

Tuesday, September 19, 2006 1:00 a.m.

CLAS clash

When the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences announced its five-year plan, CLAS Dean Neil Sullivan must have expected some controversy. The plan calls for sweeping budget cuts, a faculty hiring freeze and a new emphasis on popular fields like psychology. It's a major shake-up, in other words.

Predictably, some faculty members were upset by the announcement - that was bad enough. But now CLAS graduate students, particularly from the English department, are in open revolt. They're calling for a public forum with Sullivan, UF President Bernie Machen and Provost Janie Fouke to discuss the five-year plan. If he's smart, Machen will give them at least that.

Of course, the administration should have sat down with graduate students weeks ago. But better late than never.

Like every university, UF needs graduate students. In fact, UF leans on its teaching assistants more than most. They lecture, do research and bring professors thousands of gallons of coffee a year. Love them or hate them, TAs are a vital part of CLAS - without them, the college could barely function. It was wrong not to consult with graduate students before announcing the five-year plan, but for the administration to ignore them now would just be stupid.