All-Hands Presentation
September 23, 2002
- Victoria White -

I would like to thank the Director and the Associate Director for Research for the trust and confidence they have shown in giving me this exciting and challenging opportunity.

I would also like to thank Matthias and Steve and their whole management team. *Much* has been accomplished during Matthias' tenure as Division Head. CDF and D0 have first physics results; the Sloan Digital Sky survey is about to make its first public distribution of data; many other experiments are being helped in various stages of publishing results, finishing or starting up; a CMS department and a U.S. CMS Software and Computing project have been set up in preparation for the LHC at CERN, which will start operations in 2007. The division's services and systems, and those of the experiments we work with, are *state-of-the-art and well run*. This includes networks, engineering, software tools, databases, farms, central systems, storage systems, data handling, online, email, equipment pool, and more (I'm sure I've left things out - it was not meant to be an exhaustive list). We are participating in broader collaborative projects such as worldwide Grid projects and Grid project coordination, Accelerator Simulation, and Lattice QCD Computing. Recently the Computing Division responded to a call for help in improving the performance of the Accelerator. We should be proud and happy that about 25 people from our organization may be able help, maybe more. And we will be ready to deal with all the data when it comes, as it surely will.

Today I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on what we are about as an organization.

Fermilab has a clear mission. Here is the mission statement for the lab

The sort of mission statement that I would like to see for the Computing Division reads something like this (of course we can work on it more and get it exactly right)

The Mission

Fermilab's mission statement

Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory advances the understanding of the fundamental nature of matter and energy by providing leadership and resources for qualified researchers to conduct basic research at the frontiers of high energy physics and related disciplines.

Many of our members are of course scientists, themselves directly conducting basic research.

Our Mission ?

The Computing Division's mission is to play a full part in the mission of the laboratory and in particular

To proudly develop, innovate, and support excellent and forefront computing solutions and services, recognizing the essential role of cooperation and respect in all interactions between ourselves and with the people and organizations that we work with and serve.

Developing, supporting and innovating (that is, bringing new ideas, new technology, new partnerships) are all important and must be balanced. Why do I stress cooperation and respect as part of our very mission? Of course, there are many other ways in which we must carry out our work. We must work - safely, complying with a multitude of lab, DOE and state rules and regulations, adhering to lab policies, and so on.

I believe that cooperation and respect is part of our very mission because the Computing Division is in a rather unique position. People everywhere rely on our services (such as email, networks, printing, information, PREP, web services, pc support) to go about their business. In addition computing solutions and systems (in the broadest sense - software, digital electronics, computing systems) are *essential* for every organization within the lab, and for every experiment or research activity that the lab supports. Today, almost everyone is computer-literate and often quite knowledgeable. Many people have wireless networks in their homes (as I do), build their own computers from parts or run down to CompUSA to get them - a new one every year. Java and java script on personal web pages is no big deal, kids are learning C++ and Java, and so it goes on. We must work closely and collaboratively with those with problems to solve, understanding the problems and the many ideas of how to solve them, so that together we can bring about truly excellent, forefront, cost-effective, scaleable and supportable systems and software and well integrated solutions.

I know that the Computing Division is a really excellent organization with a huge number of talented, dedicated, hard working individuals.

Does this mean that everything is perfect and is as efficient and well focused as it possibly could be? Could we do better in some ways? Well of course I'm sure we can - and anyway things don't stand still. Technology is changing under our feet at an ever-increasing rate. When we think about the technology changes that have taken place in the past 8 years, it is truly amazing. - From main-frames to linux boxes everywhere, from tapes of less than 2 Gbytes used to record experiment data to 40 GB disks as standard in a laptop and we see rapid technology changes in electronics and software and networks; in fact in all areas. Technological change is not the only

change. Experiments at the LHC will each have more than 2000 collaborators from 4 continents. That is science on a global scale such has never been seen before and we, in High Energy Physics, are leading the way. Already the current Run II experiments are building globally distributed systems to support analysis of the data.

There are always many choices for how best to organize ourselves for the *next* set of projects or problems. Where *should* we put our money? How aggressively do we reach for innovative and possibly risky solutions? Together, and working with the lab, we will have to make these decisions. What I do know is that the organization has to be increasingly flexible and on its toes - to be able to respond to changing circumstances, technology, and budgets.

I don't yet know exactly how we could be better organized for this; it will take quite a bit of discussion. I can't today share with you my vision and goals for the next year, or the next 3 years. There will be changes and I will be asking you (often through your group leaders, and department heads) to help me figure out what those changes should be, and to then help embrace and implement them.

If we have to face constrained budgets - because of the needs and priorities of the lab, then we will deal with the situation as best we can – tighten our belts a little more, think a little harder, examine ourselves a little more carefully - without *too* much whining.

Today I can't answer detailed questions about projects and priorities for the future. Instead, I can tell you a little bit more about myself and what I believe in, and about what I think is important for the future. I have already spoken about cooperation and respect and how they are not just important, they are intrinsic to our mission.

