

Town Hall Meeting transcript, March 17, 2011

CAPSR, PSR Administration, students

In attendance:

- Administration: Terry Dyonzak (facilities), Delphine Hwang (Assistant Dean), Riess Potterveld (President), Mary Tolbert (Dean), Steve Argyris (CFO), Kathi McShane (Advancement)
- CAPSR members: Maja Gray (moderating), Miak Siew, Hope Attenhoffer, Staci Imes (student trustee), Donnel Miller-Mutia (Assistant Dean)
- Members of the DRC (from audience)

Opening remarks (Maja Gray, moderator—summary)

[[00:00 in video]]

What we're doing here today:

- We want to help students get their concerns addressed. There are a lot of questions floating around and we want to get things cleared up.
- Today we'll give folks up on stage a chance to do opening remarks, and then we'll take questions
- Questions come from CAPSR email account; questions will be read anonymously though CAPSR council knows who asked which question.
- If you want to ask a question, you can ask for the mic or write it on paper to preserve anonymity; we'll collect them as we go

Some caveats:

- This is mostly for members of the PSR community, though folks from other schools are obviously welcome
- This really is meant to the beginning of a conversation, the first of many discussions; all of the people here on the stage are willing to address concerns in private; you can talk to folks on CAPSR council; you can talk to Donnel or Charlotte; there are brochures for PSR Circles of Care pastoral program. Lots of resources if you feel this isn't addressing your questions; reach out, make sure people are aware of your concerns.

[[3:24 in video]]

“I’ll just start with a little framing. Some of the questions that we were given did address the financial condition of the school, and that is in the background. That’s not the only issue, but that’s in the background of many of the things we might talk about today. So I want to give a big picture of that. The deficit condition of the school in the previous four years was a loss of 5.6 million dollars. There was a steady erosion of what you would call the unrestricted endowment. You have the restricted endowment, where people have given gifts for specific purposes, and you have unrestricted endowment which allows the seminary to apply the earnings of that to all the needs of the school. And then this year when I arrived it was 1.5 million in deficit for this year and projected for next year 1.6 million. And so I don’t know if you can grasp the dynamics of that but it’s an unsustainable condition. And the longer that PSR delays dealing directly with these overages the more they build up, as a kind of pent-up crisis. And so we reached a point this year where while we were going through this current deficit, [[unclear]] the unrestricted endowment was being depleted. When that happens, the school hits a wall, and it has to do something. If you don’t do something, number one you’re an irresponsible steward of your assets, and secondly, you may be condemned both by donors who we need to support the school, by the accrediting agencies who do not like to see this kind of institutional behavior.

“So when I say that I arrived and the whole team arrived this year with a very significant crisis on our hands. We have spent four months developing a response to this which includes many things; I can’t go through all of them but there’s probably twenty things or thirty moving parts to this. And then we took that after much discussion and consideration and research to the Board of Trustees in February, and basically as a response to this information conveyed they mandated us to take a million dollars or more out of the next year’s budget. So a lot of what we’ve been doing in these months is to try to steer the school both to cost savings but also trying to begin the process of developing new revenue streams.

“There’s really four things that support the school so that you have the basics in mind. There’s tuition: yay. [[laughter]] But there’s tuition, but several things are factors there. Tuition keeps going up as the school’s ability to finance scholarships remains basically static. So there is the shifting of the burden to the students over time. And if you look across the country where this is going on, you’ll see there is a steady, rapid rise in student debt. It’s a crisis for the individual, it’s a crisis for the school, it’s a crisis for the church—the churches. And at some point it, too, will become unsustainable. How much are you going to pay for an education that sends you into ministry? That’s a realistic factor; I’m aware of it, the school is, it’s working in the background. But if you look at the actual enrollment at PSR, it’s dropped from, say, 5 or 6 years ago, around 202 headcount, to 168. As the enrollment goes down, that’s a loss of revenue to sustain the school, okay.

“The second is auxiliary income, which would be things like room rentals and so forth. Other fees that come in beyond tuition. And that’s been a source of income for the school, but we have very old buildings. So if we begin to try to repair, bring those up to what we would like, it’s another cost factor. The more you spend, the less you have in that revenue stream, okay. There’s only four, so [[unclear]] [[laughter]]. I haven’t thought of a fifth for you.

