CAS Task Force
Meeting Notes | April 19, 2019

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The task force heard from the working group assigned to consider external issues or factors relating to the college's structure. Topics the group considered included: student recruiting, industry partnerships, development, government affairs, and press and communications. Working group members walked through these points in the meeting.

RECRUITING - UNDERGRADUATE: It was noted that most undergraduates do not have any knowledge or special connection to a structure; this includes international students who may be highly focused on specific colleges or areas of study. Student recruitment efforts have been focused lately on students who do not necessarily know what they want to study and therefore have offered a fairly broad message about departments and programs. Admissions staff suggested that the liberal arts structure of CAS could support this "exploring student" message as an organizational manifestation of the recruiting strategy, although the overriding sense at Admissions is that the CAS structure is mostly irrelevant to undergraduate student recruitment.

RECRUITING – MASTER'S: There appears to be no evident benefit to the current structure for professional master's degree recruiting. Those students are highly focused on the *program* and not where that program sits. Some noted that the current structure was actually a disadvantage to professional master's program recruiting because the larger entity (CAS) was ultimately in receipt of graduate tuition revenue and individual programs did not necessarily benefit. However, this issue was considered largely moot at this point because many of those programs are now running through the Knight Campus. The was some general conversation among task force members about how structure may or may not play a role in these types of issues, ultimately concluding that it is mostly a function of the dean or individual(s) in charge of the college as opposed to the structure of the college itself.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS: It was generally held that internal management or administrative structures are not relevant to government stakeholders, though it's possible that structure bolsters (or hinders) our external rankings. For example, if a new college suddenly emerged with really high rankings that could help set it apart, that might be beneficial. But this was not seen overall as an issue of impact.

PRESS/COMMUNICATIONS: Most communications efforts are centered on focused departments or academic programs rather than at the college level, and thus a structural change would not necessarily equate to better storytelling or better brand journalism. There was some mention that smaller colleges may get better communications overall, but this was less about their size and more about the relative amount of resources each college or school chooses to spend on communications from its discretionary budget.

INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS: The workgroup reported that the current structure of CAS is a disadvantage to promoting industry partnerships, largely due to its breadth of interests and lack of focus on specific areas. Those who work most in cultivating industry partnerships believed that smaller structures work better in recruiting and sustaining such partnerships because smaller units have more focus and are less likely to change with whims of leadership or other unit impacts.

DEVELOPMENT/FUNDRAISING: It was noted that there are pros and cons to the current structure and to possible new structures. Ultimately the development staff and their efforts follow the structure whatever it may be. That said, a smaller unit might have more focused fundraising efforts; but they may also have fewer resources. And a larger college may struggle with focus and having too many bigger initiatives to fundraise for, but may be advantaged by having diversity of programming to draw from.

After discussing each of the topics above, the task force had a conversation about the possible implications of breaking the College along existing divisional structures versus establishing narrower-colleges that are more focused, such as a College of Computer and Information Sciences. The group used this concept as a basis for discussing scenarios, relative benefits and challenges, etc. It was noted that there are multiple options for what such colleges could be focused on – e.g., Creative and Performing Arts, Environmental Science, etc. But the question remains whether there are inherent benefits to new structures. Issues such as program development, joint appointments, co-location, and other topics were discussed.

There was additional conversation about whether the division of units into narrower colleges would be driven by new initiatives or "the next thing" – and then whether this makes sense given changing preferences, splits among specific departments, resources needed, bandwidth and energy for change.

There was some sentiments that the existing structure doesn't really allow us to be nimble when new ideas are initiated; there isn't really a way within the structure to cultivate and coordinate.

Some other areas touched on through the ending discussion:
- Incubation facilities; interdisciplinary ideas; perhaps a coordinator type role within CAS to facilitate

- How has VPRI created a research agenda that is in conflict with or duplication of what is happening already within CAS departments?

- What is optimal for the number of people a good leader would want to have in conversations re: decisions? Are there already too many now that the Divisional Deans go to the Deans Council.

- Legacy of the division of research in the VPRI and teaching in CAS.