Task Force on the Structure of CAS
Meeting Notes | January 22, 2018

The task force met on January 22, 2018 in the EMU. Many of the discussion points weaved in and out throughout the duration of the meeting. Thus, the notes below are not presented in chronological order, but seek to summarize by topic.

Subgroups

The group discussed proposed subgroups that could be useful in gathering information, generating ideas, and analyzing information. There was a robust discussion about how best to structure subgroups and what issues such groups would tackle. Issues and ideas raised included:

- Looking at incentive structures to motivate (or demotivate) certain behaviors
- Creating four subgroups that looked at topics from the aspect of (i) teaching, (ii) research, (iii) internal management, and (iv) external management and relations.
- Establishing some draft structures (including the current structure) from which to analyze pros and cons
- Comparisons to other institutions and peer groups, as well as analysis of what other schools have done relative to merging or splitting colleges
- Global studies (a school)
- Financial consequences and administrative costs for structural options
- How would a change in the college shift things for students

Next Steps

Ultimately, it was determined that there would be two key next steps:

1) (A) To identify criteria upon which to analyze advantages and disadvantages of a particular structure (more below) and (B) apply those criteria to the existing structure. Everyone would participate in this via working groups. (The next step would be to conduct the same analysis, with the same criteria, to different model structures.)
2) To identify approximately three model structures—for illustrative purposes only—for the CFO team to analyze from a financial perspective. It was noted that assumptions will need to be made to appropriately engage in this step, and those just need to be clearly articulated.

Criteria and Issue Spotting

There was quite a bit of discussion among the group about what criteria should be used as the basis for assessing "advantages and disadvantages" (as used in the president and provost's memo). The group agreed to work on these via electronic discussion, but several initial ideas or themes were referenced multiple times. These include: teaching effectiveness, faculty productivity and advancement, philanthropic opportunities, and increasing research.

Various suggestions were offered in the context of both (a) issues to analyze *and* (b) ways to approach the analysis:

- The importance of exercising some restraint in the topics analyzed—focusing on problems that are likely related to the structural issue (not, for example, policy decisions).
- Looking at linkages between/among issues.

- It is useful to look at comparisons with other institutions and we should gather more information, but we do need to be cautious about imparting lessons at one institution directly onto the UO
- Would a split challenge existing abilities to engage in interdisciplinary research and scholarship, the existence of small interdisciplinary programs, or similar interdisciplinary activities
- Some issues may be solvable within existing structures and we should think about that as well
- How do we analyze excellence from a more values-based and qualified discussion around knowledge production
- We need to get our hands dirty thinking about specifics and working through the tough questions
- How do we consider and approach those departments that straddle current divisional lines (e.g., Linguistics, Psychology, Anthropology)
- Is there a body of knowledge about what components must exist at a university or within a college in order to achieve success and excellence? Can we get some information about academic research conducted on this general question, or about academic structures and relationships?
- Challenges exist at the UO around ensuring that expectations from the central administration ("the top") and align with steps taken at the local levels (e.g., college, department); perhaps some of this is policy or miscommunication and not structural, but perhaps some of it is structural

Timing

During the meeting, there were several concerns and questions raised about the timing of this endeavor and how quickly the group is expected to tackle a very big discussion. Some questioned *why* there was urgency, and others pointed out that there was much work to be done in a limited period of time. There was some connection between the timing afforded this task force and the need to ultimately launch a search for a new dean (or searches for new deans).

Third Party Assistance

There was discussion at the end about whether—given the scope of the topic, the time afforded the group, and the likelihood that third parties already have relevant knowledge and expertise—it made sense to hire outside support for the initiative. This could come in the form of information gathering, project management, facilitation, or some combination of these. The group was very much in favor of exploring this option; staff and the chair will discuss this with the president and provost. It was generally agreed that the financial cost associated with such help was worthwhile given the cost associated with the many talented FTE on the task force.

Underlying Premise for the Analysis

There was discussion about the president and provost's underlying motivations for forming this task force and asking the question about the size and structure of CAS. Some indicated that they've received feedback from the campus community about whether this is a "solution in search of a problem". Reflecting on the December 12 memo from the president and provost, it was discussed that they do not have preconceived answers to the advantages and disadvantages question, but wanted a group of faculty, staff and students to think through the question using first-hand knowledge of and experience with CAS and other academic structures. It was relayed that the president, provost, trustees and others had questions upon arriving at the UO about the structure of CAS relative to the rest of the university because it is so much larger; that this relative size and structure may be appropriate or the best model, but that it has been an open question for some years and the timing of the dean's departure presented an opportunity to call the question before conducting a search.

Other reasons for initiating the discussion of the structure of CAS were also suggested:

- Smaller units have a more direct line to the dean; fewer layers between the faculty and the dean
- It may be difficult for a dean to prioritize—or for the faculty to feel like they're prioritized—in Development conversations
- What college structure produces the kinds of leaders we want?
- There has been no clear vision in CAS at any level for the last 30 years which may be a function of size and scope

Financial Analysis

There was also discussion about how best to go about analyzing the costs associated with different structures. Various points were raised on this topic:

- If there is additional money to spend on rearranging the chairs, perhaps that money could be better used to invest in something else (such as new chairs, or something other than chairs altogether)
- Potential costs of different structures are hard to predict with specificity because administrative support structures cannot be designed until the academic structure is designed; additionally, there are many ways to design administrative functions to support academic functions so the notion of simply creating a formula for "what this size college costs to run" does not necessarily work
- We have to have some sense of boundaries; if something can be done for a few hundred thousand, that is perhaps reasonable and worth the time to explore; if something is going to cost millions, it's probably not worth the time to explore because it's simply not financially feasible
- Remember the guidance provided in the charge, which was to not look too specifically at financial components because the most important piece is getting the academic components right