“Then there’s the endowment itself, and as you know, with the downturn a few years ago our endowment lost between approximately 26% and 33%, so a significant hit. And, so, the endowment shrunk, plus we were invading it to sustain the operation, and so those two conspired together to make the endowment even less robust than it ought to be right now. There’s many schools in this condition, and what they do is they start spending unrestricted

bequests that should be going to the endowment, they start putting them into operating expenses. It's a bad habit, and people down the road later pay for it.

“And then the last is fundraising, and that's a significant source of income, both for your operating expenses (people who give to the annual fund)—we hope you'll all do that some day [[laughter]]—and estate gifts, and planned gifts, which come in as the seedbed of the endowment, and will be there in perpetuity throwing off income. And giving has gone down, year by year, here, step by step. And one of the goals of course is to turn that around, and to elicit from our donors larger gifts, and we're already hard at work on that. Kathi, I think we used to have 115 visits to make before June 30, we're down to, I don't know, like 107 [[laughter]]. We're talking to people all the time. One of the crises, though, is how do you inspire people to give you significant resources when you haven't been a good steward of the gifts in the past? It's not an easy argument to make. And so the focus on new revenue streams, new programs, new energy, new things on the internet will be one of the ways that we'll be able to show people some of the new energy of the school, new ways that we can serve individuals and congregations, and play a role hopefully in building a new wave of support for the school.

“We wouldn't be doing this if the school wasn't important. It's important to us, hopefully it's important to you, we think it's important to the world to have a progressive school such as this and have it do well and prosper. So that's the framing.

“Now, the changes that are part of this restructuring have implications for almost everyone. We have had, we knew that we would have to have a smaller faculty, and we shared that with our faculty, the need for some voluntary retirements and resignations, and we would need to also for the sake of our student body work toward some kind of new way of also increasing faculty. How do you do that? Well, we're into conversations with other schools on something like a shared faculty model, and those conversations are not concluded, they take a long time to work out, but the way that each school could claim a relationship to a whole faculty that would be more like 21 to 24 in size and would have the kind of luster and representation of different disciplines that we would attract more students, so that is also part of the process.

“We've had to deal with the fact that a lot of the budget goes into personnel, staff and faculty. That's where a lot of the money that we spend each year goes, as well as student scholarships. And so there's almost no way to reconfigure the school without approaching the issue of some layoffs, and those are in process, and we'll have a report soon on the reduction that will happen in the staff. Again, the kind of criteria one uses is the need to take money out of the system by laying people off, and making sure that whatever function that person has provided is something that can be moved or taken on by other people who remain on the staff. So a careful utilization of that. This was not me and my office with a red pencil. It was endless conversations we had. The chief architects responsible are those three [[pointing to Mary Tolbert, Steve Argyris, and Kathi McShane]] [[laughter]] plus Benny Liew who was the Associate Dean this semester and sat in on all of those deliberations and did a wonderful job of supplementing the contributions of Mary as she struggled with her own health issues.

“Now. So. The downsizing of staff. Another factor is that the CMS program, it's a great program, reaches marginalized persons who are headed into [[?]] ministry, probably working full time or working time and a half, can't pay to come to seminary and we've been providing educational platforms to them for 25 years. But we've been losing \$90,000 a year on it. So rather than eradicating that program which is so essential to the mission of the school, we have instead, we're restructuring it, and we're going to be putting more of those resources online. This will be actually better because this way people won't have to drive here, or drive somewhere, and they'll be able to supplement their face-to-face education with additional online resources, and we're already deploying those, so it's

in process, but it's very—one reason we didn't walk away from it entirely is because that would be undermining some of our essential core values.

“The dining program—which, I just ate over there—gave my \$7 because the donors that I visit at lunchtime I put on my little card so it goes quickly, the dining program for a long time has lost money. But the amounts are rather staggering. Last year it was \$90,000 for PSR, and another 20 to 30 thousand for CDSP, so we're talking in the range of \$120,000. So we made some modifications this year. We gave some free passes away, we tried to lure people in. We opened it on the weekends, you know, we expanded the time when you could get your meals throughout the day. All these were good assumptions and kind of hypotheses, but I checked in December we were down \$75,000. So we know we're going to have to do something. I cannot announce today what it is. But it will be restructured in some fashion. Maybe we'll do something like only provide a noontime meal and leave D'Autremont open all day for coffee, soft drinks, conversation, informal learning, meetings, things of that kind. We know that for the people who live in Arch, if we did that we'd have to put some kitchenettes in those 15 apartments. We'd have to upgrade the kitchen facilities in Benton. And we would need to work at adjusting to this kind of austerity without just saying, 'Ah, they can eat on Euclid or something' [[laughter]]. So we're not inattentive to this but we do not yet have a conclusion as to what the best model is. And like everything it's more complicated because we also have CDSP in our partner in this. So I may decide what I want to do, and then I have to sell it to another school and another set of trustees, et cetera.

