



WORST OF TIMES, BEST OF TIMES

by Dean Rebecca W. Bushnell

The economic turmoil that has shaken our world has had a profound impact on all colleges and universities. No one is immune, and that includes the School of Arts and Sciences.

This far-reaching situation touches almost every part of the School with hits to endowment, greater financial-aid need for students, more challenging philanthropy during our Making History campaign, tighter job markets for graduates and much more. The deans have been working closely with department chairs, faculty and staff to find innovative responses to the new realities wrought by the current fiscal environment.

In more prosperous times, we've grown accustomed to thinking that success is defined as "more"—more faculty, more programs, more buildings. But going forward, the metric of success points toward a more effective, more sustainable operation that makes the most of the remarkable people and the resources we have now in the School of Arts and Sciences. It means not just doing more but rather working more efficiently and creatively. With this metric, we can succeed in honing our strengths and coming up with new approaches to our most important business of teaching and research. The situation calls on us to persist in what the School has long been good at: doing more with less.

Planning for a sustainable School of Arts and Sciences can make us think smarter. We've been working hard to fund a Neural and Behavioral Sciences (NBS) building, but we had to scale back the design to fit our new budget. We brought the scientists, planners and architects together and got them talking about how to do this. The solution, we discovered, was already at hand, in sharing space that was available in the School of Veterinary Medicine and redesigning the vivarium of the existing Carolyn Lynch Laboratory, now used by our biology faculty. In the end, we will achieve a better programmatic result by bringing biologists and psychologists together for research collaborations in Lynch, an outcome that is one of the goals of the proposed NBS building and the new life sciences "neighborhood" that we aim to create.

Despite hard times—perhaps because of them—we feel that what we do in the School of Arts and Sciences has never been more important. In coming years, our highest priority will be to sustain the quality of our core mission, which is providing outstanding undergraduate and graduate education and supporting our faculty's essential research.

Research remains vital to our nation's future, and it is a vital part of the education we offer to our intellectually hungry students. A liberal arts education not only feeds minds, it gives our students a diverse portfolio of knowledge and skills that helps them navigate a complex and changing world. It prepares them for many jobs and a variety of careers. More than ever, ours is an uncertain world, and graduates need the broad and rich "cross-training" of a liberal arts education. It's not just our graduates who need it; the world is starved for the multi-dimensional, agile-thinking leaders that we are educating in SAS.

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The School itself has benefited from the wise counsel and generosity of such leaders. Chris Browne, C'69, recently stepped down after ten years of service as chair of the SAS Board of Overseers, and David Silfen, C'66, has stepped in as our new board leader. I am deeply grateful to both Chris and David for their guidance and friendship. With their support and that of the entire School of Arts and Sciences community, SAS rests on a solid foundation of sufficient financial resources, excellent faculty, dedicated staff and ambitious students, which will sustain our important work of research and teaching and learning for years to come.