

Final Report
May 21, 2019

TASK FORCE ON THE STRUCTURE OF CAS

This report summarizes our understanding of our charge, the process used to carry out the charge, and the Task Force findings. We adopt the following organization:

- Overview of charge and CAS TF process
- Summaries of the preliminary reports from the five Working Groups
 - Research
 - Teaching
 - Internal Administration and Management
 - External Management and Relations
 - Other College Structures
- Conclusion
- Appendices

Task Force Membership

- Elliot Berkman, CAS, Natural Sciences, Associate Professor of Psychology
- Tina Boscha, CAS, Humanities, English, Senior Instructor/Assistant Department Head
- Melissa Bowers, CAS, Humanities/Social Sciences, English and Folklore and OCIAS, Business Manager
- Ben Brinkley, CAS, IT, Director
- Karen Ford (Chair), CAS, Humanities, Professor of English/Senior Divisional Dean for Humanities
- Pedro García-Caro, CAS, Humanities, Associate Professor of Romance Languages
- Spike Gildea, CAS, Humanities, Professor of Linguistics
- Monica Guy, CAS, Social Sciences, Environmental Studies, Office Manager
- Bruce McGough, CAS, Social Sciences, Professor of Economics/Department Head
- Betsy McClendon, CAS Advisory Board Chair
- Juan-Carlos Molleda, SOJC, Professor of Communications/Dean
- Gabe Paquette, CHC, Professor of History and International Studies/Dean
- Craig Parsons, CAS, Social Sciences, Professor of Political Science/Department Head
- Mike Price, CAS, Natural Sciences, Senior Instructor of Math
- Teri Rowe (Support), CAS, Finance and Administration Manager for Economics and Sociology
- Tyrone Russ, CAS, IT, Buyer
- Christiana Sewall, CAS, Natural Sciences, Undergraduate Student in General Science
- Brad Shelton, OtP, CAS, Natural Sciences, Professor of Math/Executive Vice Provost
- Janelle Stevenson, CAS, Natural Sciences, Graduate Student in Biology
- Joe Sventek, CAS, Natural Sciences, Professor of Computer & Information Science/Department Head
- Richard Taylor, CAS, Natural Sciences, Professor of Physics/Department Head
- Frances White, CAS, Social Sciences, Professor of Anthropology/Department Head
- Rocío Zambrana, CAS, Humanities, Associate Professor of Philosophy

May 21, 2019

TO: President Michael Schill
Provost Jayanth Banavar

FROM: Members of the Task Force on the Structure of the College of Arts and Sciences

SUBJECT: Task Force Report

Overview

Last Fall the Task Force (TF) on the Structure of the College of Arts and Sciences was assembled and charged with conducting “an analysis of the costs of and benefits to making structural changes to the division of academic programs currently housed in CAS, and those in professional schools that may better align with current CAS departments” (“Charge and Discussion Outline” https://Provost.uoregon.edu/files/cas_task_force_memo_12.12.18.pdf). The 22-member group included UO deans, tenure-related and teaching-focused faculty from the three CAS divisions, OA’s, staff, an undergraduate and a graduate student, and the chair of the CAS Advisory Board. The CAS TF was supported by the University Secretary and Interim Chief of Staff to the Provost, the Department Manager of Economics and Sociology, and a subcommittee of academic CFOs for data analysis and research coordinated by the Executive Vice Provost for Academic Operations. The Provost’s Office also supplied graduate research assistant support. For information, schedules, documents, and resources, see the CAS TF webpages at the Provost’s website: <https://Provost.uoregon.edu/task-force-structure-college-arts-and-sciences>.

After an initial charging meeting with the President and Provost in December, the group met biweekly through Winter and Spring 2019. The charge was to submit a report “on the pros and cons of the current structure and possible changes to it,” not to make a recommendation. We were asked “to think creatively and to look outside of the existing structure.” Our purpose was to consider “what allows for the greatest success of faculty, students, and staff” in CAS, not to find efficiencies or cost savings.

