



# Pittsburg State University

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

March 3, 2008

Dr. Steven A. Scott  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Pittsburg State University

Dear Dr. Scott:

I am submitting my report on the review of the organization of the College of Arts and Sciences that you asked me to conduct in your letter of November 29, 2007.

Over the past three months I have met with the department chairs, faculty, administrative officers, administrative officers and specialists, unclassified instructional support staff, Assistant Dean, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to discuss and assess options for optimizing the functioning of the College in the three areas that you identified in your letter: communications/decision making, workload, and advocacy. I met with the chairs five times and with the faculty twice.

- There are complications in each of these three areas that are unique to CAS on our campus because of the size and the complexity of the College.

The CAS represents half the University in terms of credit hour production, and has about half of the faculty on campus and about half of the majors.

It represents fourteen departments with very diverse disciplines.

In addition there is a significant variation in the number of unit faculty in the departments, with five departments having five or fewer unit faculty and four having eleven or more unit faculty.

Four departments have an aggregate of 50 tenure track unit faculty, compared with total unit faculty in each of the other colleges ranging from 22 to 50.

The number of unit faculty is not the full measure of the size or complexity of a department. For example, the Department of Nursing has only 6 unit faculty but the “true” number of full time faculty in that department, consisting of unit and full time temporary faculty is 17.

As enrollments have increased, the number of part time and full time faculty assigned to the departments has increased dramatically over the past several years and this should also be taken into account in gauging the workload, communication/decision making, and advocacy effectiveness in the College.

The number of faculty within a department or college does not necessarily fully reflect workload, since there are other factors to be considered, but it is one measure of the workload of the departments relative to each other and of the CAS relative to the other colleges, and it certainly has implications for communications/decision making and advocacy.

- Any consideration of the reorganization of the College must take into account not only the impact on the functioning of the College in relation to the rest of the university, but also the impact at the departmental level, within the departments and between the departments and the Dean. There is definitely a strong interest in providing for effective advocacy for faculty and department interests, communication between faculty and departments both horizontally with other departments, and vertically, with the Dean and higher levels of administration. The structure that is provided needs to promote decision making that is informed and timely. There are also pervasive concerns as to how reorganization might create competition and an inequitable distribution of resources. Finally, there is a potential that reorganizing the College could have some impact on the workloads within the departments.

I want to say that I have always had a high regard for the caliber of professionals that we have in the CAS, but, even so, I was pleasantly surprised at the high level of professionalism, creativity, and thoughtful, insightful analysis and discussion that they displayed in every one of my meetings with them. They have high regard and respect for each other, and I received several unsolicited comments of commendation for the present dean for her character and the quality of her leadership of the College. There seems to be a universal recognition that the dean is doing a fine job in her responsibilities with a very burdensome work load.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to lead in these discussions and for your full confidence and support throughout this project. I'm confident that you will use our work wisely and that our work will result in significant benefits to the University. I will look forward to discussing my report with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Orville Brill".

Orville Brill

# **A Review of the Organization of the College of Arts and Sciences**

## **Overview**

Over the past three months, I have met with the department chairs, the administrative officers and specialists, the unclassified instructional support staff, the Assistant Dean, the Dean, and the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences to discuss and assess options for optimizing the functioning of the College in the three areas that you identified in the assignment you gave me on November 29, 2007.

In my discussions with these groups, we understood that any additional resources that might be provided to effect our recommendations would be limited, so we limited most of our thinking to options that we thought would be reasonable to accomplish. During our meetings with the various groups, I asked the participants to focus on three questions:

1. How can the College best be organized in order to optimize timely communication both within the College and between the College and external units, the gathering and dissemination of information, thoughtful deliberation and discussion, and prompt decision making?
2. How can the College best be organized in order to provide for equitable work loads for comparable positions?

While this question seems to be particularly relevant to the Dean's level, it is also relevant to the workload of chairs of large departments.

3. How can the College be organized in order to provide for optimum advocacy, for the College to higher levels of administration, and for the faculty and the departments to the Dean?

In the ensuing discussions, it quickly became apparent that every option for dealing with these issues had some negative as well as positive aspects. The basic issue is then, given the disadvantages and advantages of each option, which choice would provide the best overall response to these three questions.

