

COLLEGES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES REVIEW COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

April 2008

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INTRODUCTION

Until 1968, the arts and sciences at The Ohio State University were organized as a single, centralized structure. In 1968, with the addition of some departments and schools that previously had been affiliated with other colleges, the arts and sciences were divided administratively into five colleges—Arts, Biological Sciences, Humanities, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences—a pattern that persisted for thirty-four years.

In 2002, in an effort to enhance the centrality and importance of the arts and sciences and to ensure that they were appropriately configured for implementing the goals of the University's Academic Plan, the [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences](#) ("The Jennings Report") recommended a new organizational structure.

The actual form that the new structure took emerged through the [Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University](#) (2003), commonly referenced as the "white paper", issued by then-President Karen A. Holbrook, and then-Executive Vice President and Provost Edward J. Ray. A formal "Federation" was identified, and an Office of the Executive Dean of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences was established. Goals for the Federation, and roles/responsibilities for administrative levels and constituent groups within it, were specified. The goals were:

1. Elevate the stature and visibility of the arts and sciences internally, nationally, and internationally;
2. Enhance the reputation and quality of all colleges by using the strengths of each to benefit others via new programs;
3. Enhance coherence, collaboration, and synergies;
4. Bolster and assess efforts in enhancing diversity of faculty, staff, and students;
5. Reduce administrative costs so that resources conserved could be invested in new faculty positions, support services for students, and advance most of the the other goals of the Academic Plan;
6. Strengthen advising and career counseling;
7. Improve joint hiring and cluster hiring;
8. Promote new curricula;
9. Strengthen the presence of Ohio State arts and sciences within organizations such as the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges;
10. Decrease wasteful college-centric competition and lower college boundaries;
11. Benefit undergraduate and graduate student interdisciplinary study and research opportunities.

A formal review of this new administrative structure was to be conducted during its fourth year of operations.

In Spring 2007, then-Executive Vice President and Provost Barbara R. Snyder, with input from the Office of the Executive Dean of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences and the deans of the five colleges, identified a 12-member review committee, co-chaired by Vice Provosts Martha M. Garland and W. Randy Smith.

In September 2007, Interim President and Provost Joseph A. Alutto charged the Committee to:

- “assess the progress made on the goals/objectives of the federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences ...”; and
- “based on that assessment, provide recommendations ... on the optimal organizational structure for the arts and sciences”;

From September to December 2007, the Committee met weekly, often more frequently, and:

- reviewed the [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences](#) (2002) and the [Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University](#) (2003);
- reviewed the [Internal Review, Office of the Executive Dean, Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences](#) (2007);
- reviewed the structure of arts and sciences at peer institutions;
- gathered and reviewed institutional data relating to the operation of the Federation;
- met with Professor Jacqueline J. Royster, Executive Dean, Colleges of the Arts and Sciences;
- met with the senior staff of the Executive Dean who hold leadership roles for budget, curriculum, development, technology, communication, and advising;
- met individually with: Paul A. Beck, Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences; Karen A. Bell, Dean, College of the Arts; Joan A. Herbers, Dean, College of Biological Sciences; Matthew S. Platz, Interim Dean, College of Mathematical and Physical Sciences; and John W. Roberts, Dean, College of Humanities;
- met with the Executive Committee (chairpersons/directors) of each college;
- held four separate meetings with the senior staff of the five colleges – one for each of the following functional areas: curriculum, development, technology, and communication;
- met with the directors of the three interdisciplinary major programs housed within the Federation: international studies, middle childhood education, and film studies;
- held two open forums for faculty and staff;
- solicited written comments from faculty and staff within the five colleges, from deans of the 13 colleges that are not part of the Federation, and from the four regional campuses;
- participated in a special meeting of the Arts and Sciences Senate;
- provided progress reports to the University Senate Steering Committee.

In addition, the Committee Co-Chairs had the opportunity to discuss arts and sciences organization structures with administrators, and their counterparts, at peer institutions.