During the charging meeting and subsequent two meetings some TF members expressed confusion and suspicion about the motive for convening the TF. The President repeatedly assured the group (and the campus at large) that he did not have a preconceived plan and was asking for a frank and creative response to the question of whether the current structure of CAS optimally supports the UO’s mission. Articulating and airing those concerns as well as hearing from the President was a productive step towards getting to work.

By the third meeting, Task Force members had organized into several working groups, with each group including a member from every rank when possible. The five working groups on Research, Teaching, Internal Administration and Management, External Management and Relations, and Other College Structures reported their findings through Spring term. Each group was tasked to address the following items:

1. What is the current structure, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the current structure relative to the college’s ability to deliver on its teaching and research mission?

2. Discuss those advantages of the current structure 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.
3. Discuss those disadvantages . . . and how various changes might mitigate or, alternatively, exacerbate those disadvantages.
4. What additional solutions—apart from structure—may help enhance advantages or mitigate disadvantages?

A sixth Writing Group drafted the report and revised it with feedback from the whole membership.

In addition to discussions in the Task Force meetings and presentation of reports, we conducted a campus survey on the first four Working Group topics and provided a feedback link on the Task Force webpage. The Task Force chair met with CAS managers, the UO Senate, the President and Provost, and with numerous faculty and staff in individual meetings to report progress and take questions and ideas. The Task Force members invited the CAS deans to a meeting, the President hosted a lunch for Task Force members, and Working Group members have interviewed faculty and staff on campus and colleagues at other institutions to learn more about their topics.

Research

The Research Working Group (RWG) surveyed the factors that influence research and scholarship and then evaluated how they are affected by the CAS structure. These factors were categorized as Resources, Administrative Support, Local Intellectual Environment, and Broader Intellectual Environment. RWG found that college structure is not the primary influence determining the success of most factors; further, factors exhibiting substantive structural dependence would likely be harmed by structural change. Along these lines, RWG emphasized one conclusion in particular: if there is a strong desire for enhancing broader interdisciplinary research, the optimal approach is to evolve rather than divide CAS.

RWG discussed each of the four factors above (see "Research Working Group Report," Appendix F). Resource factors included personnel (faculty, post-docs, and graduate students), funding (college grants supporting research programs), facilities (lab and office space), and knowledge access (libraries and literature access). RWG found most of these factors to be independent of structure. Faculty and GE positions were notable exceptions—it was not clear how splitting into smaller colleges would impact faculty lines under the current Institutional Hiring Plan. RWG anticipated that the current flexibility of GE allocations enjoyed within CAS would become more limited for separated colleges.

Factors associated with Administrative Support included grant development and administration (pre- and post-award), personnel administration (graduate programs, GEs, and post-docs), finance and business (including travel and visiting scholar coordination), college-level administration by the deans, and development and external support. RWG again found most of these factors to be independent of structure. College-level administration was a major exception. The CAS system facilitates considerable dean-level communication and synergy, resource flexibility, and identification of opportunities. Although it would be hard to tease out the precise contributions of individual personality, physical proximity, and college structure to these synergies, RWG concluded that the current system of divisional deans is effective and would be disrupted by a structural change. (Only in the Development enterprise did the group find that synergies across disciplines are not cultivated. With the exception of presidential initiatives, Development efforts follow the structure of the College.)

CAS promotes the local intellectual environment of faculty, post-docs, and graduate students via its support for collaboration on, and dissemination of, scholarly work. This support is realized through frameworks such as colloquia and other active seminar and workshop series. However, much of the responsibility for research falls under the office of the VPRI. RWG found that under this current model, a change in college structure would have minimal impact on local research activities. A significant exception lies with the hiring and promotion of faculty. Individual colleges might allow for more targeted hiring, while the current CAS structure may allow for broader connections across the faculty.

