

## **Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Taskforce: College/Division Restructuring January 18, 2023**

Executive Summary: The NSM section of the Restructuring Task Force collected input from faculty and staff through multiple departmental listening sessions, an anonymous survey and individual conversations. Three overarching principles were articulated again and again. First, faculty and staff must be empowered to return to the tasks that they were hired for, scholarship, teaching and scholarly service, rather than clerical tasks; this implies continuous cutting of administrative burden, hiring and retention of appropriate departmental staff, and delegating selected tasks to properly enabled directors at the college level. Second, responsibilities (for infrastructure, academic personnel, etc.) must be partitioned to a specific administrator rather than duplicated redundantly to Divisional Deans and Executive Dean. Third, decision-making processes need to be agile, nimble and timely; this requires that budgetary authority must reside with the (Divisional) Dean who has the responsibility for the task at hand. We also propose metrics of success that should be collected before, during and at the end of the divisional pilot period. After this preliminary report, we look forward to further shaping the College structure in light of the meritorious feedback received.

Engagement of stakeholders: Each member of the taskforce worked within their respective departments to schedule one or more listening sessions. These sessions, when applicable, were attended by at least one task force member from a separate department to help lead the discussion and take notes. An anonymous survey was also conducted and distributed via the College website, Department Heads, and through direct contact with key stakeholders whose voices may not have been heard in listening sessions.

Findings and Recommendations: Overall, the sentiment from stakeholders is that, compared to peer colleges, the College of Arts and Sciences has been grossly understaffed, resulting in an increased administrative burden on faculty and departmental staff. As stated by a faculty member, *“On a typical work day I spend most of my time doing admin work, tasks that would be assigned to staff if we had them. The work that the Dean believes they hired me to do (scholarship, preparing to teach...) is mostly squeezed into the weekend or evening.”* Departmental and College staff are working after hours to complete their own tasks. Given the lack of support at the College level, many additional responsibilities fall on the departmental staff and faculty (TT and NTT). There are discrepancies between departments regarding staffing levels to meet the “missing” College duties; this further perpetuates higher administrative burden in different groups.

An overriding principle in dividing resources and responsibilities between the executive and the divisional level is that “day-to-day” operations should lie at the divisional level, whereas exceptional circumstances should be dealt with at the executive level. Additionally, structural elements that go across divisions should lie within the Office of the Executive Dean. This would include: DEI (full-time director with additional staffing); Academic Programs (full-time Dean with additional staffing); Advancement (Development; full-time director with staffing); Advising; and Centers (eg. NIMBioS) as these are across divisions. The Executive Dean must have a significant budget to ensure adequate funding for these offices. There needs to be some discretionary funds as well for unexpected expenses that arise across divisions. Stakeholders explicitly expressed that **responsibilities should be partitioned out, and no new layers of approval should be created.**

To meet DEI needs, A&S currently has a half time Associate Dean. This current structure limits the ability to help support and foster initiatives across undergraduate and graduate programs as well as effectively work to increase diversity among the faculty. A&S has been hampered severely to offer the

needed start-up packages to increase faculty diversity. Poor coordination across other units within the University to establish joint appointments for such hires exacerbates the problem: often such negotiation falls upon the individual departments who lack the funds and ability to directly appeal to hire administrative levels for such requests. Thus, adequate budgeting and negotiations via the Executive level are needed for improvement in this area.

An area of massive expansion in administrative burden has come through the ever-increasing need of assessments and data analytics. **Assessments and data analytics are areas where professional expertise is essential to serve the needs across the College.** These professionals can be housed at the level of the Executive Dean; however, there must be sufficient professionals to fulfill the needs of all 23 departments. As an example, the Tickle College of Engineering, with 7 departments, is hiring a second, full-time data analytic individual. Thus, we must adjust the number of positions based on the size and needs of the entire College. Such professionals will greatly relieve administrative burden on departmental faculty and staff, increasing their efficiency.

*Human resources and staffing at College and Departmental Levels:* The shortages within the College result in insufficient interactions with groups including Human Resources that have direct consequences on faculty and staff productivity. One recurring message was that there is a lack of understanding between HR and those in CAS who dealt with hiring, especially of support staff at the College and departmental levels. Better **advocacy by the College vis-a-vis HR on behalf of departments would make us nimbler and more efficient.** Salaries are not sufficiently competitive and as a result, we hire untrained individuals, train them, and then fail to retain them as they leave for better paying positions once they are trained. This means there is additional lost time and effort in running searches over and over for the same position. *Between turnover and training, there is almost never a fully functional staff within the College and many departments.* This also overburdens the dedicated, long-term staff who remain for personal (rather than financial) reasons who then fulfill their jobs and cover for their absent or learning peers - this increases burnout and decreases retention of senior individuals who hold valuable institutional knowledge and expertise.

*Additional advocacy is needed to HR to help improve salaries for staff and NTT faculty, as well as to aid in expediting hiring needs with increased enrollment.* The same logic also applies similarly to support for graduate teaching assistants where uncompetitive stipends thwart recruitment efforts. **Respondents argued that the NSM division needs autonomy to improve salaries for staff, NTT faculty and GTAs,** who play a critical, revenue-generating role in our instructional mission that is not acknowledged fairly in the budget allocation model.