“I'm just trying to give you some of the background of this. The last—we've been selling instructional technology to eight schools. We run the technology for eight other seminaries. And one of the questions was, do we make money or lose money on it? The idea was, not to make millions, but—something. We lost \$132,000, somewhere between \$132,000 last year, depending on whether you counted the equipment that was bought in that year that might last four or five years. That's not good. So I had to go to the other presidents and share with them that their allocations were going to go up. All of them believed in it. That is, everyone thought that the data was correct. They had been waiting for PSR to figure it out [[laughter]]. But, guess what. Some of those are small schools that are even in some ways in worse financial condition than we are, or, they have their own version of it. And they've made their financial plans, so where are they going to come up with this additional allocation? So you have to understand, it's negotiation, it's trying—the schools that were hardest hit were Starr King and DSPT, and so those are schools that are much more fragile in some ways financially. And so we have to work with them.

“It goes on and on. We are trying to build more of an I.T., internet presence for education. So some of you who are here longer, eventually there will be more courses that will be hybrid. We're working with a center in Atlanta that does progressive church, new church plants and revitalization, and they're becoming linked to us; we're talking to the Beatitudes Society which is a group that focuses on progressive leadership and the development of progressive leadership, and they're at least ruminating about the idea of being on our campus and moving here and becoming another resource. We are changing the Advancement office—Kathi can talk more about that—so four schools, we hope, will share kind of a database operation, appeals letters, communication and marketing, that sort of thing. And each school then would have just a Major Gift Officer and probably someone working with alumni and donors. And that would save roughly \$200,000 from the four schools and would be another way of reconfiguring yourself to try to respond to this.

“Students have their own version—I'll recite your pain for you [[laughter]], you get a lot of it yourself. Tuition. Tuition goes up, housing goes up. I mean they're not huge increases—tuition will go up 3%—but it's still money out of your pocket, or money that you have to borrow. And from your perspective, with changes in the dining hall

and so forth, you might say to yourself, ‘well, you know, I’m actually getting a little bit less than I was in the previous year.’ So you have your version of this.

“For the staff and faculty, we’re taking some significant cuts for the second time to what’s put into retirement. The school used to pay 14%, went to 10%, we’re going to 7%. There’ll be no cost of living increases for next year. The senior staff are taking voluntary cuts. I’m taking 5% off my salary, might do more, but I felt you have to be involved yourself personally and significantly and somehow also adopting part of this problem through your own sacrifice. So we’re doing that.

“The faculty voted to suspend their search for a professor of Hebrew scriptures. That doesn’t mean you won’t ever have one, but Aaron Brody has stepped up and said that he will teach the intro course next year, he’s very excited about it, he wants to do a great job, and we have already Steve Davidson and Annette Schillenberg at CDSP, and they’re very competent scholars. So I can see us going to that [unclear] as we work towards this shared faculty model.

“I’ve probably talked too long. I haven’t gone through all of it, but it’ll give you a sense that we looked all the way across, through everything.

“What would really hurt us would be if enrollment continued to decline. And that is the national trend, so we’re fighting upstream. Secondly, if donors don’t understand us or our mission or what we’re doing, and see it not as something positive but something negative. And the economy slides into yet another recession and the endowment shrinks again. There’s no buffer from reality; whatever happens we’re going to have to make the best of it. And we’re going to try to do everything we can to keep the quality of the school excellent, the educational model one that is attractive, and the commitment to our core values alive and well. So, [pause] that was quite a sermon, but—” [laughter] [hands the mic to Mary Tobert]

Mary Tolbert’s remarks

[24:32 in video]

“I don’t know whether I have too much to add, but one thing that I think would be useful to say, and you probably [?] all know this is the problem that seminaries are facing across the country—and it is everywhere, it’s not just here, it’s not just the GTU, it’s everywhere across the country—the problem that they’re facing is a secondary problem. It’s a secondary problem because it’s really based on the problem that the Church is [facing]. And as the churches decline and we have more and more churches that are closing down, are losing membership, then seminaries are hit by that, because they have fewer people that they’re serving, and fewer leaders, fewer places that need leaders. So that one of the things we want to think about as we’re thinking about the future, we may not be able to solve the problem of the churches, but we certainly want to be able to help prepare *you* for ministries for a church that looks quite different from the way it looked fifteen or twenty years ago. And that means that we’ve got to start looking at social media, how that plays a part in the formation of churches, we’ve got to start looking at ways of delivery of the message that we all still believe is absolutely viable, the message of the Gospels, in a way that actually is not as expensive, that doesn’t require the buildings, that doesn’t require the kinds of space issues, the kinds of plant issues, that have been really characteristic of the church for the last fifty years.