## **Process**

The general approach in these discussions was to meet with the various groups, explain our assignment, summarize previous discussions, and then encourage them to propose and discuss various options for dealing with the three issues that you identified. During those discussions, I tried to serve as a facilitator, providing information and questions to keep the conversations going, but participating as little as possible in generating or critiquing the options. After meeting with each group, I summarized the options and comments that they had made and distributed them to that group for their review and comment. I then presented a summary of the items developed by the previous group(s) as conversation starters to successive groups as they entered the discussions, and these summaries then gradually evolved into more concrete options as the discussions moved along through the various groups. I also provided a survey spreadsheet to each group and asked them to rate various aspects of the options that were proposed in terms of their effectiveness in addressing the three questions mentioned above. The content of the spreadsheet also evolved as we moved through the process from group to group. Along with the three issues that you identified for us, it seemed early on in our discussions that a fourth issue, the 'identity' of the Arts and Sciences, was an important concern to a number of the participants. The

'identity' of the Arts and Sciences as an icon or a brand for a university, and the discussion/decision making style of questioning and debating characteristic in those disciplines, seemed to be important enough to some people that I included it in the discussions of the options and the survey spreadsheets, along with the three areas of communication/decision making, workload, and advocacy. I asked the participants to use the spreadsheet to rate the effectiveness of the various options that were being proposed in terms of how they would address the three issues that you gave us and the additional issue of preserving the 'identity' of the Arts and Sciences. The spreadsheets were primarily helpful in encouraging respondents to think critically about how each option would impact these four issues at the departmental as well as the college levels.

I met with the department chairs a total of five times. The chairs were invited to attend specific meetings but were encouraged to attend any or all of the meetings with the chairs as they wished. For the first two meetings, the chairs were divided into two groups to start the process. After these two meetings, I summarized their comments and met with them again in two separate meetings with different combinations of chairs. I met with the chairs a fifth time at the end of the process as a single group after meeting with all of the other constituents, to allow them to discuss and comment on the options that had evolved since the first four meetings.

I met with the faculty twice. These two meetings were held toward the end of the process, just before the fifth meeting with the chairs, and this allowed for a very fruitful discussion of the options that had matured during the previous steps.

The materials that I handed out at the beginning of the various meetings and the summaries that I prepared of those meetings are provided as Attachments 4-9. These materials are presented in chronological order, and they will help you to see how the discussions progressed and how the options evolved during our discussions. The summaries are not intended to be Minutes of our meetings, but they are simply my notes listing in order the various comments or suggestions that were made in each group meeting. Also, the summaries were not intended to indicate the value that participants placed on the various comments, or the extent of discussion about them, but they will give you a fairly clear picture of the kinds of concerns that participants had and of the options, some admittedly out of the box, that were proposed.

Toward the end of our process, Ms. Cynthia Pfannenstiel located two papers for us in the literature that I found to be helpful in reflecting on our discussions. These papers were published in the seventies, but they are contemporary in identifying some of the issues we considered, and reassuring in confirming some of our observations. I have included copies of those papers in Attachments 10 and 11. The March 1978 article, "A Study of the Structure of Colleges of Arts and Sciences at Five Major Universities", Creswell and Jones, seemed especially relevant to our study.

## **Outcomes**

One outcome of these discussions is a list of perspectives that seemed to be common enough among the Arts and Sciences family that I have listed them below. Without questioning whether or not they are justified, I believe that they do reveal important, honest predispositions that strongly influenced how the parties viewed the various options for the organization of the College, its position *vis a vis* the other colleges, and their places within the College. As such, they deserve thoughtful consideration as to how they might affect any changes that are implemented.

**Underlying Perceptions.** The following underlying perceptions seemed to influence, or even limit, the way individuals were able to think about options for the organization of the College of Arts and Sciences:

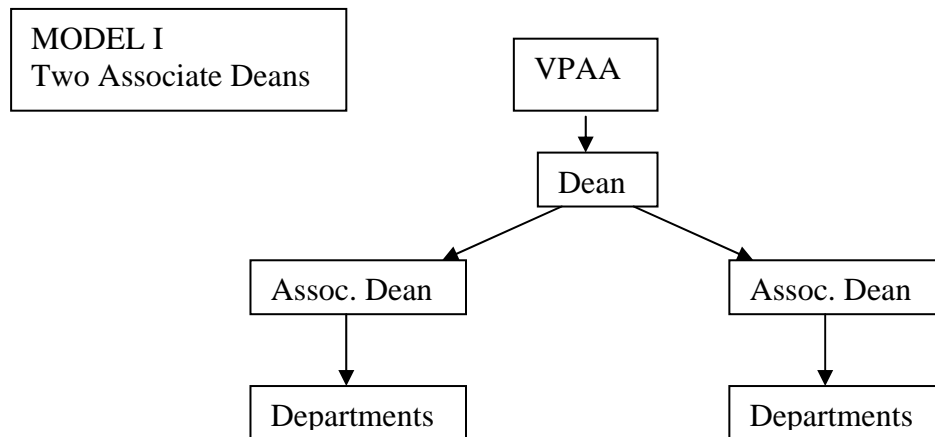
- Some felt uneasy about change. Some believed that change might be desirable but should be made incrementally and transitional to the desired outcome. In other words, a new structure might be desirable, but should come about as a result of gradual, incremental change allowing for incremental adjustments to the changes. Others felt just as strongly that change was necessary and inevitable, and, if changes were to be made, they were best made at one time.
- Some were concerned about the equitable distribution of resources and support if there were to be a reorganization of the College.
- There is a mixed feeling among faculty about the importance and the reality of the ‘identity’ or brand of the College of Arts and Sciences, and also about the importance of keeping the College intact. For some, keeping the College intact is very important in preserving this identity, but it was not critically important to others. It seemed to be somewhat more important at the chair level, but I could not find that this was an issue of overriding importance. That is, there were very mixed opinions as to whether the ‘identity’ of the Arts and Sciences as the brand of higher education was necessarily dependent on having all of the disciplines in one College.
- Direct access by the faculty to the Dean is highly desirable. This was perhaps a unanimous criterion for any reorganization that might be implemented.
- There seemed to be a common sentiment that the College does not have an equitable voice ‘at the table’. Some of the options that were discussed for organizing the College were particularly aimed at giving the Arts and Sciences disciplines an influence in advocacy and distribution of resources proportional to their size on campus. Some felt that dividing the College would further weaken the influence of Arts and Sciences on our campus, while others countered that the current situation had demonstrated that size does not translate into influence, and argued that a division into two or more colleges would increase the influence of the disciplines in Arts and Sciences.
- Some were concerned that any reorganization of the College that separates the departments might result in political infighting and competition for resources, resulting in inequities for certain departments.
- Additional resources devoted to a reorganization of the College might be taken from resources currently devoted to teaching

