Unifying the Colleges of Arts and Sciences: Implementation Considerations

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On June 18, 2009, Joan R. Leitzel, Interim Executive Dean of Arts and Sciences and Vice Provost, sent a memo to the Committee on Academic Affairs and the University Senate requesting an alteration of the fundamental structure of the arts and sciences at The Ohio State University. At this point, most are familiar with the history of arts and sciences at Ohio State. In 1968, with the addition of some departments and schools that had previously been affiliated with other colleges, a single, centralized College of Arts and Sciences was divided into five colleges: Arts, Biological Sciences, Humanities, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. In 2003, the arts and science structure was changed to create a Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences led by an Executive Dean. It was hoped that the establishment of the Federation would accomplish several goals, such as enhancing the reputation and quality of all of the colleges by using the strengths of each to benefit others, enhancing coherence, collaboration and synergies across college units, and decreasing college-centric competition while lowering college boundaries.

In April 2008, a review committee co-chaired by Martha M. Garland and W. Randy Smith issued a report on the structure of the College and its Federation structure. They recommended the creation of “a single, integrated College of the Arts and Sciences that brings together all the faculty, resources (budget, space), and academic programs that currently reside within the five colleges” that "would be led by a Dean with ultimate decision-making authority for the college in all realms of college life, reporting directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost.” This model has been adopted, and Interim Executive Dean Leitzel’s memo has requested formal recognition of this reorganization.

On July 1, 2009, Joseph E. Steinmetz came to The Ohio State University as Executive Dean of Arts and Sciences and Vice Provost. He is overseeing the restructuring of the arts and sciences as the institution moves from the Federation structure to the new single-college structure. Creating a single College of Arts and Sciences after 40 years of arts and sciences distributed to five different colleges is no trivial matter. It will require many changes in basic organization, structure, policies, procedures and ways of thinking as we move from five independent units to one unified college. This document identifies several of the issues that will have to be addressed during the reorganization process and articulates some basic ideas and principles on which the reorganization will be based as the unified College of Arts and Sciences moves forward.

Why Unify the Arts and Sciences?

There are many reasons for unifying the Arts and Sciences into a single administrative unit at this time in Ohio State’s history. Central among these reasons is that the implementation of the Federation structure in 2003 failed to produce the desired results—that is, lowering barriers between units and encouraging cooperation and collaboration between units in the five separate colleges has not occurred. An even more compelling reason for creating a unified College at this time is that many of the exciting developments in research and teaching in academia are at the intersections of our traditional disciplines in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. A unified College will make it easier to develop these new interdisciplinary areas, while at the same time providing the means to preserve the disciplinary-based areas of excellence that made Ohio State the great institution it is. Unifying the College should
encourage the exploration of creative new ideas, provide our undergraduate and graduate students with new experiences and new opportunities, and allow our faculty to develop interdisciplinary ties with other colleagues that can be career defining and enhancing. At great institutions like Ohio State, the arts and sciences should be the cornerstone on which all other academic experiences are built. The College should be more prominent and influential, both here at Ohio State and around the world. A unified College will make it easier to have the collective voice of arts and sciences heard both on and off campus. Our goal for this reorganization is simple, but lofty—we want to be the best College of Arts and Sciences anywhere.

New Administrative Structure

As indicated above, the College of Arts and Sciences is led by an individual who serves as Executive Dean and Vice Provost. The major duties of the Executive Dean include managing a unified College budget, representing the College in meetings and at functions both on and off campus, fund-raising for the many units in the College, and strategic planning. In the role of Vice Provost, the Executive Dean has been given additional responsibilities to provide advice and counsel to the Provost on promotion and tenure recommendations and other academic matters.