For A&S to achieve greater levels of success, *expansion of support staff at the College and individual departmental levels is needed* and will enable the faculty to focus on their primary positions, thus increasing their efficiency in teaching and research needs. *However, this expansion needs to be funded through Central, to allow for implementation of this structure, rather than charged to the departments as implicit under the new budget allocation model.* Note, for many departmental “routine” day-to-day duties, several groups are and have been grossly understaffed. *Equity in staffing across departments is crucial and this requires investment from Central.*

To summarize the needs of staffing: *“With enrollments continuing to climb, hiring is my number one concern. Workloads will continue to rise and we are already stretched thin.”*

*Communications:* Communication with the College, within the College, and via the College is unnecessarily complex with little coordination and a lack of accountability to the departments. This was a common talking point from stakeholders. As an example, *“The office of communications...cannot post news about research findings or new awards by faculty. I have had this experience multiple times and it*

is frustrating to not be able to share news about high impact findings and awards.” Across departments, frustration regarding out of date web pages, our primary means for communication to prospective students and promoting our teaching and scholarly works, was mentioned repeatedly. With the restructuring, **additional accountability to the Departments is essential to ensure appropriate promotion of teaching and research.**

*Associate Dean of Research and Facilities:* The Associate Dean of Research and Facilities is an expansive position that needs to be divided in order to allow for adequate attention to these needs. For example, “the Mossman building had two years of teething troubles with the Animal Facility, which was designed and constructed incorrectly. The ADR has heavily needed to resolve these problems. Because the ADR is massively overcommitted, these problems took too long to get fixed. New faculty members got caught up in this mess and lost years of productivity.” Such duties hinder the ADR from being able to help support and promote new scholarly ventures within the College and across the University. **The ADR position should be split such that the buildings and facilities component is taken over by a new Director of Infrastructure who has direct interactions with Facilities.** There was some disagreement whether this position should be at the executive or divisional level as the services provided by an ADR are not equally needed by all three divisions of CAS.

A large part of day-to-day operations for NSM would be for our division to have our own Associate Dean of Research and Creative Activity. This is a full-time position solely to help facilitate and promote the research and creative activities of the Division. This Associate Dean should have more direct contact with ORIED and with Deans in similar positions across campus; respondents pointed to the success of the ADR and respective office in the Tickle College of Engineering. However, it is imperative that research and creative collaboration across the divisions, and across the university as a whole, be promoted and any barriers preventing such collaboration be removed. *Thus the ADRs in A&S must have a collective committee for the sole purpose of coordination research and creative efforts: this must be reported to the Executive Dean.*

The support staff for research and creative activities are also severely understaffed; below is documentation of just one aspect, that of grant submissions for 2022.

College	RA Staff#	Proposal Submissions (2022)	\$\$ Requested (2022)	T/TT Faculty
Nursing	1	29	\$21,000,000	25
CCI	2	29	\$5,000,000	51
CEHHS	2.5	126	\$63,000,000	115
<b>A&amp;S</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>\$154,000,000</b>	<b>457</b>
UTIA	9	580	\$254,000,000	145
TCE	5	656	\$393,000,000	166

For NSM, the **staffing of this office for the purpose of proposal development etc. needs to be on-par** with that of other successful Colleges across campus such as Tickle College of Engineering, adjusted for faculty numbers.

*Promotion and Tenure:* Where promotion and tenure decisions should be made under the new structure was not unanimous across the departments, or even within the departments. A possible solution would be to have an NSM promotion and tenure committee, with an external member(s) from a separate division to provide a valuable, broad-based view over the candidates.

*Other important considerations:* Departments house critical research support operations, such as machine shops, glass shops, Biology Service Facilities, etc. These services are highly specialized and perform separate roles that cannot be covered by University Facilities services. However, funding from the College is not equivalent for these services across departments. *These services need to remain at the departmental level but financial support from the College needs to be equivalent.*

**A significant expansion of A&S support staff needs to minimize disruption to the departments.** In terms of physical space, the expanded College-level support staff need adequate office space (e.g., downtown or in buildings without classrooms) in a location that won't displace faculty or departmental staff. Years of experience from work-from-home patterns can also be considered for College-level support staff.

Metrics for success: *The major goal for the stakeholders regarding restructuring is to reduce the exorbitant administrative burden that is passed down onto the Departments and their respective faculty and staff.* The Chancellor stated that one main goal of our overall academic structures is that they “[provide] the best opportunity for disciplines and programs to thrive.” One metric of success is simply that currently thriving processes are not disrupted, and this can be measured with the collection of continual feedback (e.g., a feedback website and form). Additionally, simple surveys pre, mid and post implementation of the new structure to gauge how much time is spent on various duties by faculty and staff can be helpful. Surveys pre and post implementation to College Deans, Directors, and ORIED to gauge understanding of research and teaching needs and duties of the College would examine if improved communications and reduced administrative burdens have taken hold. Monitoring grant submissions, success of grants, press releases, additional outputs of creative activity, retention of faculty and staff will provide an overall picture of improved functioning. However, it is critical to note that a two year evaluation period may not be sufficient to see measurable progress in some of these quantifiable areas.