RWG found that a united college of arts and sciences in principle provides the optimal structure for supporting a liberal arts mission and for incentivizing cross-disciplinary collaboration, thereby providing support for the broader intellectual environment. RWG agreed that it is possible for separated colleges to promote this vision; however, success in either structure will depend upon personalities. In the same way that the current synergies are dependent upon a broad-minded dean and divisional deans who work well together, synergies in a multi-college structure would rely upon a broad-minded and responsive provost and deans who work well together. The broader CAS mission aims to mitigate the “silos” that can happen within departments or more focused colleges.

RWG concluded that future considerations should explore the possibility of evolving the CAS structure to better fulfill its liberal arts mission. If there is a large latent desire for broad collaboration, CAS could serve as an incubator for interdisciplinary research themes. This would require a greater collaboration with the VPRI’s office and might also be achieved through enhanced roles of the divisional deans in fostering research collaborations, and possibly by introducing a Dean for Research or “synergy” Dean.

Teaching

The Teaching Working Group (TWG) considered other college structures and concluded that alternative structures would not clearly improve the liberal arts teaching mission of the UO. They saw many benefits in the current structure or something very much like it. They therefore focused on the student experience in CAS as it is currently structured and took up a question that guided many TF discussions concerning what a liberal arts education should be at the University of Oregon in the twenty-first century. Teaching excellence is fundamental to a successful undergraduate education, and research and teaching ideally come together in a “core” or “general” lower-division education that forms the broad liberal arts foundation. Core education courses that are responsive to perspectives of students who wish to be fully immersed in and passionate about their coursework and future jobs will be innovative, engaging, well conceived and structured, and will offer students the basic skills and broad perspective that will help assure their future success in their studies and their careers. Core education is one of the central spaces where CAS-related departments and programs offer students some of the key transferable skills they will need not just in CAS but in UO’s professional schools and in other programs and pursuits beyond the UO.

Because of the relationship between our liberal arts mission and core or general education, the group considered how CAS can participate in campus initiatives to improve student experience, for instance by liaising with the Core Education Council and assuring that the College and Careers advising operation coming to Tykeson Hall in the Fall works in cooperation with these teaching efforts. TWG examined the potential benefits of an administrative position dedicated to teaching, a position that could work with the Provost’s Office on improving and promoting teaching excellence and supporting all faculty. There are numerous resources to cultivate and support high-impact teaching on campus, and CAS can partner

with the Teaching Engagement Program, the Teaching Academy, the Core Curriculum Council, and the University of Oregon Committee on Courses to advance cutting-edge, effective teaching in the college and throughout the university.

TWG also considered the possible benefits of creating a core education unit, where CAS could direct resources to the general education courses that almost all UO students take at some point in their undergraduate careers. Faculty-in-residence in a core education unit could provide oversight of quality education, facilitate better engagement with students, focus resources on student success and support, and even provide mechanisms for interacting with the surrounding community. (TWG proposed the development of a core education college as a plausible model for a core education unit; this proposal, which is included in the addenda, should be viewed as an example, not as a recommendation from the TF. See “Teaching Working Group Report,” Appendix G.)

The group further examined the issue of faculty departmental homes versus teaching across different departments. CAS is currently the seeding ground for unique interdisciplinary programs on our campus, including international area studies programs that involve faculty members across all the schools and colleges, as well as new interdisciplinary programs such as Environmental Studies and Global Health. These interdisciplinary hubs offer orthogonal and multifaceted approaches to teaching and research, fostering innovation in ways that productively complement traditional disciplinary departments. However, departmental and budgetary structures can make it difficult for faculty to move across campus and teach in interdisciplinary programs; this in turn could discourage innovation in cross-disciplinary collaborations and forms of teaching that defy or perhaps challenge the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Flexibility in teaching will generate faculty interest, innovation, and collaboration and will improve student experience.

TWG asked whether an organization not among divisions (Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities) but among mutually enhancing and illuminating fields within the College might serve innovative, cross-disciplinary learning better than our current structures. They encourage the UO to examine what approach to teaching and curriculum in CAS would diminish duplication, assembly-line courses, and faculty isolation and best increase interest, innovation, and nimbleness in our teachers and their classrooms.