ASSESSMENT

This Report does not provide a detailed description of the current structure of the Federation—patterns of enrollment, staffing, and funding. Such information was collected and used, and is available elsewhere—[Internal Review, Office of the Executive Dean, Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences \(2007\)](#). The Report presented here focuses on the analysis and assessment of the information gathered, and on the issues that emerged.

Based on its own analysis, and supported by the majority of those with whom it met:

- i) **The Committee strongly reaffirms the central goals presented in both the [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences \(2002\)](#), and the [Federation of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University \(2003\)](#).**

The disciplines that make up the arts and sciences are central to the research, teaching (general education, undergraduate majors and minors, and graduate and professional programs), and service missions of our University. Indeed they are critical to the future of higher education in general, and especially to the preparation of students who will move among multiple employment opportunities during their lifetimes.

To make certain that these central fields reach their full potential, the University must continue aggressively to pursue the goals listed previously.

- ii) **The Committee concludes that the organizational and administrative structure adopted in 2003 is highly dysfunctional.**

The Executive Dean was never given real financial authority, or effective control of personnel policies. Instead, the deans of the five colleges continued to hold those important responsibilities at the college level and to operate accordingly, supported by the college-level senior staff that works with them.

Reinforcing that situation was the simultaneous implementation of a new budget model that identified colleges as budgetary responsibility centers, enhancing their roles and authority dramatically. The Committee quickly

realized that the University's budget model effectively works against any attempt to mold an integrated and effective Federation.

The Executive Dean and her staff have been able to work only within the limited authority assigned to them through the "white paper," which significantly constrained their efforts to achieve some of the broader goals of the Federation. Lacking any real budget authority, they have tended to focus on activities viewed by the colleges as marginal or unnecessary, and utilizing resources that could have been put to better use back in the original units. Indeed, because it was able to find its own revenue sources only through a tax on the colleges and whatever enrollments were generated from academic programs housed in its Office, the Federation became in effect a "sixth college", perceived by the others as duplicating, competing with, or inhibiting their own individual efforts.

This "sixth college" approach to the operations of the arts and sciences will not enable the goals of the Federation to be achieved, and should not be sustained.

iii) The Committee determined that progress on achieving the major goals identified for the Federation in 2003 is uneven, and the organizational structure adopted then is a central reason for the lack of success of many of them. Progress on each of these goals needs to continue to be monitored in whatever organizational structure is ultimately adopted.

- Some of the most active and visible work of the Federation has related to curriculum: its efforts to offer a strong voice for the liberal arts and sciences within the institution, to support curricular innovation, to maintain quality standards for these central core disciplines, and to encourage interdisciplinary activities (Goals 1,2,3, 8, and 10).

The results are mixed. A positive aspect of the federated model has been the development of the more integrated management of curriculum through the new Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (CCI), now a stronger faculty-based committee—with particular success in interdisciplinary programs, in the area of learning outcomes assessment, and in leadership in the creation of freshman seminars, interdisciplinary minors, and the new freshman clusters. Indeed, during the recent review of the general education curriculum, the CCI took the lead in articulating the response of faculty in the five colleges.

However some college officers and faculty members expressed serious concerns about the day-to-day management of curricular processes in the Federation Office: the length of time needed for curriculum approval, the top-down approach used in the early development of interdisciplinary minors, and the resultant

negative impact on college-level curriculum decision-making and related processes.

In any case, the competition among the five colleges, reinforced by a budget model that treats them as separate responsibility centers, continues to play a major role in significantly limiting the scope of curricular reform, and preventing a number of recommendations in the 2007 general education revision from being implemented.

