

Date: April 24, 2011

To: Faculty and Staff
College of Engineering

From: Thomas W. Lester, Dean

RE: Resignation as Dean

I have informed the President, Provost, and members of my senior staff of my intention to resign my position as Dean of the College of Engineering effective June 30, 2012. I've delayed my announcement until late in the semester to assure that I did not become the focus of attention at various student and college events. I'm also announcing my resignation before the new president is named to assure that nobody mistakes my decision as a vote of no confidence in the new institutional leadership. I will be communicating personally with alumni and other supporters of the college throughout this week, but you should feel free to discuss my decision with those among that group with whom you might routinely have interactions or correspondence. At this time, I've not yet finalized my future plans.

The experiences I've had as dean have been the most satisfying of my professional career. I've had the good fortune to serve under individuals who understood the importance of engineering to the university and the state, and I happened on the scene as resources were being made available for program and infrastructure development. A group of faculty and staff with great abilities and lofty ambitions greeted me upon my arrival as dean in July 1990. Much that has been attributed to me would have happened in any event, no matter who occupied the position.

I do take a great deal of pride in the faculty and staff colleagues I've hired, in those I've assisted in one way or another to succeed, and in the students who have entrusted their educational experience with us in engineering. Almost 10,000 have received their degrees during the past twenty years. I have enjoyed the experience of meeting thousands of alumni, of making life-long friends with a good number of them, and in having them respond positively to my appeals for their financial assistance to support our faculty in their endeavors and our students in their education.

The decision to leave is not an easy one in my circumstances. I've had too much enjoyment as the dean to depart without some regrets after having spent one-third of my life in the position. Nonetheless, it is time. It is time for a new dean to build upon the very real strengths of the college, to use their imagination for program enhancement, their national and international reputations to build the college's reputation, and their tenacity to attack problems for which I had no solution and against which I gave up the struggle long ago.

I believe it should be possible to attract a first rate individual. The College possesses a marvelous faculty, with strong senior leadership and abundant young faculty talent throughout the disciplines. Departmental leadership is outstanding-the best it has ever been in my opinion. There are members of

the senior academic leadership of the college who will be deans, if not here, then elsewhere. The staff is highly skilled, dedicated, and responsible for the college meeting its obligations day in and day out.

With the faculty and staff as the bedrock upon which all else depends, the college is poised for growth. Infrastructure needs further development, but in the main, it is now satisfactory to support first class education and research at the level expected at UK. Alumni, development, marketing, recruitment, and financial aid programs are now in place to assure the college attracts outstanding undergraduate students in significant numbers. Initiatives are underway to attract larger numbers of outstanding graduate students as well. Recruitment of more students from underrepresented groups still eludes us, and more needs to be done in future years in this area.

The college is now engaged in a wide array of educational, research, and engagement programs with a number of other colleges on campus, most notably agriculture, The Gatton College, arts and sciences, design, education, medicine, and pharmacy. Linkages with the Center for Applied Energy Research are evolving, but have a ways to go. Over ten percent of our undergraduate students now participate in one or more of the college's international endeavors. It would be difficult to find another engineering college in this country with more linkages to other academic programs within the university and overseas.

That some of you openly admit that you were members of the search committee that brought me to UK brings me great satisfaction! I hope that I have not misread your sentiments-that I have in most ways repaid your confidence in me when I came to UK in 1990. To other members of the college, I extend my profound thanks for your many gestures of support and encouragement during my tenure as dean. I have always tried to convey the impression that I was not infallible in my decisions, that I was open to criticism, and that I respected the opinions of others. I trust that for the most part, I was successful in doing so.