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STATEMENT IN FAVOR OF KEEPING CIS IN ARTS AND SCIENCES

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I am here to speak in favor of keeping the Department of Computing and Information Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences. When a decision was made to develop computer science on this campus in the late 60's, I am told that there was debate at that time as to where the department should be located, Arts and Sciences or Engineering. The decision was made to place computer science in the Department of Statistics, my department, with the understanding that it would eventually become a full-fledged department in the College of Arts and Sciences. The people in my department felt that was the right decision then. We believe that keeping the CIS Department in Arts and Sciences would be the right decision now.

I see at least three major problems arising from the move of the CIS department out of Arts and Sciences. I hasten to say that the problems are not caused by the fact that the move would be to Engineering. Rather the problems would be there regardless of where the move might be made, whether to Engineering, Business, or wherever. First, I believe the move would create a problem with service courses in computing, leading to duplication of effort as departments seek to fill the void caused by the departure of CIS from Arts and Sciences. Second, the move would stifle interdisciplinary research in computing, as research in the CIS department would naturally begin to focus on engineering problems. Third, the approval of such a move would send a chilling message to those of us in Arts and Sciences that our aspirations for high levels of excellence might not be attainable as long as we stay within the College of Arts and Sciences. Let me address each of these points in turn.

Departments which serve large segments of the university community with courses cutting across disciplinary lines have traditionally been located in Arts and Sciences, and for good reason. This is the most logical and efficient way to do things. I was faced with a rather similar situation at the University of South Florida a number of years ago. As a result of the university not supporting a strong statistics program in Arts and Sciences, all colleges who needed statistics were offering their own courses. There was duplication of effort and lack of quality control. I believe this is a lesson that can be applied to the situation we face here. If CIS moves to Engineering, there will soon develop pressures within other colleges and departments to develop their own computing courses. We've all heard the arguments before. How can a department located in professional College X, Engineering in this case, possibly understand and meet the special computing needs of Colleges Y or Z? New courses would spring up with titles that make them sound like special applications courses, but they would be basic computing courses nonetheless. Having seen similar sorts of things in my discipline at other universities, I feel confident in predicting that this is the way things would go here, if not now, then a few years from now as the CIS department begins to conform to the norms of its new college.

I also am concerned that the move of CIS out of Arts and Sciences would have a negative impact on university research, particularly interdisciplinary research. Our Department has been actively working with the CIS department on research problems of mutual interest. In fact we now have joint funding from the National Computer Security Center and from the U.S Census Bureau to do research in the area of data confidentiality. This is an important area of research, but it is not engineering. Should we expect the College of Engineering to support non-engineering research? Clearly not. Thus, if CIS were to make the move, opportunities for broadly based interdisciplinary research in computing science would be lost.

Finally, I would ask you to take a careful look at how we have come to this point here today. Why would a Department that traditionally, and so logically, belongs in Arts and Sciences feel that it must move to another college to achieve the level of excellence it desires? Is there not opportunity to achieve that same level of excellence within the College of Arts and Sciences? If the move were to be approved, the message to those of us in Arts and Sciences would be clear. If you want to move up, you've got to move out.

I would hope that you would send a different, more positive message. Rather than moving CIS from one college to another, I would hope that you would recommend that the university use this opportunity to further promote cooperation among the colleges at K-State. Let us support such things as joint appointments, interdisciplinary degree programs, joint funding of GRA's, and various joint research activities to bridge the gap between colleges. The close working relationship that our department has had for many years with the Agricultural Experiment Station convinces me that this type cooperation can work to the benefit of all parties concerned, and without exceptional expenditures of resources. With a spirit of cooperation, we can strengthen research and scholarship in computing both in Arts and Sciences and in Engineering while avoiding the negative consequences that the proposed move would cause.