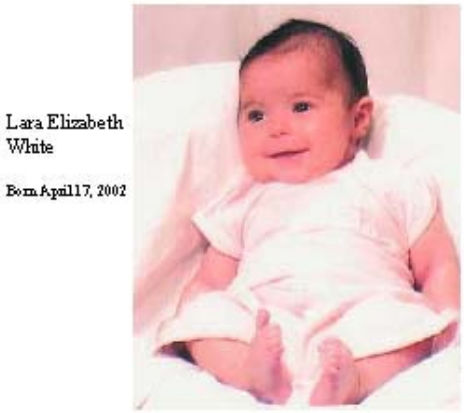
In the past three and a half years, as some of you know, I have been on an assignment in Washington DC, in the Department of Energy. I have learned a lot from this, and also I have done a lot of traveling. I've been on a great many airplanes and eaten dinner in a lot of restaurants on the road.

It has been interesting. It turns out that Southwest Airlines is my favorite airline - they run their planes on time, never have left me stranded and their service is courteous and friendly. Their staff will help you - if you arrive late, or your bag won't fit - no griping. And I don't mind that they don't assign seats. The flight crews and ground staff seem to genuinely enjoy their work and feel they are doing a good job - they joke and smile - not in that false "have a nice day" way that you get everywhere. One day I took out the airline magazine to read - you know the "award winning" one in the seatback pocket that all the airlines have. There I found an article about the airline and the founder Herb Kelleher. He was asked "who is more important – the shareholders, the customers or the employees?". To paraphrase his answer, he said unequivocally - "why the employees of course. For if the employees are happy then the customers are happy - and if the customers are happy then the shareholders will be happy". Somehow his philosophy shows through in the airline, which is one of the only consistently profitable airlines in the country. There is just a "sense" that all is working well.

When I go into a restaurant I can often get a "sense" of whether this is a good place or not. Of course if it is 7.0 pm on a Friday night and the place is deserted it is pretty easy to figure it out. But even if the place is full and bustling, you can often tell - by how the staff are working together, by whether they really seem to expect that you will enjoy your meal and by whether they seem to be proud and happy to be working there.

One thing I like to do is "walk around". If you see me doing that don't worry - I am not trying to find out if people are working hard or doing the right thing. There are simply some things that I need to "sense" – some things that status reports and meetings and department heads can't tell me about how we are functioning as an organization. What sort of meals do *we* think we are we serving up and are we happy and confident that our engines are well maintained and our pilots getting us there safely and on time?

I could not take on this job without the love and support of my family. They are very important to me. And now our family has a new member - our future. Here she is Lara Elizabeth White, 3 months old in this photo.



She is really gorgeous. It's not just the view of a grandmother is it? You can see in her eyes the energy and excitement to grow and learn and take on the world. I know that sometimes your responsibilities and your assignments take you away from your families. Many of us must take it in turns to be here when needed, so that our lab's science program can make best use of the expensive accelerator and other instruments and detectors. But we must all, including me, balance our time and effort and take time for ourselves and our families, if we have them. I know that some of you have suffered great losses in the past years, or are even now going through times of personal or family difficulty. I hope that our organization will continue to be a compassionate and supportive place to work. I hope it will be a place where the knowledge of how important your work is to us and to the lab will give you some comfort and support in difficult times.

I'm a woman, obviously. I don't much enjoy football games, nor can I get terribly excited and wrapped up in most sporting events. Some women do of course, but I know that a great many are like me. There *are* differences between men and women - not in what they can accomplish or in what they are capable of - but sometimes, from time to time, in how they approach things. You

might even see me get emotional at times, or perhaps it will just be my contacts playing up. There are people who I exchange hugs with – very undignified in our culture, but quite common in many others. It is just a way of showing that you care. If anyone is really in need of a hug – then come see me and I will see what I can do. My door will be open to all. That doesn't mean I encourage you to go around your group leader or department head, but by all means if there are issues that aren't being addressed or you can't find the right person to talk to then, as I said, my door will be open.

But I'm not all soft and sentimental, as many of you know. I can be very tough and determined and very intense. It may be that, in the past, I have had conflicts and disagreements, even angry words, with some of you. But let me assure you that what was said or done in 1986, or last year, or even last week, will have no bearing on how I look on you as a person with skills and experience and potential to play an important part in our organization. What we must try to do is best match all of your qualities and skills, and your goals and passions, to what the division needs done to help carry out its mission. Likewise I ask you to look at me, not in the roles you may have seen me in the past, but as a person now playing a new role.

When I take over as division head on November 1st nothing will change. You, the people of CD, will go about your work and your business as you always do. It is you who know your roles and your work and I ask you simply to continue doing what you have been doing. We will have other meetings, several times a year, and one soon after November 1st , when we all get together to talk about our organization and goals and activities.

And now I'd like to start the formal part of my presentation today. I have only about 27 slides - so we should be done by about 12.45. I hope that no one had any lunch plans.

Just Kidding!

I think a little humor in our organization is good. I'm not very good at it, but I encourage others who are. So now let me end.

I most humbly and sincerely ask for your help and support in carrying out my new role.

I very much look forward to working with you all, with Mont, with the other members of the directorate and with the director, Mike Witherell. The Computing Division is a strong and talented organization, full of good people and I am tremendously excited about the opportunity to work with you all in the years ahead. Thank you so much.