Internal Administration and Operations

The Internal Working Group (IWG) evaluated both internal processes and impacts of those processes on stakeholders, with a focus on CAS department administration, faculty and union concerns, graduate students, staff, and HR concerns. They conducted interviews and examined current structures to determine advantages and disadvantages of current processes (budgeting, grant support, GE allocations, hiring, etc.), advantages and disadvantages of these processes under split models, and whether those processes would be improved or impaired by a change in structure.

IWG identified some areas where current organizational structures leave room for improvement, including graduate admissions as directed by the Graduate School and the policies for assignments and employment of graduate student funding by CAS. Additional issues included disincentives to developing summer/online classes due to summer taxes from CAS and the need to standardize funding for departmental support of majors as advising shifts to Tykeson Hall. Although these problems are all related to organizational structure, they do not necessarily reflect the administrative structure of CAS.

IWG concluded that they could conceivably be addressed either within the current CAS structure or in another college structure.

The main issue that was identified as having both possible advantages and disadvantages under moving to a split model was the “layers” of deans between department heads and the college decision level, with the expectation that knowledge of the department would decrease as deans were more removed from direct interaction with department heads. Fewer levels of deans within a given college might result in the deans having greater departmental knowledge but might also result in less power for the college as a whole so that splitting would most likely have a negative result.

The IWG saw other operations (such as budget allocation, hiring, curriculum oversight; see “Internal Processes Working Group Table,” Appendix E) as being even more difficult to perform in another college structure. The overall conclusion of the subgroup was that there were no clear advantages to a split model with respect to internal operations. The transition costs (time, financial, effort, public relations, faculty morale, etc.) of changing the structure of CAS overshadowed any possible minor gains.

External Management and Relations

The Working Group on External Relations (WGE) began by identifying seven operations where a potential CAS reorganization could affect UO’s relations with outside groups:

- Recruiting of domestic undergraduate students
- Recruiting of international undergraduate students
- Recruiting of students for professional MA programs
- Development
- Industry partnerships
- State and federal government
- Press/communications

In each area a WGE member interviewed UO personnel with related responsibilities (see “External Processes Working Group Report and Table,” Appendix D).

In three areas—recruiting of domestic and international undergraduates, relations with state and federal government, and communications—interviewees felt that UO’s external relations were unlikely to be significantly advantaged or disadvantaged by a CAS reorganization. Domestic undergraduates know little about college-organization, being interested either in specific programs or very broad areas. UO branding for domestic audiences has emphasized a liberal arts framework and supportive resources for exploring students, which have affinities with a broad CAS structure, but recruitment could work with a reorganized framework as well. International students typically have very focused interest in specific programs and little concern for how they are organized in colleges or schools. People in state and federal legislatures or funding agencies are also not very interested in college/school organization. A reorganization could boost UO’s appeal with these audiences only if it produced a college that could be highly ranked in external measures. Communications personnel felt that effective “brand journalism” to promote UO’s research and other achievements depends above all on sufficient resources for these activities. Given sufficient resources, communication could be effective within various structures.

In three (or two and a half) areas, interviewees saw some potential advantages from some division of CAS: development, industry partnerships, and professional MA programs. Of these, CAS reorganization

seems least significant for recruitment into professional MAs. Most issues that promote or impede these programs entail resources or policy that presumably can vary independently from college structure. However, many such programs involve industry partnerships for internships and other student opportunities, so that category can have a knock-on effect for these MA programs. The group heard the strongest endorsement of a reorganization from people who have worked on industry partnerships. Industrial partners want highly specific collaborations that are focused in areas of their interest. To date CAS has seemed too broad to develop such connections well. CAS processes have tended to pull proposed partnerships in more diffuse directions that partners see as unappealing. Smaller and more focused colleges would presumably be better able to develop such partnerships. In development relations to donors, too, WGE heard some arguments for the advantages of potential CAS splits. Development personnel stressed that their foci tend to follow fairly strongly from college/school structures. The broad CAS structure has thus encouraged some emphasis on fundraising for broad goals that benefit many units, like the Tykeson academic and career advising center. If one expects that the strongest CAS units have the greatest development potential, a split might better focus development efforts on the most promising areas if there were also sufficient resources. Interviewees noted that more focused development is less efficient and thus more expensive than fundraising for broader goals.