- Support for undergraduate advising (Goal 6) has been well provided by the federated structure, with a central operation overseeing students' general education programs, and decentralized structures—either in the five colleges or within departments—providing advising for major programs. Even in this relatively effective area (whose arrangement actually predates the creation of the Federation), however, there have been some challenging issues. For example, in dealing with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, the Federation and the colleges have sometimes been in conflict with each other, undermining recruitment effectiveness.
- With respect to academic quality control within the arts and sciences disciplines, (Goals 2, 3, 5 and 10) the federated structure has played only a very limited role. Ongoing program reviews of individual departments or schools have included the Executive Dean, but the college dean (who controls the fiscal and personnel resources) has clearly been the more important decision maker in this process.
- From the earliest days of the Federation it was tacitly accepted that graduate education (Goals 8 and 11) did not lie within the purview of the Office of the Executive Dean, on the assumption that graduate curricular oversight would create an additional, unnecessary bureaucratic level of review. Thus, graduate course and program approval is not linked to the CCI in any way. But this assumption also meant that in the recent Graduate School doctoral program review, one of the most important processes within the University in recent decades, almost no role was assigned to the Executive Dean, with evaluative central data being distributed to, and preliminary college responses being developed by, the college deans.
- The flexibility and agility necessary to deal with new opportunities and challenges, including the ability to deploy financial and other resources flexibly/quickly, have not been evident.

All five of the colleges contribute significantly to the University's revenue stream (~90% of general education instruction), and together, in FY07 the five colleges have a total budget of \$360 million, with a surplus of resources over expenditures. In the present configuration however, this strength cannot be used to advance really imaginative trans-institutional initiatives or otherwise support as effectively

as possible the University's aspirations toward a range of efforts to achieve academic excellence. Furthermore, recent changes in state funding have led to increasingly unfavorable cost/earnings patterns that are distributed unevenly across disciplines. The extraordinary "collective" resources of the arts and sciences have not been available to provide any buffering against such financial challenges.

Indeed, it was clear to the Committee that competition among the five colleges across the whole range of academic resources (budget, personnel, space, institutional influence) creates a situation that weakens the effectiveness of the arts and science disciplines, both inside and outside the University.

- One of the premises of the original restructuring had been that the colleges would achieve efficiencies and cost savings by merging some of their support functions, savings that would then be matched by the Office of Academic Affairs to support increased programming or faculty hires. As it turns out, the expectation of such efficiencies was probably unrealistic. Simultaneous to the arts and sciences restructuring and the imposition of the new budget model, an increasingly demanding compliance and control environment developed across the campus in general, requiring more, not less, staff effort in several arenas. And in fact, in general no evidence of the hoped-for economies at the colleges was presented (with the exception of some reductions in staff in the College of Humanities.) Indeed in several areas, and in several of the colleges, there has been growth in support staff. The Committee did examine efforts at collaboration and efficiency across five areas: development activities, information technology support, communication, personnel, and finances. (Goals 5 and 10).
 - **Development**—Pulling together a joint arts and sciences development organization was one of the earliest efforts at collaboration (predating the White Paper), and in this area there have been some visible accomplishments. The University Development Office has collaborated with the Federation in establishing a central office, with professional leadership and staff and in which each of the colleges has a representative. The development staff members from the colleges expressed real appreciation for the collegial professional support they receive from the central office, but it was very clear that the staff members regard themselves as working for their "own" individual deans. No culture has developed of passing a prospective donor from one part of arts and sciences to another. This failure is especially frustrating inasmuch as the arts and sciences development officers believe that they have identified a number of potential donors who are actually committed to a vision of a unified, integrated enterprise focused around the liberal arts and sciences.
 - **Information Technology**—The delivery of technological support naturally is very sharply differentiated among the various disciplines, and the Committee was not surprised to learn that extensive cross-college

collaboration had not developed in this area. The Federation has established an IT group that has undertaken a number of projects of cross-college interest. The most visible and successful was technological support for undergraduate advising and the five colleges are appreciative of this support. The technology experts from the five colleges do seem to operate in a loose cooperative confederation; staff members pointed out that information technology connections reach out to a wide range of other relationships (Office of Information Technology, non-ASC colleges) so that cooperation within the Federation is only a relatively non-central part of the IT officers' organizational structure.