“Um—this is—these are—we’re facing this as a seminary, but this is something that all of your denominations are facing, and that you’re facing as ministers as you go out to serve those denominations. So this is a, this is something we’re all in together in the larger sense of this question. And as you go out to serve churches, you may be in a

situation—I've had so many people who were former students here contacting me and saying, "You know, my church is downsizing, I'm having to lay off staff, I'm having to change programming, how do I do this?" So this is yet another—you know—what we're trying to do, we're trying to do this in a way that reflects our values, which is, you know—one of our greatest values would be, you know, to do no harm, and there's absolutely no way to do this without doing harm. Frankly. There's no way to downsize without doing harm. And so the question is, how can you be as compassionate in those situations as possible?

"And I think that's what we're trying to work on, and that's something that every one of you, or at least those of you who are planning on pastoral ministry, really need to take some very serious thought about, in what you're going to be facing in the work you do. Even if you're thinking about chaplaincy, or you're thinking about working in denominational headquarters, denominational headquarters now are also in great disarray on these same circumstances. So, one of the questions we have is, how do we prepare you for the situation you're going to find, which is quite different from the way people needed to be prepared, or the situation they were going to find, say, at the end of, even as little as a decade ago, or a decade and a half ago. How do we prepare you for that? And secondly, how do we help you get the creativity to renew the church? In a sense, if you can renew the church, our problem is solved. [[laughter]]

"So one of the things we're looking at with the faculty is really trying to think, what kinds of things can we do as a faculty, and even as a larger faculty if we begin to work out some connections with some of the other schools, that will help you in the future and will help the issue around church renewal. And so that's the future. The future is really looking at, how do we plant new churches? How do we renew old churches? How do we bring energy back to the way we present the Gospel, how do we do these things in a way that really represents the sort of progressive religious values that we all, most all of us, see as central to our ministries. And nobody has a crystal ball. Nobody knows exactly how to do this. You may be hearing about schools all around the country trying different things. A lot of schools are merging or trying to merge with each other, some are becoming interreligious, schools that will serve both Judaism and Islam as well as Christianity; others—there are a lot of different models that are being put out, and nobody knows which of these models is actually going to work out in the end.

"So—but—all we are trying to do is do the best we can, see what works, help you be more experimental. This is really a time that will call upon our imagination and our creativity more than maybe other times that we've had in the history of Christianity [[at this school]]. So we can use, not only just in thinking about the church, but in thinking about what we do here at PSR, we can use your creativity. If you have ideas—what I've said, what I've said to the staff and said to the faculty is, "Right now what we need to do is be as efficient as we can be, be as thoughtful and as charismatic as we can be, and we need to do those things that are necessary, maybe not all those things that are desirable. Right now we need to make that distinction. We may have things that we do that are desirable, that we like, but that are not really necessary, and those things right now, we just can't do them.

"But what are the necessary things? And what ways would you have to reshape some of those so that we are doing a better job of delivering them? You know, the basic point that Riess has already made, and that I'll make one more time, it's not just a point about PSR, or about any of our GTU colleagues, it's a point about theological education in general. Theological education in general in this country is unsustainable in its present form. We have an unsustainable business model. It will not work any longer in its present form. Some schools may hang on a little longer than others, but all of us are going to have to change. So the question is, how do we change so that we keep giving a quality education, and that we help you prepare for the kind of ministry you're going to have, you're going to be facing as you move out into the areas around the country and around the world that you're going to.

