Master of Engineering Committee Meeting
September 10, 2003  8:00am – 9:00am
240 Carpenter Hall

Attendees:  Graeme Bailey, James Bartsch, John Belina, Larry Cathles, Scott Coldren, David Grubb, Mike Hayes, Fred Kulhawy, Richard Lovelace, Matthew Miller, Larry Newman, Mark Otis, Michael Spencer
Guests: Patty Apgar, Karen Biesecker
Absent: Claude Cohen, Mark Eisner, David Hammer, Jim Jenkins

Meeting Summary: College of Engineering Intranet, updates to M.Eng. web site, Strategic Plan discussion, and a new M.Eng. Representative for A&EP.

Jim Bartsch called the meeting to order at 8:05am.

Approval of May 2003 Minutes:
The May 2003 MEC minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.

Updates:

M.Eng. File to Move to Intranet:
Mark Otis:  The Intranet has been established. The MEC minutes will be available on that kerberos protected site instead of through the password protected site.
Mike Hayes:  The Intranet will be college-wide and huge. It’s internal to the College of Engineering. Faculty and Staff will have access to this site.

Web:
Mark Otis:  I am currently updating the M.Eng. web site. The new site will coincide with Increasing the impact of our recruiting materials and making information more easily accessible. If you have items you would like to see on our site, please contact me and we’ll make sure it’s included.

Other Business:
Mark Otis:  Dean Fuchs is traveling today, but he will attend the October MEC meeting.
Jim Bartsch:  Can you tell us anything about the approval process of BMEP?
Mike Hayes:  We should hear by the end of September. It’s at state level right now.
Jim Bartsch:  While reviewing a draft of the College’s Strategic Plan, I noticed that the Master of Engineering is one of the bullets.
Mike Hayes:
The Plan is currently in the hands of the Directors & Chairs in draft form for their feedback. A Faculty committee, appointed by the Dean, was convened to review graduate programs, as well as a Graduate Student Committee. Mike sat on both committees. We gave them input; we don’t know what they accepted. The Dean charged the Faculty committee with looking at graduate programs and assessing how we make Cornell University more prominent in the graduate program world; how do we increase our rankings; how do we increase our quality of students; etc. They did a thorough job. A series of recommendations was made, but I don’t know what those recommendations were.

Larry Cathles:
I sat in for our Chair at a meeting where we read the review carefully, and there is an issue we should consider with regard to increasing the amount of fellowship support for M.Eng. students. There’s an issue that comes up tangentially regarding the distinction between a regular Masters program, an M.Eng. program and the Ph.D. program and the allocation of faculty resources, etc. I personally think, for the long-term health of the M.Eng. program, we need to make a clear distinction with regard to how we get funding. Do we want to compete with Ph.D. and Master’s programs for fellowships, or do we want to draw the line that we’re a 5th year undergraduate program -- a money source, not a money sink. In terms of promoting what we deliver, we might want to think of alternate things that might bring us greater benefit. For example, small amounts of money for student projects, encouragement of interdisciplinary/interdepartmental projects, a way of piloting intellectual advances that can’t be done as well on a M.S. or Ph.D. level program. I worry about us blurring the line between what we are and what the M.S./Ph.D. programs are. We need to think carefully about what we want to accomplish.

Mike Hayes:
I recall that discussion with the Faculty committee, and the fellowship issue was not to compete with M.S./Ph.D., it was to give you more resources to fund more students.

Larry Cathles:
As soon as you enter the enterprise of trying to attract fellowship money or draw money toward the M.Eng. program, you’re competing with these other programs.

Mike Hayes:
You raise a good point. I would guess the bulk of your financial aid is gift money that someone has given toward the M.Eng. program – not from tuition returns.

Larry Cathles:
It’s not clear in the strategic plan.

Fred Kulhawy:
I agree, except for one point -- we need to get away from portraying this as a 5th year undergraduate program – this is a professional degree program.
It is a money making program. It’s a student-pay rather than a university pay program.

Graeme Bailey:
Concentrate on the professional development aspect and then open different kinds of doors for fundraising. Larry’s comment regarding maintaining a separate funding stream is critical.

Jim Bartsch:
Is there anything in the report about growing the program?

Mike Hayes:
I have no idea about the content of the final report. The subcommittee discussed the issue of program size.

Graeme:
I heard comments of constraining the M.Eng. program to provide resources in other areas.

Mike Hayes:
The discussions weren’t really about resources as much as faculty effort. Discussions centered on rankings, and the Planning Committee saw through that, but I don’t know what the outcome was.

Larry Cathles:
There are conflicts within report. On one hand, we want our Ph.D.s to graduate quicker; on the other hand, it talks about increasing the number of Ph.D.s per faculty member. These are in conflict with one another. Wrapped into that is the amount of time it takes faculty to properly supervise students in the M.Eng. program. There’s a trade-off between training proper Ph.D.s in a timely manner and doing other things like the M.Eng. program. We need to be clear about what we think the advantages of a professional program are.

Mike Hayes:
Kent set the Strategic Planning Committee up with parameters that aren’t overt in the report. He stated that we are about to enter into a capital campaign and increasing our faculty is a priority. The Committee had some insider information from when they made those recommendations. If those things come to fruition, it won’t look as dramatic as the report might indicate.

Jim Bartsch:
We have 443 new M.Eng. students for F’03 compared with 478 last year. How did the international students numbers fare?

Graeme Bailey:
We had 30 deferrals due to visa problems. S’04 isn’t really even a possibility for many of our students. Our web site indicates students can apply 1-year in advance to provide more of a line to get in.

Karen Biesecker:
Will you favor early apps?

Graeme Bailey:
Mid-range students won’t receive precedence.

Jim Bartsch:
We appreciate you sending agenda items to Mark Otis (mjo26). We will meet on 10/8 to speak with the Dean. Please check the Committee Member list for accuracy.

Richard Lovelace:
  Introduced himself to the Committee and indicated that he will be the new M.Eng. Representative for A&EP.

Jim Bartsch:
  I’ve had a couple of students ask about the issue of TAing for credit and having that credit count toward their M.Eng. program. I told them no, am I right?

John Belina:
  Yes, you are correct – we turned down the TA Development class years ago.

Mike Hayes:
  Thank you for allowing us to participate in your Orientations. We are seeing an increased flow of students into our new office as a result of that contact.

Graeme Bailey:
  Do we have a Howard University update?

Mike Spencer:
  Next month Mike Hayes and I will go down to Howard to follow up with Dean Johnson.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30am.