

Academic Restructuring Working Group Interim Report Feedback

September 21 - 25, 2020

Below are comments shared by members of the U of A community in response to the [Academic Restructuring Working Group's Interim Report](#). All feedback shared through the UAT website ([Interim Report Feedback Form](#) and [UAT Feedback Form](#)) is, and will continue to be, shared with the Academic Restructuring Working Group (ARWG) for consideration as they refine and revise the proposed scenarios. A list of all University of Alberta for Tomorrow (UAT) consultations is available on the [UAT website](#).

Responses to frequently asked questions and comments can be found on the [UAT FAQ website](#), and in regular [UAT Updates](#) from President Flanagan, Provost Dew, and SET Executive Lead Rob Munro.

General Questions and Comments

Given the evaluation matrix on page 44, I don't feel that the ARWG actually put forward more than 1 real scenario (B), with a potential weaker backup (C), despite technically presenting three scenarios. This makes the whole exercise of the ARWG seeking feedback feel exceptionally disingenuous.

Can the Committee provide a cost estimate breakdown of the expected savings of the three restructuring scenarios in order for faculty to give an informed opinion, given that this move will involve costs to make the changes and be the added disruption of restructuring?

How will equity be considered in the next round or level of restructuring?

How will these changes affect faculty evaluation structures?

Will this project be as open about the processes that go into determining changes within the faculties and departments? As a student I think it will be important to illustrate the impacts that this group will have on student life, which is often more affiliated with the department than Faculty.

This entire exercise is more administrative restructuring than "academic" restructuring. In fact, in the vernacular context, it could be argued that there is absolutely *no* academic restructuring proposed in this document.

More clarity on these changes, their expected impacts on teaching quality, educational costs and student experiences are necessary.

It's imperative that the chosen scenario preserves important elements which set the university apart and make it an attractive choice (now and into the future) for students and faculty. These are elements such as a culture of excellence in research (both among faculty and students), commitments to reconciliation, and its role as a major driver of the province's political, economic, and social futures.

In my opinion what is most important to remember is that these changes should benefit students and be as focused on ensuring each student gets specific and personal advising, instruction, and administration.

Recognize the ways that consolidation of faculties, particularly professional programs harms the student experience. Two of the three scenarios involve the faculty of law losing its status as a stand alone faculty, which no Canadian Universities have done. This risks making University of Alberta law less competitive to other Canadian Law Schools since the University will have fewer resources to dedicate to ensuring a high quality student experience. Please talk to those in professional programs and understand why they are stand alone faculties. Cross-disciplinary collaboration is great but not when it comes at the expense of the student experience. Having student service and career service people specifically for law is a large part of the reason that graduates are so employable. I don't feel that this restructuring considers graduate outcomes which should be paramount in your considerations, especially considering the impending implementation of performance based funding.

I think it is a bad idea to reduce the number of leadership roles. Even now, accountability is almost impossible to achieve. By giving fewer people more power, they will be even more untouchable. Under the new structure, please provide a faculty code of conduct, not just a student code of conduct, and provide us with clear and safe methods for alerting the administration when a faculty member is in violation.

Please be very clear about how any of these scenarios will result in savings on the academic side. My estimation, based on these scenarios, is there will be considerable savings on the administration side (combining administrative functions) and added costs to the academic side (executive deans). The largest cost drivers of the University are salaries and benefits and nothing in this scenario suggests a containment of these on the academic side.

How is interdisciplinary research and teaching supported within the models - which still create silos between health, natural science, and social sciences? How will these models coordinate with the current funding model?

The Faculty of Native Studies should be somehow integrated with all faculties through mandatory courses that allow students to gain perspectives into Indigenous worldviews and history that would complement their studies and enhance interdisciplinary learning and research.

As a faculty member at Augustana, I think we are far to administratively top heavy. I don't think we need an ADT or ADR. This can be a shared resource within a division or at least with CSJ and NS (What about moving NS to the Augustana Campus?). I haven't benefited from the work of our ADT or ADR in a manner that justifies the cost. Most of my teaching support comes from colleagues and CTL and I have worked more closely with our Research Facilitator from grant support than our local ADR. I am not sure what the "best" administrative structure at Augustana is but my bet is that the ARWG will be encouraged not to change much by our current administrators in order to keep those people from having to go back to the classroom...we have too many people who are aiming for administrative careers rather than teaching and research careers which is our primary purpose. I think the Department Chairs need more influence. Perhaps we need only a Dean, Vice-Dean, some form of AD academic with a more focused job description than our current AD academic who I think gets involved in activities far beyond the role of AD Academic, the three Department Chairs and our Assistant Dean Finance on our Academic Council. Some functions at Augustana need to be independence from Edmonton and others can be shared. We need a careful and realistic discussion of this that isn't driven by faculty members trying to preserve their role as career administrators.