“So, that’s, you know, that’s even a larger context in which to think about what we’re doing. But in thinking about the future, that’s the issue. Creativity, imagination, what can we do to renew the church? What can we do to help ourselves have a creative, exciting ministry presenting the kinds of values and the kinds of message that we want to get out? So, that’s kind of my—anyone else want to—?” [[hands mic to Kathi McShane]]

Kathi McShane’s remarks

[[32:23 in video]]

“This is just a brief echo of what’s already been said. You know, when I’m out talking with churches and donors about the school, the stories I’m telling them are your stories. I often say that the Master of Divinity might be the only graduate degree program in the country that is designed to reduce your earning potential. [[laughter]] And the point of that story when I tell it is really what *you* have sacrificed in your life to be here and to be doing this work and to be preparing for the work that may be [[unintelligible]] faith-based ministry in some form, and how it really unrealistic and counter-cultural that is, but you do it because it’s your call. And in the same way I think that each is of us up here, because it’s our call, right now, to be doing this, and the work of sustaining and rethinking and reimagining PSR and the work of theological education feels as valuable as anything else any of us could be doing.

“So we really are in this together. And, you know, when things are as unsustainable as they seem right now, and as they have been going in the past, I think we realize it’s not just running faster doing the same things that’s going to make a difference. It’s really rethinking everything. So we’re thinking, as Riess and Mary have already suggested, all kinds of things. You know, how do we move from the—the precious, really valuable gem of learning and formation that happens on this Hill, and extend that down wider, make a kind of—at least some aspects of theological education more accessible to people who are *never* going to enter vocational ministry, but who yearn for something more than what they can get in their local church. Or, for clergy who are already out there practicing who need something to sustain their skills and their calling to ministry. All of that’s open. It’s a great time in theological education, in the sense that everything is available for us to think and talk about. So I echo again that I think we really are all in this together.”

Maja Gray

[[35:02 in video]]

“I just want to jump now into some of the questions. I know you guys have [[unintelligible]] [[a lot of them]] have been submitted to CAPSR, but with some more detail on some of these issues. We had one question that was inquiring about the layoff process more particularly, and how will layoffs be taken into consideration? Is there consideration of class issues; will people who work with their hands be laid off first? Is there going to be consideration of racial issues during the process? What exactly is the situation going to be? If, you know, you can address that.”

Riess Potterveld

[[35:46 in video]]

“I’ll say a few things about it. One is, it wasn’t just looking at people; we looked at departments, how they were functioning, how they could function differently... every single employee is a valued part of this community. Some

of the layoffs have to do with the restructuring of Advancement. Others were selected because we felt either those functions were changing or could be passed on to another employee. So, that's—and then the need to come to some sort of number of people. And what we've done is, rather than having sort of a day of absolute blood-letting where people walk in and get released, we have set it up so that people will be told, you know, tomorrow, and they will be remaining as a valuable part of this community, if they choose to, through the end of May. They will have 15% of their work time to devote to their transition, their search. We have set up all kinds of human resources modules to help them—mock interviews, [?] of resumes, and if they need to be off campus for interviews, things of that kind, all of that will be within that 15% of their time. If they find another job first and choose to leave, we're not going to, you know, in any way impede that. But the desire is to keep people through that terminal state at the end of May.

“We will also, as I've said, there's the usual severance, which is at PSR one week of salary for each year of employment. That's kind of been the model and so we wouldn't change that.

“It's a—we're attentive, I think, all of us around the table are attentive to the core values of the institution and although it might not be judged to be perfect, we came to the best decisions that we could given circumstances.”

Maja Gray

[38:22 in video]

“The next question is on a related note, which—there were some questioners who wondered what the administration was doing to retain faculty of color. A lot of the folks who have departed are people of color, and so there's some concern for the people who [remain], if you could address that. I don't know who wants the mic—”
[laughter]

Mary Tolbert

[38:49 in video]

“It's a great concern for the entire faculty, I think. As the faculty shrinks, we're losing people across the board, and some of those people have been some of our really important long-term faculty of color. We're trying to—in terms of the people we're trying to—we're trying to protect our present faculty of color. I don't mean that in any kind of patronizing sense, I just mean we're trying not to put extra pressure on them. But because of that we have fewer across the board, we have fewer faculty across the board, but we're trying to—certainly in the Dean's Office we're trying to be very cognizant of that issue and trying not to, you know—one of the things that PSR needs also to do—this isn't in your questions, but you probably need to know this if you don't already, is that my term as Dean ends June 30th. So, one of the things that we're doing this spring is working on who the next Dean is. And we've had a lot of faculty discussion along this line, and one of the issues is, we'd love to have in the senior administration a Dean—someone in the senior administration who's a person of color, but when you have a small faculty and a small faculty of color, to try to put pressure on both those people to take on major administrative functions, really tends to undercut their ability to do the kind of work they want to do. And that—you know, it's kind of an odd thing. You're doing it for institutional reasons, that are very good reasons, but at the same time there's the potential there to actually undercut the community. So we're trying to be very careful about how we are working on talking about the Deanship and how we are working with the students all the way across the board—I mean, the faculty all the way across the board.