The Executive Dean’s senior administrative team will include three deans who will head the three divisions that make up the College: Arts and Humanities, Natural and Mathematical Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences; the five colleges that currently exist will be eliminated and replaced by one College. The divisional deans will report to the Executive Dean and serve as the primary contact for the College departments and programs and the Arts and Science Executive Dean’s office. They will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operations within the departments in their respective divisions, managing budgets allocated to the divisions by the Executive Dean, and representing their divisions at the College level, as well as in many forums around the university. While the divisional deans will have division-related duties, it is important to note that the goals and objectives of the unified College will be at the forefront of their considerations when dealing with issues related to the operation of the College and its units. Each divisional dean will be assisted by two associate deans, who will have responsibilities defined by the divisional dean, as well as College-wide duties assigned by the Executive Dean.

The existing position of Executive Associate Dean will be part of the senior administrative team and continue to report to the Executive Dean. The Executive Associate Dean will be assigned College-wide duties to support the guiding principles of the structure. To facilitate cooperation and collaboration between units in the College, the interdisciplinary programs that currently report directly to the Executive Dean’s office will be moved into appropriate divisions, and one of the divisional deans will serve as the contact dean for the programs and their directors.

College Budgeting

Perhaps one of the biggest changes for Arts and Sciences will be the allocation of budget. In past years, budget allocations were made to the five arts and sciences colleges by the Provost using Ohio State’s budget system. The colleges then made allocations to individual departments and programs using a variety of different methods.

We plan to take a group or team approach to managing the arts and sciences budget. Beginning this year, the combined budgets of the five colleges of arts and sciences were
distributed to the Executive Dean for subsequent allocation by the Executive Dean to the three college divisions that have been formed. Starting in spring 2010, an annual budget call will be made to department chairs and program directors, who will submit budget requests to the Executive Dean’s office that include proposals and requests for instructional and non-instructional related funds. After setting aside a small portion of the budget for the operation of the College and division offices, funds will be allocated to departments and programs by the Executive Dean after consultation and discussion with the divisional deans. Throughout the year, the divisional deans will oversee the management of the budgets for the departments within their divisions.

Budget planning each year will be guided more by sound strategic planning and less by year-to-year marginal gains and marginal losses caused by fluctuations in enrollment in individual units. Because the College’s level of funding is, to a large extent, based on credit hour production in the College, however, the College will track enrollment trends in each unit and factor these into the budget allocation decisions that are ultimately made.

Faculty Recruitment and Hiring

Arguably, the most important activity we engage in each year is the recruitment, hiring and retention of faculty. It is the quality of the faculty that ultimately determines the excellence of the institution. Hiring new faculty at the cutting edge of their disciplines helps assure that The Ohio State University remains a vibrant and exciting place for students and scholars. Hiring new faculty provides important opportunities to start and develop new programs, strengthen existing programs, and advance the general goals of the College and the university.

To this end, the way we allocate resources for faculty hires will reflect these goals and objectives. Early in the spring each year, department chairs and program directors will be asked to submit proposals for hiring new faculty. These proposals will provide a rationale for the hires being requested by the chairs and directors. The Executive Dean and divisional deans will then discuss the proposals that have been submitted and select those that will go forward for recruitment in the following year. Several factors will be considered during this selection process, including whether or not the proposal addresses College and/or university priorities, addresses needs or wants identified during the departmental and individual college strategic planning processes that have been conducted, and/or strengthens one or more department or program while also keeping in mind our continuing desire to diversify the faculty. To this end, we plan to work on an overall College strategic plan that blends the individual college strategic plans that have been articulated previously.

Because faculty retention is important, the ongoing mentoring of faculty at all stages of their careers will be a priority for the unified College. Opportunities to share in hiring with other Ohio State colleges and schools will also be aggressively pursued. Overall, the goal in hiring new faculty will be to advance the department or program, the College, and the institution through solid disciplinary or interdisciplinary hiring decisions.

College Services

The current reorganization process provides an excellent opportunity for us to assess the ways we deliver important services to faculty and students in areas like business operations, information technology, student advising, development, communications, and outreach. For the most part, these services are currently distributed to the level of the departments and the previously existing colleges. Our intention is to examine the effectiveness of how we deliver
basic services to our students and faculty with an eye toward improving services while realizing financial savings, which then can be redistributed to the College departments to meet important needs and program development. The current business process redesign program we are pursuing is an example of this effort.