Scenario A

In Favour

This one is my most preferred since it keeps as much autonomy of the faculties and continues strong separation of concerns.

Scenario A is preferred. Although the savings are less, it is less complex. It also has less levels of hierarchy.

The only one that doesn't completely disrupt current students and staff, is scenario A. Both B and C are completely outrageously terrible and would harm the current culture and learning environment that I love about the University of Alberta. I strongly urge the UofA for Tomorrow team to implement scenario A.

Scenario a as stated above is my preferred scenario since I think it keeps a good separation of concerns and allows each faculty to be more specific in what is best for its students, which at the end of the day is what I think this should all be about.

Concerns

I would rank this one 3rd for all scenarios, it doesn't save anywhere near as much money to justify going with it.

Scenario A takes us to a total of 12 faculties, and it seems to produce minimum disruption outside a few small health-related faculties. My problem with Scenario A is that political correctness got on the way and prevented what could have been a good starting model. Some small units were left untouched. In any way, we can all survive this scenario. The negative side is the saving of only 10M. However, one could look at more savings by decreasing the number of central VPs and associated VPs. You might save a few more millions of dollars without affecting teaching or research.

This scenario does not benefit the health science discipline at all, while it does not impact the rest of the university. I think that this will cause a lot of frustration for the health science students and does not make the most economic sense.

I think it makes the most sense but means you would have to cut costs somewhere else. I also think health sciences could merge with FoMD but still maintain some autonomy.

I don't love scenario A. As a student I would prefer overhead costs of faculties be cut instead of going in and cutting programs! I think if you are going to go into faculty restructuring, you should go all out.

While creating the "health sciences" grouping is a very logical choice, I agree that it maybe does not accomplish the goal of consolidation to the extent to which the University wishes to.

This scenario is very directed at a small cohort of Faculties. All have been deemed to have the premise of "health" within them. This is a targeted scenario suggesting these faculties are the "problem". Selection of this scenario provides very little evidence of establishing nimbleness and cost savings - 2 points you have made clear are very important.

Seems not to solve the financial savings issue. Appears like it is a straw man option because I can't see that this represents fundamental change or restructuring.

Scenario A seems like a complete waste of time, I would think about other possibilities where the scale of change is more comparable to B and C. I would look more seriously for ways to actually combine faculties, departments, or people that don't involve the creation of new layers of deans. Focusing on existing faculties also raises problems (such as combining the health sciences group with FOMD being problematic because FOMD is so much bigger) which might be removed if we didn't think so much about maintain existing faculties within some new super-structure (e.g., if each of the health science was a department, and there were a bunch of similarly sized departments in what is now FOMD, and there was not an intervening level of "deans", then such concerns might not be as important).

It would be good to reduce administrative overhead and I don't think this scenario does that.

Scenario B

In Favour

I think that this scenario is the most beneficial in cutting costs administratively. I would hope that more costs cut administratively would mean that student groups and program support would not have to face as significant cuts.

This seems like a good balance between grouping the faculties while still maintaining distinctions between their general interests/goals.

As a scientist in an interdisciplinary lab, combining biology and engineering under two supervisors from different faculties, Scenario B seems sensible. Bringing research to reality requires a marriage of foundational and applied sciences.

This scenario treats faculties more equitably and suggests that everyone must be part of the solution not just a small number of faculties.

Scenario B is definitely a great step forward if it better aligns us with tri-council and funding bodies that we won't need to make more cuts in the future.

I like scenario B, but the report mentioned a few times that medicine and dentistry is already a huge faculty alone so I'm wondering if it would be better to leave FoMD out of the division and then have a health sciences division?

I like this scenario but I am concerned with putting education in with the other arts and social science faculties. I don't know if education fits in with that grouping.

It is interesting to see that the solution being proposed in the preferred scenario is yet more deans and more layers of administration even if most of the ADs move to executive Dean's office in the larger division. I suppose when the Working group is composed of Deans and such they would have a vested interest in keeping their job. What doesn't make sense is hiring even more Deans (executive deans) on top of the existing Deans and in essence creating more bureaucracy. Just have a single Dean for each division (major faculty) and have everyone else under that structure as Departments with Dept. Chairs. The main cost savings in preferred scenario is through reductions in ADs and support staff. Perhaps the reduction in ADs won't affect much on our end as an academic, but certainly further centralization of support staff will have even greater loss of support. We have seen substantial reductions in support already with our centralization model in our faculty where everyone was moved out of Department support to the faculty level where it is pretty apparent that things are worse than they were previously.