“So I just wanted to—I mean, that’s an important thing to say, that in all of these choices, a really difficult issue for us is we don’t have money right now to hire new faculty. So when people resign for wonderful new jobs, or because they’re retiring, or because of whatever, we don’t have the money to replace them. One of our hopes is that by having—by working with some of the other schools, we can also bring more diversity into our classrooms. I think our long-term goal—when we do have more money—that hiring ethnic-minority and racial-minority faculty will be the number one requirement. And it was actually for the—as you may know, or maybe you don’t know—for the Hebrew Bible position, that was one—well, you can’t say it that way, but what we said was, we wanted someone with work in Hebrew Bible from an Asian, with an Asian-American hermeneutics or [?] hermeneutics, so we were really—you signal, that way, that you’re really looking in that direction. We had actually some wonderful candidates, but then we had to stop the search. But I’m hoping in another year or two we’ll pick it up again, and that will again remain the top priority for hiring.

“So, it’s a—I agree with you, it’s a hard time, and it’s depressing. I mean, it’s—you know, I was crushed when Jeffrey left, but you know, when I was trying to advise him, of course when I had my Dean’s hat on, I was saying, “No, no! you must stay here!” [laughter] And when I had my colleague’s friend’s hat on, I said, “Yeah, you gotta take that job, I mean, it’s a wonderful opportunity for you!” So, you know, I want to see—I want to see, not only PSR have a wonderful, vibrant, racial/ethnic minority faculty, a faculty that is very multi-cultural, but I also want to see all the people that I have worked with over the years who are racial/ethnic minority people have great careers. I think they can do that here, but I can also see that they can prosper somewhere else. So it’s a hard, it’s a very hard issue. And—but it’s not an issue that anyone, I can assure you, *anyone* in the PSR administration or faculty takes lightly. This is our commitment, and [?] to it.”

Maja Gray

[44:04 in video]

“I’d like to ask one question from this list here that I have, and then maybe we can get some questions from the audience. There’s really a lack of time here, so I want to apologize to all of you guys, we have more questions than we’re going to be able to get answered in this hour. But hopefully we can have more discussions, we can have interviews with the folks up here, figure out other ways to get these questions answered. So if your question was sent to me and I’m not going to read it, my apologies, and please do encourage us to make these questions heard. But with that said, I want to ask—I’m going to read this verbatim: ‘Is the administration aware that the controversy and woundedness about the demise of PANA extends beyond those who were present at the time that PANA closed. Many students understand PANA as a safe space for students of color and international students, and many students were expecting the resurrection of PANA this spring, to be announced at the end of the school year, and the moving of Benny Liew and his family into the PANA house before final reconciliation has been achieved is exacerbating all the feelings and seems to announce an end to the support for creating Asian and Pacific Islanders [?] at PSR. Is the administration willing to engage in a reconciliation process that concerns [?] [?] at PSR? What are the plans for PANA in the future?’”

Riess Potterveld

[45:29 in video]

“I can say a few things. Having—I’m still writing reports on PANA, and the—we’ve had—I’ve had extensive conversations with people outside of PSR who were, who have been involved with PANA during its history. We have had various opinions about whether to do the kind of public sort of reconciliation that’s asked for there, and some people are strongly against it, some people are strongly for it. You get various kinds of advice, depending on people’s perspective. We’ve ordered—well, not ordered, but we were able to contract with Rita Nakashima Brock, who did a lot of interviewing, a lot of evaluation, wrote a major document on PANA—what went wrong, what did it accomplish, those kinds of things. And we have shared that with the Board of Trustees. I don’t consider it a public document for the whole world, but we did learn from it, and it’s been a valuable experience.

“The faculty who were closest, more closely tied to issues of Asian church and Asian ministry have been meeting all year, and there is a committee now that is both looking at PANA and also at what the next step will be. At this point, PANA will not reemerge in the form that it was, but there is an idea, if we can secure funding for it from some foundations or other parties, the opportunity to recreate a program that would focus on an API leadership. But more on those emerging scholars from those particular heritages and communities, and it would be done in conjunction with Drew Theological Seminary and McCormick [correction from off-mic: “EDS”]—EDS. McCormick was where it was held last summer, I’m sorry. So I expect that it will be resurrected in a new form; it’ll focus on scholarship and leadership. Our faculty who represent those communities are most attracted to that model, and if we can secure funding, then we’ll be able to do some of the dreams that have been envisaged in their planning process. It’s a very—you know, I wrote the original grant for PANA, so I have my own degree of connection with it and its history. [Pause] Things like this happen. It’s not one fault but multiple faults, multiple realities, and there was I think some—I’m not going to say mismanagement, but mishandling of it on PSR’s part as things started to go wrong. So, that’s kind of—[to others on stage:] Things I left out or you’d phrase differently?”