- **Communication**—It was the hope that the five colleges would collaborate on communication efforts, developing a recognizable arts and sciences vision, and collaborating on (or at least cross-referencing) each other's events, but this is another area in which very little significant activity has developed. An arts and sciences communications council has been organized, and some of the college communication officers did express appreciation for assistance they had received from the central office, but it was clear that local loyalties were viewed as far more important than was any sense of group identity.
- **Personnel** —The documents that established the Federation left somewhat unclear the relative roles of the Executive Dean and the college deans in personnel matters, particularly promotion and tenure and the appointment or reappointment of the college deans. These issues were not resolved completely, and so the Executive Dean has played only a very marginal role in personnel matters. Certainly there has been no sense in which the Dean could reclaim or reassign a vacant line from one college to another. The Federation has had occasional success, however, in fostering several cross-college spousal hires and in collaboration on some cluster hiring for diversity (Goals 4 and 7).
- **Finance**—There is no area in which a lack of collaboration was more clearly demonstrated than that of fiscal management, although it is the Committee's understanding that the Federation asked the five fiscal officers to work together to establish some broad collaborations. The Executive Dean and the five deans individually made it clear that no satisfactory mutual understanding of financial resources has ever been developed.

In general, however, the Committee notes that communications about Federation funding are not well understood by faculty and staff. This has led to inaccurate perceptions about the total costs associated with the establishment of the Office of the Executive Dean; the extent to which individual colleges have contributed to expected reductions in

administrative costs; or the ways in which taxes have returned to the colleges in some form.

- There is no evidence that this structure has yet been able to provide a unified and effective voice for the University's arts and sciences through participation in national higher education conversations (Goals 1 and 9). The Associate Executive Dean, and the Director of Assessment, recently have begun to attend some national meetings, but as yet we have no real presence. Indeed, the Executive Dean lacks the authority to commit faculty or staff, whose essential loyalty and resources lie with the five colleges, to such efforts.

At the time of the establishment of the Federation, there was a strong desire for the Executive Dean to serve on the President's Cabinet to provide a voice for the arts and sciences within the University. She is now a member of the President's Cabinet. However, the membership of that body has evolved, and so the Executive Deans of the three other college clusters are also members. The distinctiveness of an arts and sciences presence has not been realized.

- As was revealed in the individual meetings with the deans, collaborative relationships between the five deans and the Executive Dean have not developed adequately, nor have the relationships *among* the deans been particularly enhanced by the new structure. (Goals 3 and 10).

RECOMMENDATION

It is clear to the Committee, and to the vast majority of those with whom it interacted, that the structure that was created in 2003 is not working effectively and needs to be changed soon. Given that the Committee believes strongly in the overarching goals of the centrality of the arts and sciences, and efforts to enhance it, then what would be an optimal organization? As Executive Vice President and Provost Joseph A. Alutto asked the Committee at its charge meeting: "If not this structure, then what?" In turn the Committee posed this question to every group with whom it met.

Three options emerged from those discussions.

- i) **Return to a multi-college structure but with fewer colleges, arranged in new ways.**

Few peer institutions have five separate arts and sciences colleges. If they have a multi-college structure, they typically have two or three colleges. One science college is common, but there is a mix of the other possible

combinations of colleges, often a reflection of the history and culture of the institution.

Although there was discussion of various combinations of the five colleges, and although some with whom the Committee met offered their own suggestions, the Committee did not conduct the kind of detailed analysis that would be needed to determine why particular combinations would be correct – based on the history and culture of *this* institution. And clearly such a recommendation would need to be more than a speculative matter.

More importantly, the Committee believes that a slightly altered configuration—simply identifying a smaller number of colleges—does not, by itself, provide gains with respect to the original goals of the Federation.