To the extent that the interviewees and working-group members saw advantages in a CAS reorganization, it was not a simple division along current divisional lines. (The group did not immediately see another comparable structure but discussed one plausible model that we include in the addenda as an example, not as a recommendation from the TF. See Appendix C, “A Case for a College of Computer and Data Sciences.”)

Alternative College Structures

The Working Group on Alternative College Structures (WGA) offered data on college structures at other AAU public universities and found that most (66%) have equivalents of UO’s College of Arts and Sciences in one unit. (For details about the norm and the variations, see “Alternative Structures Working Group Report,” Appendix B.) Though they found that a single CAS-like college is the norm (two-thirds of our peers have their CAS departments in the same basic structure, often adding fine arts), they also noted that our CAS represents more of the overall UO because we do not have other large colleges like most of our comparators (engineering, medicine, and/or agriculture). There is some variation in the administrative structure of these similar colleges. Three universities have what WGA referred to as a “hybrid structure,” with a senior or executive dean who is also dean of one of the divisions functioning as our dean of CAS. All these colleges emphasize the interdisciplinary mission of arts and sciences, advising services, and collaboration.

WGA examined a number of aspects (administrative structure, mission, research, teaching, resource flow, strategic planning) across different college structures. They concluded that research is largely independent of different structures, while teaching seems to be largely oriented towards the particular university’s structure. Though the college structure may provide an opportunity for branding undergraduate education, it was not clear to the group that there is any one optimal structure for a liberal arts college.

WGA found that a divided structure offers fewer intermediate nodes for resource flow than a unified structure does. A divided college would therefore likely retain more local control over decision making because of its shorter chain of decision makers. However, this might mean that there is more Provost-level control over decision making regarding resource distribution and a loss of the intermediate node of

the CAS dean who can adjust central decisions within the college. If a unified structure adds a layer of autonomy *vis-à-vis* central administration, it also reduces division-level control over decision making. Finally, the data collected by the WGA revealed patterns at other colleges indicating that a unified structure reduces the total number of academic administrators.

After examining other college structures, the group reflected on what might motivate us to change the CAS structure. Change of structure is costly and should be well motivated and accompanied by new investment and by a robust promotional campaign. If change requires new resources, we would need new structures that are attractive to donors who could provide startup funds and that would increase our capacity (and competitiveness) for undergraduate enrollment. WGA called for us to imagine new arrangements that retain the benefits of the current CAS structure, avoid the costs of wholesale change, and give us greater flexibility to nurture innovation.

Some issues that concern decision-making or representation of certain units or interdisciplinary themes within CAS could perhaps be resolved with reorganization of units *within* CAS if they are currently disadvantaged in some way (without coherent units to serve/promote them). Examples we discussed include International Studies or Global Studies, which many agree are poorly organized at the moment, or Environmental Studies, whose themes might achieve more salience in an intra-CAS organization. Again, these are examples that helped the group to be concrete in our discussions, not recommendations from the Task Force.

WGA concluded by asking whether UO should be thinking about a collaborative strategic planning process that supports excellence, interdisciplinarity, and innovation with CAS.

Conclusions

The dominant sentiment in all our discussions and communications is that CAS should not be dismantled into separate colleges but that the Task Force process of examining the structure of the college brought forth important suggestions for improvement and internal restructuring. Two values have emerged emphatically in every discussion and survey: (1) the strong liberal arts education that CAS offers to undergraduates is central to the UO mission and (2) the CAS structure facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching and research. These two values are clearly connected since a liberal arts mission aims to empower our students with the broad skills and knowledge they will need to adapt to a changing world and to play multiple roles as citizens and productive creators. It also offers them a deliberately broad frame of options to develop advanced skills and knowledge that suit their individual interests and strengths. Cross-disciplinary inquiry and collaboration are necessary to this broad education. In our globalized, complex, and rapidly changing world, discovery, creativity, and problem solving often occur at the intersections of disciplines. Task Force members affirmed in a variety of different discussions that we aspire to be a university that actively explores and encourages synergies—in research, teaching, and also in communication, awareness, and empathy—across the three units of CAS, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, and indeed across all the schools and colleges. While we should be wary of upholding traditions and approaches that have outlived their usefulness, we should also not seek change for change's sake, altering structures that have served their purpose reliably and remain relevant to our needs. (For a succinct history and proposal about liberal arts for our age, see "A Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century," Appendix A.)