Mary Tolbert

[49:12 in video]

“We are—the faculty just voted, actually, at this last faculty meeting, to formally close PANA so that it wouldn’t just be hanging and there would be some sense of closure for that program. You may know—those of you who know about PANA may know that its primary foci were two. One was a focus on academic research; PANA became the primary sponsor of the APARRI conference, which is a conference that meets every summer for Asian/Pacific Islander scholarship and research. It’s a—it meets in various places around the country, but it started meeting here kind of regularly, and PANA really took on the administration of that whole conference issue. And, actually, barring that last [?] and PSR from [?] a little bit that was left from a grant actually paid for the conference. So, we have—we still have that long-term commitment. The other part of PANA was the Represent to Witness program, which was a youth program working mainly with high school youth, and that’s the part of the program that became less and less connected to the school as a whole. So PANA was really kind of split into two major kind of emphases, and so what was happening in the present proposal that has come from a task force made up of faculty and others based on the report we received from Rita Brock, is a recommendation to pick back up that one part, which is the APARRI conference, and the research work, and also this time rather than trying to go it on our own, to really do it with several other schools that have a major commitment in these same areas. And several organizations that do, not just the APARRI board but [PANATAM], which is a long-term program for Asian women both in ministry and in scholarship that has nurtured many, many of our finest Asian pastors and Asian scholars and Asian-American pastors and scholars over the years. And that would also be connected with this;

they're interested in this. So we're trying to work out how this kind of new nexus of organizations would work, with some kind of representation right here at PSR."

Riess Potterveld

[[51:53 in video]]

"About the house, we lived in it for ten years before PANA came into existence, and when I came as president it was sitting idle and passive, and trending towards disrepair. And so my decision to turn it back into a residence was both to house appropriately a senior faculty member and to get the house back in [[practice]] and put its income on a regular basis for the school. So that was the reasoning behind it was as simple as that, basically. It wasn't meant to be—I didn't want to live there again [[laughter]] [[?]] used to tell me what I had had for breakfast by looking out the window [[laughter]]—I don't have a great breakfast anyway, but—[[laughter]] So that's—I'm not going to make fun of it, but that's why we turned it back into a residence. It's an appropriate use of the building. If there—if API—if there's any resurgence of a center or a program, we will have space on campus to bring them home and furnish them—"

Mary Tolbert

[[53:11 in video]]

"—and in fact we've already got space saved for this program."

Question One: Mark McKenzie

[[53:16 in video]]

"I'm deeply concerned that Archie Smith chose to resign instead of retire. He's the senior faculty member on this campus of color, he's been here forever, he's stuck it through everything, and I'm curious as to why he chose to do that instead of retire. What does that say?"

Mary Tolbert

[[53:55 in video]]

"Well, you know, you'd have to ask him. Because in the letter he sent it isn't clear, and I can't—but, it really was—it's not clear at all. Now, what had happened is that, as Riess had mentioned, it didn't seem right as we were thinking about all of what needed to be done to get a million dollars out of the budget of an eight million dollar budget—so we're getting one million out of an eight million dollar budget—so it didn't seem right to say, 'oh, we're going to lay off staff, but we're not going to touch the faculty'. So Riess had very early on talked to the faculty at a faculty meeting and said, I think this was in December, and said, 'We need to have two less faculty members. And the easiest way to do this would be through voluntary retirement. And he had said that he was going to call a meeting, which he had done just last week, of all the senior faculty, and talk to them about how lovely voluntary retirement would be [[laughter]]. But before—between that time in December and before Riess called the meeting of senior faculty, Archie Smith tendered a letter of resignation. Archie is the most senior faculty. And my response to that was to write him a note and say how much I appreciated his—not only his many years of service to PSR, but a

really generous act right now for the future of the school that will allow the school to, you know, to be able to bring that deficit down. So I can't answer the other question; I don't know the answer to it, and I'm, you know, I think if any of you want to ask him and see what he says that would be fine. I mean, I know what was in the letter but it was not clear to me what the reason was. That's his issue."