Our goal is not to centralize all services; local delivery models are sometimes better than centralized models. Rather it is likely that a hybrid model will emerge where general oversight of the services will take place at the College level with some delivery and organization of the staff largely along department or division lines. Communication, development and outreach are exceptions because these services tend to reach across the entire College. Much is to be gained by unifying these operations in the College office to maximize the effectiveness of these areas of service. We will also carefully examine how effectively we use and deliver technology in the unified College and how space is allocated, managed and used. The reorganization process may provide some excellent opportunities for us to rethink how technology is developed and deployed in the College and how space may be used more efficiently and more cost-effectively.

**College Shared Governance, Policies, and Procedures**

Other areas that will receive much attention and discussion include the committee and governance structure of the College and a number of policy and procedure changes that will be necessary to assure the unification of the arts and sciences. The change from five smaller colleges to one unified College will necessitate a variety of procedure and rule changes at the level of the university and college senate bodies. This process will follow the multi-step procedure laid out in the University Senate rules.

To assist us in discussing these issues, we plan to form a committee or task force early this fall to explore issues related to college committee structures and faculty/staff/student input on College matters. Wherever possible we believe unified College committees with members elected or selected with both divisional and college wide representation in mind would be desirable. For example, elected College executive committees for faculty, staff and students, which serve to discuss policy and advise the Executive Dean and divisional deans are critical for the future of the College. The role of the Arts and Science Senate in College matters will also be explored and discussed as we move forward.

The structure of graduate and undergraduate curriculum committees will also have to be examined as we move to a unified College. We believe that it is best that they be developed with both divisional and College-wide representation in mind. For example, divisional subcommittees could be formed to discuss curricular issues and make recommendations that are forwarded to a unified College curriculum committee (or the College-wide executive committee) for a final discussion and vote.

While promotion and tenure procedures will be affected by the reorganization, the basic structure of the review will remain the same: a department level review and chair recommendation, College-level (intermediate) review and dean recommendation, and university-level review and provost recommendation. No additional level of P&T review will result from the reorganization. One possibility for a P&T structure would be to have reviews conducted at the College level by divisionally constituted P&T committees that are chaired by the divisional deans. The divisional committee recommendations would then be forwarded to the Executive Dean for his/her review and recommendation and then passed on to the university-level committee and the Provost.
The arts and science reorganization process also provides a key opportunity to examine and
develop policies and procedures on a number of issues including: methods of accounting for
the student credit hours taught by faculty to encourage collaboration and cooperation between
units; creation of team-teaching policies that enhance student experiences; development of
flexible policies for course load assignments that help faculty balance their teaching and
research responsibilities; creation and management of interdisciplinary programs involving units
inside and outside of the College; the recruitment and development of jointly hired faculty; and
studying the general education requirements as we move to a semester system.

Concluding Remarks

We intend to have the general framework for the reorganization of the arts and sciences
completed by the end of this calendar year. After CAA and University Senate reviews and,
hopefully, approves Interim Executive Dean Joan Leitzel's proposal for establishing a unified
College of Arts and Sciences, we hope to have the basic working plan for the unified College in
place by the end of the academic year. We will aggressively push forward in planning, but in a
thoughtful way that is mindful of the long-term future of the College.

In the end, we want The Ohio State University to have a College of Arts and Sciences that is
dynamic and able to react to important developments in our many disciplines that reflect
important changes and developments in academia. We want a College that encourages
collaboration and cooperation among faculty and the units in which they are affiliated. The
overall long-term goal for the reorganization of the College is a lofty one: the College should
serve to enhance the research and teaching experiences of its faculty and students. Simply put,
the College at Ohio State should strive to be among the best colleges of arts and sciences in
the world.

Respectfully submitted by:

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