

**Issues, concerns & opportunities to consider during discussions
about CELS departmental reorganization (DRAFT)**

Background: The CELS Dean's faculty advisory council met once a week for seven weeks during the spring semester 2013 to discuss the potential for departmental reorganization within CELS.

What are some driving forces behind CELS departmental reorganization?

- ◆ Several CELS Departments have small numbers of faculty, resulting in high service workload for some faculty
- ◆ Reorganization into units with more faculty has the potential to:
 - 1) Improve administrative efficiency and faculty productivity
 - 2) Promote interdisciplinary research
 - 3) Encourage cross-disciplinary discussions that advance innovations in teaching, research and outreach
 - 4) Create a more flexible college structure
 - 5) Limit curricular redundancies

During the discussions, members of the council expressed a variety of issues, concerns and opportunities that should be considered as CELS discusses reshaping, reorganizing and realigning different aspects of the College. The following list highlights some of those issues, concerns and opportunities grouped into broad categories. Note that this list does not represent a consensus of the advisory council nor does it prioritize any of the items. The list provides an opportunity for the advisory council to share some of the issues brought up during the weekly discussions and to stimulate additional thoughts, ideas and input from the rest of the College.

Issues, Concerns, Opportunities to Consider during Reorganization:

Category 1: Units (structure, function)

Possible considerations

- ◆ Units could be more fluid than departments (for instance, in some units at ASU, faculty members are organized into faculties which are "designed to be flexible and to respond rapidly to this evolving area of science" according to a recent ASU report, *Intellectual transformation and budgetary savings through academic reorganization*)
- ◆ Primary and secondary affiliations with units should be allowed to further reduce barriers to interaction
- ◆ Labels of units should be discussed early on in the formation of new units; what are potential impacts of changing longstanding and respected departmental names?
- ◆ What are some of the potential consequences of smaller departments merging with larger departments? Our own experience in BES graduate program can be useful (see *Lessons from BES* document).
- ◆ Units will need adequate web presence and other promotional materials so that programs are still visible after reorganization
- ◆ Procedures for hiring, making curricular changes to programs should be considered/developed early on by members of the new units (departments that formed new units at ASU developed memoranda of understanding—but this could be time consuming)

- ◆ Leadership of the unit is important; possibilities of directors, heads, or chairs were discussed – would external searches be conducted for candidates? How would chairs/directors/heads be compensated (salary, release time, etc)?
- ◆ Useful to consider that workloads of graduate and undergraduate directors will likely increase in larger units
- ◆ With larger units, will the money for lab fees go to the unit or back to the major within which the courses are offered?
- ◆

Category 2: Administrative support

Possible considerations

- ◆ Chairs and other faculty spend considerable time doing administrative tasks; there were suggestions to reduce administrative tasks for faculty (e.g., signing forms; reports completed when possible at the College-level rather than by individual unit)
- ◆ Administrative tasks may be outsourced to dedicated “managers,” either in each unit or shared among multiple units. These managers may or may not need to be faculty members
- ◆ Visibility/marketing of accredited programs, as well as new units, is important; a common theme in our discussions is the limited web/computer support within the College
- ◆ Centralizing some administrative activities could have positive and negative effects on overall faculty productivity; it would be useful to consider what these effects might be
- ◆ Centralized administrative and service activities (such as IT service) can be effective and efficient, but it will also need a system of routine evaluation from their users (i.e., faculty members)
- ◆ There are concerns about addressing administrative issues that occur at the University-level (e.g., Grad School)
- ◆ Need to continue accredited programs, possibly within new units
- ◆

Category 3: Faculty

Possible considerations

- ◆ Size of faculty in units should be manageable (not too big, not too small)
- ◆ Procedures for promotion/tenure should be defined early on in reorganization; as departments are reshaped, there is a need to consider who will have input on promotion and tenure decisions
- ◆ While fewer units could result in fewer faculty serving on college-wide committees, there is some concern that some interests will no longer be represented at the College level
- ◆ If multiple degree programs are combined into a single unit, will there be protections for programs with fewer faculty so that they are not always outvoted?
- ◆

Category 4: Curriculum (undergraduate)

Possible considerations

- ◆ Limit redundancies in undergraduate courses
- ◆ Opportunities to develop common curricula within larger units

- ◆ Current advising responsibilities may need to be adjusted as numbers of students and faculty in units change
- ◆ If units with more faculty/students are formed, multiple curriculum coordinators should be considered, possibly like those now in Biological Sciences
- ◆ Useful to address admissions, an imbalance of majors within CELS, and students' employment opportunities/outcomes post-graduation, i.e. numbers of students per major and student retention rates should not be the sole metrics of successful degree programs and this should also be taken into account during reorganization
- ◆

Category 5: Space

Possible considerations

- ◆ Support staff should be located close to physical locations of faculty and programs
- ◆ Faculty being located near one another can facilitate research collaborations
- ◆

Category 6: Research

Possible considerations

- ◆ Seminars and other research activities have been traditionally organized by departments; how will the new structure promote research and innovations within (and between) units?
- ◆ Procedures for allocating overhead from research grants should be clear (at least within units)
- ◆ How will graduate assistants be assigned to the units?
- ◆ How will scientific research grants administrator support be allocated?
- ◆

Category 7: Outreach

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