Concerns

In principle a viable scenario but it would leave the three small faculties (Nat Stud, CSJ, Augustana) too isolated when they should be better integrated into the UofA structure so as to produce academic synergies (teaching, research, infrastructure, shared equipment, etc.). Also, no savings may emerge from this scenario for these three small faculties, continuing their financial struggle.

I am skeptical about this scenario. It disrupts faculties that are successful and that are run with great fiscal responsibility like Science. One trouble with this scenario is that we are eliminating departments as we see them today by not allowing them to have their leadership structure. We will be creating a new complex layer of people for decision making. It can end up going wrong, for instance, if the main dean and the three deans of Science+Ales+Eng with time decide to slowly introduce back their own structure (APOs and associate Deans, communications, etc etc). We are adding a new remote-from-departments layer of bureaucracy, which undoubtedly is not helping professors, researchers and students.

The only benefit (if numbers are correct) is the saving of \$43M. However, I am also skeptical about this number. Associate chairs do teach and run successful research programs that bring NSERC grants to Science and on top they take care of important aspects of our grad and undergraduate programs. Therefore, I am not sure how adding a unit dean and the group of people coming with the position will produce a 43M saving. This model will probably require

massive layoff of people who reside in departments. It seems a really bad idea to move away decision processes from people conducting teaching and research.

The tri-agency division alignment will stifle cross-disciplinary work across agencies. It creates a false division given that we already have researchers in many departments that seek funding from multiple combinations of the tri-agencies. And finally, it assumes that the tri-agency division is set in stone.

My concern is coordination of the three larger divisions(?) likely requires an executive dean or some other position aligned with faculty structure. If all faculties are to remain under the auspices of a new division leadership, I fail to see any savings. I see a new layer of executive decision making required.

I think this is just 'too much.' I worry that this is creating more silos that don't allow for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary movement. Crossing science and arts and humanities and medicine (e.g. participatory health work) is increasingly. This model creates more division, not less. It also appears to only add another "superlevel" of administration, and we need less, not more levels of admin.

Scenario B and to some extent Scenario C add an extra layer of administration to this University. First, this seems antithetical to the ideas administration reductions, despite the claim that there would be a net reduction. What I see instead is the replacement of academic administrators with administration-only administrators and the addition of a new level of administration-only administrators, both being built largely by reducing replication in support staff. So I agree with many of my colleagues in identifying this as an attack on the model of collegial governance. Scenario C may be less an attack on collegial governance; it was unclear to me if Arts & Sciences; Health Sciences; and Applied Sciences are Divisions or Faculties). The former would mean the additional layer of administration, which I feel should be avoided at all costs, where possible.

I am deeply concerned about adding another layer of administration. Though in the short term admins may be moved in such a way as to generate savings, I feel that problems will immediately occur that can only be solved by adding more admins at multiple levels, and that the additional layer of bureaucracy will cause a variety of roadblocks in our mission.

Grouping Law in with other faculties devalues the law degree and threatens to take away administrative services that are key to student success such as our faculty specific student services. These services are tailored to the needs of students in a unique faculty and to take those away would diminish the quality of the experience.

Executive deans, plus a bunch of other deans--over time this will just be the creation of an extra layer of administration.

There should only be the faculty of Med & Dent and a combined health sci faculty. I also fail to see how this will save on administrative costs when each faculty will still have a dean and there will be a new division head in charge of the deans.

There are many aspects of Scenario B that make sense to me. However, I am concerned Augustana (I am a faculty member at Augustana) will be left out of the strategic planning for the University by not having a Executive Dean advocating for Augustana. I think Augustana, (and CSJ and NS) need the same representation at all levels of decision making as all other faculties and divisions or we will be left behind. I am not sure what the best model for this is, but I like this aspect of Scenario C. I encourage more thinking about this issue.

Will this scenario allow for sufficient flexibility for faculty members to collaborate between divisions?

Why make them divisions and not just faculties? It seems like a division is adding another layer of administration, when we are trying to reduce administration. If this is not the case, the AWRG needs to explicitly outline how this approach will achieve the desired cost savings.

FoMD has a number of independent and separate programs (Medicine/Dentistry/Dental Hygiene/Med Lab Sciences/Rad Therapy). Is there consideration in separating these 4 out of FoMD and having them have the same amount of visibility as Nursing, Rehab Med, Pharmacy, SPH, KSR?

