor, Eng-e-News
Date: December 12, 2005
Re: Report of the Task Force on Women in Engineering
as part of the Vision 2010 Planning Exercise in the Faculty of Engineering

I am very pleased to make public the final report of the Task Force on Women in Engineering, which I struck earlier this year as part of our Vision 2010 planning exercise. On behalf of the Faculty of Engineering, I thank Prof. Christine Moresoli, Chair, and the members of her Task Force (Prof. Ladan Tahvildari, Prof. Bill Lennox, Toni Carlisle, Bernice Chan, Leanne Whiteley, Lesley James, Natasha Derbentseva, Devon Hutchinson, Kim Boucher, and Amy Resmer) for their excellent work in producing this very thoughtful and detailed report.

Of particular note are the extensive efforts the task force made to consult with undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members in order to understand the current situation, and the thoughtful and detailed observations and recommendations they prepared as a result, which are presented beginning on page 22 of the final report. It is clear that the University of Waterloo needs to take further proactive steps to encourage and facilitate the participation of women in all areas of our engineering community, and the recommendations included in this report provide a number of positive steps that can be taken to do so.

I am recommending the implementation of most of the task force's recommendations. Foremost, I plan to create a new full-time staff position that will have shared responsibility for recommendations arising from the women in engineering task force and those arising from the faculty issues task force. A minimum of 50 per cent of this position will be focused on women in engineering, and many of the faculty issues it will address will be highly synergistic with women in engineering initiatives.

This new staff position will be central to implementing a number of other operational recommendations included in the task force report, particularly those aimed at strengthening the Women in Engineering Committee (WIE), providing continuity to its activities, and better integrating its efforts with other internal

and external groups and individuals. I expect to see the centre of gravity for women in engineering initiatives and decisions to remain fully with the WIE and its leadership; however, this new staff position will provide ongoing support and an important element of continuity to the Committee and its efforts.

Furthermore, the recommendations included in this report and the surveys conducted for its preparation provide a solid foundation of event ideas for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members from which the Committee and staff support person can build initiatives for the coming years.

I am forwarding the recommendations regarding undergraduate recruitment efforts to the Faculty of Engineering Marketing and Recruitment Co-ordinator, to address in her strategic plan for recruitment and to work with the WIE for implementation. I am forwarding recommendations regarding graduate recruitment efforts to the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and International Agreements, for action through his working group on graduate recruitment.

The faculty members who fill the WIE faculty co-chair roles are fulfilling an extremely important service for the Faculty of Engineering. However, our women faculty also act as essential role models when they are actively engaged in teaching our undergraduate and graduate students. At this time, I do not plan to provide teaching relief to one of the co-chairs. I ask that the Chairs of the departments from which these co-chairs are appointed take this significant role into careful consideration when determining service tasks for our WIE co-chairs.

Regarding recommendations related to women faculty, the new staff position, in its joint role on women in engineering and faculty issues, will work to develop and co-ordinate improved mentorship and orientation programs and practices for new faculty members. These recommendations are expected to inform the planning and preparation of such new programs.

I agree with the task force observation that very little visibility and promotion of women faculty members exist. I will ask our Director of Planning and Communications to work with the WIE and staff support person to plan strategic ways to improve this situation. However, at this time I do not plan to include a chair of women in engineering among our fundraising priorities. If another government-funded chair should become available for women in engineering, Waterloo will certainly prepare a strong nomination for submission.

Again, I want to express my appreciation to the task force members for their hard work on this very important matter. I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes of the implementation of these recommendations over the next few years.

Adel S. Sedra