Question Two: Libby Gardner-McBride

[[56:29 in video]]

"Two things, one about PANA. Personally, it would have helped me a whole lot if something had been said earlier. [[Audience: "yes."]] It would have helped a *whole* lot, because I've followed it since they closed, I've known people who were involved, and seeing somebody—as it happens, the person who was supposed to be heading up PANA—move into the house seemed like a slap to those that had been involved with PANA given that none of us outside [[?]] [[?]] knew what was happening. [[Audience: "right."]] So communication makes a huge difference, even if it's to say 'It's a question that we don't know, and we're doing this for the time being but we are trying to do other things to revive PANA as an institution.' That would have helped a lot."

Mary Tolbert

[[57:17 in video]]

"Just to say, you know, we received Rita's report in late August, and the faculty did get it at the faculty retreat which is late August/early September, and that's when I appointed a task force to work on the new program. And what I did, and what we decided at that point was that we wanted to take to the Board Rita's report *and* the proposal for the new program at the same time. And the Board as you know has been involved in some other things over the last six months, and so that got put on the back burner, and I apologize for that. But it really did—but it did—we do have PANA, we do actually have a program and a project that all of this will be publicized very much—"

Riess Potterveld

[[58:09 in video]]

"The report only came to the faculty at the last meeting—" [[Mary Tolbert: "The report from the task force."]] Yeah. They've not been sitting on it. They just got this new proposal."

Maja Gray

[[58:23 in video]]

"I think what I'm hearing from the audience, though, and from the discussions that CAPSR has had is that we would have loved to have known that, even that little detail." [[Audience: "Yes."]]

Mary Tolbert

[[58:32 in video]]

“Well, you know, CAPSR has a representative among the faculty who comes to the faculty meeting. And so that information should have come back to CAPSR Council from that person, if not in any other way. I grant you we haven’t been publicizing it because we didn’t know what to publicize on the website or anything like that until we began to get a sense of what the new focus was going to look like. Just know that it hasn’t been dropped.”

Riess Potterveld

[[58:59 in video]]

“And I do hear that communication is sort of the preferred style of, you know, life for us, and we have to think about that.”

Mary Tolbert

[[59:10 in video]]

“But let me just say—let me push this again, you know—you, CAPSR Council needs to have a person at the faculty meetings to really represent and hear what happens and bring that back for students for things that we’re not ready to publicize generally yet. If the person doesn’t come, if you don’t have somebody—as is the case right now—this is really a problem.”

Maja Gray

[[59:44 in video]]

“We’ll take volunteers. [[laughter]] You can come up right now or afterwards. [[laughter]].”

Question Three: Alixx Ortiz

[[59:51 in video]]

“My name is Alixx Ortiz and I’m a second-year MDiv at PSR. You have mentioned a couple of times about a collaboration with other schools, and I’m wondering if nine seminary colleges plus the GTU is sustainable.”

[[hesitation on stage about taking the mic, laughter]]

Riess Potterveld

[[1:00:16 in video]]

“Yeah, now all the seminaries are under-capitalized, they all have insufficient enrollment, the enrollment in the GTU has gone from 1500 to 1000. It’s a third dropped. So take all of that income, and even with the amount for scholarships it’s still a lot of money. So the answer is, it’s probably not sustainable. And you will see around the country schools moving or being acquired and being absorbed; there are many seminaries moving onto college-related campuses, so undergraduate schools; I was working on that for two years at Lancaster trying to get Franklin and Marshall across the street to want to have a Divinity school or something of that kind. So it’s going on daily. Meadville-Lombard, the Unitarian Universalist seminary in Chicago, is kind of in a merger operation with

Andover-Newton, so it's happening. Having done this—I have three separate merger things going on at Lancaster [[sic, presumably meant PSR]]—the most live one right now is the one that includes PLTS, CDSP, PSR, and SFTS, except that they have just an interim president so even if he signs things in blood [[laughter]] the new president will come in and, you know, [[?]] it'll be all over again in the sense of not necessarily recognizing those plans. This is the key. If you kind of merge or get a consolidation or whatever you want to call it, is your model still going to have sustainability or not? That is, as you get—is it viable to put three sort of shrinking institutions together to get a strong one? And my suggestion is, it's not.”

[[video cuts off: 1:02:33]]

—transcribed by Maja Gray, March/April 2011; caprs@psr.edu.