Task Force members and survey participants found advantages in the balance of disciplines and the efficiency, oversight, consistency, and expertise achieved by having one Dean's office. Many believed

that the current CAS structure allows for sharing resources, preserving a broad and diverse set of programs in the liberal arts, and offering a voice on campus for a shared educational mission among diverse disciplines. On a campus currently revising the core curriculum, many have noted that CAS teaches core curriculum goals like writing, numeracy, and basic skills that are necessary to all disciplines—in both CAS and the professional schools. 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 cannot advocate effectively for particular disciplines.

The main disadvantages to the current CAS structure that group members and others identified are having competing priorities within one college, the large size of the college (which may impede agility, simultaneously preserve small units yet not adequately sustain them, encourage micromanaging departments without adequate local knowledge, and give CAS too much authority on campus), and the dilution of scarce resources. If supporting the mission of undergraduate teaching is generally viewed as an advantage of CAS, lack of support for the research mission of the UO was cited as a disadvantage of the current structure.

Even those on the Task Force interested in learning about other, possibly better, college structures raised concerns about the costs (financial, time, effort, and personal costs) of restructuring CAS. There is a general skepticism about making large structural changes that would require the UO to set up two or three new college dean's offices. Given the widely held conviction that we do not have resources to create something better than what we have, the group concluded that this is not the time to make large, structural changes. Even those most interested in change do not want to change unless we are sure we're creating something better and have the resources to realize its benefits. Most agree that the cost of restructuring CAS would be prohibitive and that we should invest any money there might be for this project in improving CAS. This sentiment deepened over the course of our deliberations by news of the budget cuts and the Provost stepping down. CAS TF discussions tended toward improving rather than restructuring CAS, a focus that fell within the broad charge from the President and Provost.

To aid communication and facilitate reference, we enumerate our principal conclusions. Since specific suggestions made by large, visible committees may become unwanted and unwarranted benchmarks, we restrict our conclusions to summary assessments and the attendant lessons drawn (with one exception, item 1 below).

1. We recommend seating a small vision committee tasked with addressing the President's concern about the establishment and communication of division- and college-level visions raised during the lunch meeting in March. It is understood that this committee will seek input from all CAS stakeholders.
2. CAS is anomalous relative to most other public research universities only because UO lacks medical/engineering/agricultural schools.
3. There is broad and strong resistance to large-scale restructuring, including "splitting up CAS."
4. There is considerable evidence that success is not closely related to structure—any structure can work. Leadership quality, administrative roles, and internal structures may be primary to a college's success.

5. There is broad and strong support for the recommendation that if CAS is to be split or otherwise significantly restructured, then the reasons must be clearly articulated; further, in case of restructuring, it should be evident that the benefits outweigh the substantial costs, which include transition costs and uncertainty.
6. There is broad and strong support for a renewed emphasis on liberal arts education and scholarship as central to the university's mission.
7. There is broad and strong support for a renewed emphasis on interdisciplinary education and scholarship.
8. Cooperation, rather than competition, among deans should be fostered—a best practice that CAS already enjoys and should be extended to the deans of the other schools and colleges.

Appendices

- A. "A Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century"
- B. Alternative Structures Working Group Report
- C. "A Case for a College of Computer and Data Sciences"
- D. External Processes Working Group Report and Table
- E. Internal Processes Working Group Table
- F. Research Working Group Report
- G. Teaching Working Group Report