Scenario C

In Favour

I think that if this scenario is chosen, that pharmacy should be combined with the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. Pharmacy has a lot more similarities with medicine than the other health science disciplines and I think it would help provide better collaboration in the future between Pharmacists and Physicians.

I could live with this one. It makes sense to have Science and Arts together into a new faculty that concentrates mainly on non-professional degrees. In other words, BSc and BA degrees, leading to grad school, medicine, health, law, becoming a writer, becoming a musician etc etc. We will not need two deans, and I imagine that the roles of current associates deans, APOs, communication and advancement people in Arts and Science are so similar that there could be savings at the top layer with minimal impact on departments. Arts and Science do have also similarities in the way TAs are used to provide experience in teaching development to grad students. I see more similarities between Science and Art than Science and Engineering. I also imagine that under Model C, the dean could run two FECs separately if having a single FEC is a problem. This model is also nice from an EDI perspective as it percolates the humanities into Science. It could help underrepresented people to feel more comfortable in a faculty where Arts and Science are together.

I like how ALES and Engineering are together under an applied sciences division, that is very interesting and intriguing. Additionally, I like how Arts and Sciences are grouped in their own division! If that happened I think it would be good to bridge the divides between the Arts and Science faculties.

My preference is for C, though not entirely happy with it. I think the excessive concern for keeping "Faculties" in name is silly, except for professionalized faculties that can't be combined with a recognized professional label. B isn't terrible and I understand that there is an idea that this is a recognizable structure, but in my view, the mixing of professionalized and non-professionalized faculties is a mistake, and I really believe that in 5 or 10 years we will find that there were no cost savings, and all the initially removed administrative positions have been re-filled, except that now there is an extra layer of Executive Deans.

Concerns

The shared division seems confusing and sciences and arts seem too large to combine.

I really believe that if we want to develop excellence in entrepreneurship and innovation we should consider either leaving Business as its own entity or grouping it with engineering. Grouping it with law does not seem as forward thinking.

I really don't like this. I think the groupings don't make sense and are too large. Particularly merging arts and sciences seems like a step backwards when other schools like UBC Okanagan are separating them as the programs are too large and diverse for this to make any logical sense.

This could be a viable scenario but it may still not address the lack of integration of CSJ and Augustana into the wider UofA structure from an academic synergies point of view (teaching, research, infrastructure, shared equipment, etc.).

Science has more in common with engineering and ALES than some of the arts & humanities. Why is FoMD an outlier?

Combining art and science is a bad idea. Someone graduating with a degree in arts and science would be confusing and potentially detrimental to whichever side does not make sense. Applying to a scientific job with a degree that starts with arts is confusing and applying to a degree requiring an arts degree but seeing science would make it seem less legitimate. It does not make the university look prestigious at all.

In scenario C where arts and sciences combine scares me as a student. I understand that other universities make this combination work, but these are easily the two largest undergraduate faculties and already have limited student support services. If combined, I fear that students may get caught up in administrative issues, as the administration would be responsible for far too

many students at once. This is especially concerning regarding time-sensitive requests, and considering the U of A's one example of a central administration: the bogged down office of the registrar who can take up to a week to respond to student inquiries.

It is a massive mistake to combine science and arts. It will be a disservice to both faculties.

The categories proposed for scenario C don't seem as logical to me as the ones for the other scenarios. Faculties with incredibly different scopes are lumped together into arts and sciences, while other faculties with which they share more similarities and crossovers are placed in an entirely different category. To me, it seems that sciences shares much more in common with ALES and engineering than it does with many of the humanities. This is especially in the areas of the academic missions of these faculties, the types of courses they offer, the type of careers they prepare students for, and the type of research they foster. To me it does not make sense to create a category of "arts and sciences" (which could theoretically encompass nearly all faculties in the university), thus grouping some very different areas of the university together, while also having an "applied sciences" faculty separate from it. I also do not understand the purpose of the undetermined category including Augustana, St. Jean, and other faculties whose distinct identities we wish to preserve. It seems that putting them together in this category may defeat the purpose of maintaining their specific identities and missions. In general, I find the categories proposed in this scenario a little too broad and slightly illogical (as if consolidation has been taken too far and we might as well just combine everything into one huge faculty).

Siloing the sciences is counterproductive to interdisciplinary research.

I dislike Econ (Arts) and Business are separate. Many Universities do this, but this is flawed. It keeps econ in the dark about the practices in the current economy (business).

Suggestions for Alternative Academic Restructuring Scenarios

Please review the [*Alternative Restructuring Proposals from the Community report*](#).