

CAS Task Force on the Structure of the College Executive Summary of Survey #2

Survey #2 invited faculty, staff, and students to respond to the second of four questions that the president and provost have asked us to consider ([found here](#)): “Discuss the advantages of the current structure [of CAS] relative to the college’s ability to deliver on its teaching and research mission and how various changes might enhance or, alternatively, lessen those advantages?” The first survey had asked respondents to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the current CAS structure; the second question asks us how any advantages might be enhanced or diminished through structural means (the third question will ask how any disadvantages might be increased or lessened through structural means). After an opening set of questions about respondents, the survey offered four options for individual responses:

1. Discuss the advantages of the current structure of CAS relative to the college’s ability to deliver on its teaching mission.
2. How might various changes enhance, alternately, lessen those advantages (teaching)?
3. Discuss the advantages of the current structure of CAS relative to the college’s ability to deliver on its research mission.
4. How might various changes enhance or, alternately, lessen those advantages (research)?

118 people responded to the second survey, again most of them from CAS. A majority of respondents continue to feel that CAS should not be restructured, but interest in improving the college from within is growing. A small number of people think CAS should be restructured. Selections from a list of the “most important aspect of the Dean’s Office without regard to structure” were heavily weighted toward department-level relationships: “Advocacy for the department in goal setting both within the college and at the university level” and “Really understanding the department strengths, needs, and culture.”

Collaboration across units and divisions, interdisciplinary research and teaching possibilities, and the importance of a college devoted to offering our students a broad liberal arts education remain the reasons most respondents cite for retaining some version of the current structure of CAS. As part of this, some respondents noted that a College of Arts and Sciences “helps promote core curriculum goals around writing, numeracy, and basic skills . . . relevant to all disciplines,” as one person put it. In this survey, respondents talked about wanting to maintain the stability of CAS and raised concerns about the cost (financial, time, effort, personal toll) of restructuring CAS. A number of respondents asserted that CAS supports teaching to the detriment of research, and a nearly equal number asserted that CAS privileges research over teaching. Likewise, some feel the CAS dean can be a unifying and synthesizing advocate for the liberal arts on campus, while others feel that the dean of a college like CAS can’t advocate effectively for particular disciplines. Questions about how the Knight Campus will be integrated with the rest of the UO were on the minds of respondents on both sides of the CAS reorganization debate.

One respondent voiced measured concerns that many others share: “On the one hand, restructuring would concentrate resources in a way that might result in more support for departments. On the other hand, separating the college along the lines of discipline types could inhibit interdisciplinary education and research, and reproduce myths about discipline value, roles in our lives, and exclusivity.”

We encourage you to read the survey results for yourself to hear the ongoing and much more detailed debates recorded there about the question of the CAS structure.