The Committee rejected this option.

ii) **Return to the five separate colleges and disband the “Federation.”**

One of the five deans could serve as a convener of the group, but without any real central authority. This was the pattern in the arts and sciences throughout much of the 1990s, and continues to be the structure used currently by the health science and the professional college clusters.

However, a slightly modified version could occur, because the Committee identified (and again many of those with whom it met concurred), that there are several functional areas that *have* improved under the federation. These are primarily related to undergraduate education—the new CCI and its monitoring of the general education curriculum, learning outcomes assessment, interdisciplinary programming—and undergraduate advising. They should be preserved and continue to be managed centrally. Absent an empowered executive dean, these and perhaps other activities, would probably need to be overseen by the Office of Academic Affairs.

While an advantage is that this option would not require substantial or dramatic institutional change, this approach does not respond to the central goals of the original re-organization plan. Indeed, it returns to a college “silo” approach that prompted the establishment of the federation in 2003, and that the current budget model has in some ways reinforced.

For these reasons the Committee does not endorse this option.

iii) **Create a single, integrated College of the Arts and Sciences that brings together all the faculty, resources (budget, space), and academic programs that currently reside within the five colleges.**

During its analysis the Committee came to recognize and articulate a fundamental reality of academic life: the foundational unit of organization at the University is neither a “college” nor a “federation” but a “department or school”. Faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students, and staff all identify themselves—their research area, their academic program, the very name of their profession—with their discipline as defined by their department/school. Indeed, as it relates to enhancing the centrality of the arts and sciences, the Committee came to see the “extra” layer in Ohio State’s bureaucracy as lying not in the newly promulgated Federation, but rather in the five colleges established in 1968.

In suggesting any reorganization, we need to recognize and hold stable the identity implied in the departmental/school affiliation, and thereby avoid real disruption in the academic community. In this third option, departments and schools would retain their identities, but they would now report to the central College of the Arts and Sciences.

The college would be led by a dean with ultimate decision-making authority for the college in all realms of college life, reporting directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Working with the dean would be “divisional deans,” individuals with the relevant academic expertise to “represent” clusters of departments/schools, but presumably without ultimate decision-making authority for their clusters. These divisional deans would be the “cabinet” of the new dean, serving as a close team of advisors and working to help the dean be highly effective in optimizing the value of the whole collection.

An additional set of associate or assistant deans would be responsible for programmatic areas such as faculty and research, undergraduate education, or advising. Senior staff would be responsible for functional areas such as fiscal operations, human resources, communication, development, or information technology. Those functions clearly would also need to be replicated at the department/school level, with individuals in departmental functions working directly with the college staff.

In this model, the dean would provide voice and vision for the arts and sciences, serving as a powerful spokesperson for the centrality of the arts and sciences within the University (on the President’s Cabinet, reporting directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost), and as a single representative for the arts and sciences on the national/international stage.

In this model, the resources of the current five colleges could be combined, providing more flexibility to enhance quality and academic excellence across the college, and to move resources to respond to challenges and opportunities.

In this model, curricular competition ought to be reduced as funds would flow to the college instead of to five separate colleges. Special programmatic needs, interdisciplinary efforts, and technology could be enhanced and significant opportunities for institution-wide excellence could be supported.

A model very much like this is followed at such aspirational peer institutions as UCLA, and the University of Washington. This approach was outlined in the [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences \(2002\)](#), but it was not the model adopted when the Federation was established in 2003.

Organizational change is often disruptive, and change on this scale is almost certain to be. However, the Committee believes that the disruption in this case would be relatively short-term, and in the end outweighed by the benefits of the reorganization. We nonetheless urge that a careful plan be developed to minimize the negative impact on the academic community, and to allow important work of faculty, students and staff to continue unabated during the changeover.

In light of all these considerations, the Committee believes that the single college option provides the best route to replacing the current dysfunctional structure of the arts and sciences with a sound and effective one, and it therefore strongly endorses this option.