

Arts and Humanities In-Process Report 1/17/23

In November and December, the Arts and Humanities Taskforce created several opportunities for faculty and staff to voice concerns and present ideas surrounding the divisional restructure. These opportunities included formats for those who wanted to chat in person, those who wanted to sit in on zoom, and those who wanted to write down their thoughts.

A google document was created and open to anyone who wanted to share ideas and concerns regarding the division pilot. It also gave the opportunity to affirm or comment on previous entries. We received sixty entries from mid-November to mid-December. Submissions could answer one or more of the following questions or leave any questions or suggestions desired.

- Think about the services that the College office provides faculty, staff, and students. Would any of these services or programs be more effectively provided at the divisional level? If so, which ones, and why?
- Is something missing from these services and programs? Would this gap be better filled at the College level or at the divisional level?
- How could a divisional structure improve support for faculty, staff, and students?
- What steps could the divisions' leadership take to foster collaborations both within and across the divisions?
- What are the success metrics that we should use to evaluate the divisional structure pilot?

We then scheduled two in-person and synchronous zoom listening sessions on November 28 and 29, 2022 for faculty and staff. There were a dozen attendees across the two days, mostly consisting of faculty. We followed these sessions up with staff only lunchtime zoom sessions on December 12 and 13, 2022. Eighteen staff attended, including many department business managers.

Current and future taskforce engagement efforts will focus on solutions for an effective divisional structure, but during these past efforts we chose to allow attendees to focus on much needed voicing of fears, frustrations, and anxieties stemming from the restructure and trends that have caused concerns for years.

There is a high level of anxiety throughout Arts and Humanities surrounding staffing, processes, budgeting, space, and morale. A common theme is that it is hard to come up with solutions not knowing where to begin. All involved wanted to make sure we all knew that their lack of input was not a sign of disinterest. It was a sign of not knowing where/how to begin.

The following consolidated feedback is divided into areas of concern, positive feedback towards the divisional restructure, ideas and solutions, and metrics for success.

Concerns:

The biggest response we received from all areas was that we need more staff. We have needed more staff prior to any divisional change. Any new administrative roles will require appropriate staff numbers to support those administrative roles. Within the area of arts and humanities, it has been difficult to retain staff when duties are overwhelming and other colleges within the university poach staff for better pay and a higher staff to faculty ratio.

Communication and process has been a big topic. In the current structure, response times for staff on time-sensitive requests from the college is extremely high. The divisional restructure needs to reduce response time, and not extend it by needing jump through more hoops. The restructure must increase efficiency, rather than put more work on staff that are spread thin. We need less surprise, less last-minute scramble. Processes also need to be streamlined. Many feel as though the new software platforms that have promised to reduce load and speed response times have added to it. All are hoping that this restructure will allow us to assess our processes/paperwork/software platforms.

Everyone is very concerned about the new BAM budget model. While some arts and humanities departments do have plenty of large classes, most feel that the arts cost money rather than make money. Most are concerned that if we don't have the College of Arts and Sciences as a funding buffer and distributor, we will see the cost share as a greater reduction and burden. BAM has not been a transparent process, which is creating lots of anxiety surrounding how funding going to be distributed throughout the college and who has a voice in that distribution.

Depending on how separate these divisions are, many are concerned that departments outside our division will accidentally affect ours greatly – more than in the past. This is amplified by the recent removal of foreign language requirements from the College of Business and its effect on Modern Foreign Languages and Literature.

Many are concerned about space for new divisional offices at a time when some departments are being displaced, due to a lack of space on campus. The promise of new Humanities building, Melrose, has been going on for the better part of a decade, and concerns are that the divisional structure will slow that process rather than help it happen sooner.

Positive Feedback:

There is strong consensus that the divisional structure will lead to individual faculty and staff having more meaningful advocacy and a stronger voice. There is also a sense that smaller departments will have the opportunity to have more focused and like-minded publicity, communications, and processes within an Arts and Humanities divisional structure.

Ideas for structure and/or solutions:

There was a strong thread regarding fundraising, grant writing, and funding applications. Many were hoping that grant writing could be housed within the division due to similar goals, sources, and opportunities.

Many departmental offices are hoping that divisional business managers with appropriate staff will exist, who then answer to the college. The hope is that divisional business managers will ease load and create support for the departments, rather than add another layer of process. Along with business managers, many hope for divisional representatives for communications, HR, and promotion. Shared services at the divisional level would be useful. Some smaller departments are already sharing staff. It is suggested to keep departmental staff within a department and share at the divisional level instead.

With the restructure, and primarily due to the BAM budget model, many are concerned about increased isolation. Many are hoping that administrative guidelines for co-teaching, especially across disciplines could be created to incentivize and reward such activity.

More detailed training in new software platforms will be critical for success.

Metrics for Success:

The strongest discussions surrounding metrics for success included retention of staff and faculty, whether workload is increasing or decreasing due to the restructure, and if workflow takes less days to get through its process. Other discussions included morale/satisfaction as a key metric.

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Arts and Humanities Divisional Taskforce.