### **Three Models**

As the discussions proceeded, three alternatives seemed to emerge as the most viable models for serious consideration for implementation. These three models also had features and offered flexibility that allowed for the discussion of the virtues of a number of the permutations that had been offered along the way. I have described each of them below along with a discussion of some of the pros and cons that we identified for each of them.

For each model I have included summaries in Attachments 4 through 9 of the opinions and questions that were expressed during the various sessions concerning the three options that were presented. They are not intended to be in any order of preference or to be equal to each other in importance. Two of the following options involve dividing the departments into two groups. Although the manner in which this might be accomplished generated considerable discussion and even some concerns, we tried to avoid specificity as to how the departments might be grouped in any new structure in order to focus on concepts that would address the three main issues of our assignment.

**Model I:**



In this model, the departments would be divided into two groups and each of them would be placed under the leadership of an Associate Dean. The Dean would delegate most of the responsibilities for such activities as personnel, curriculum, evaluations, and budgeting to the Associate Deans. Special programs such as the BGS and International Studies Program would be assigned to the Associate Deans. The Dean would function as a quasi-VPAA /quasi-Dean, who would facilitate and coordinate the work of the College through the two Associate Deans.

Comments:

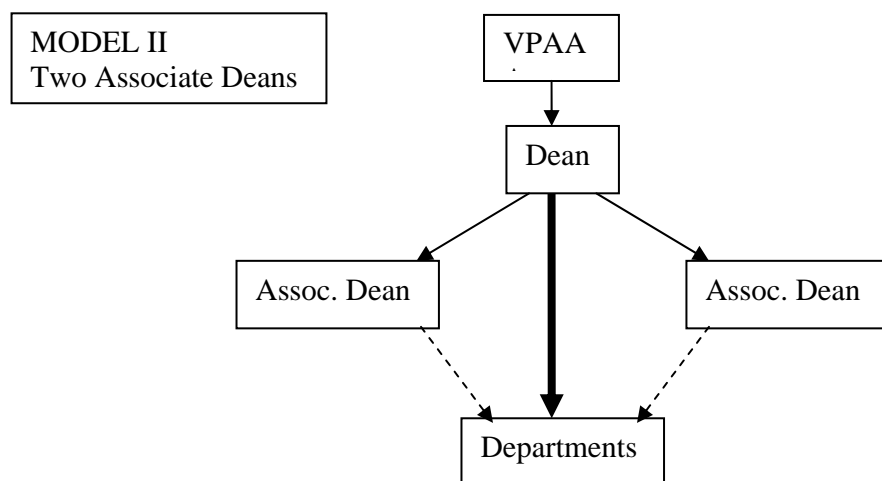
- Would keep the College intact and maintain the identity of the Arts and Sciences.
- Would relieve the workload of the Dean.
- Would complicate the workload of the Dean who would need to rely on the Associate Deans to understand the heartbeat of the departments.
- Would require additional oversight and coordination of the Associate Deans.
- Would make it more difficult for the Dean to understand and advocate for individuals and departmental issues.
- Within each subunit (Associate Dean and departments reporting to him/her), communications between departments and Associate Dean would be improved, but communications would be diminished, perhaps significantly, between the departments/faculty and the Dean and higher levels of administration.

- Would diminish direct contact between individual faculty and Dean.
- Might create unhealthy competition within the College.
- Creates another level of administration and another filter between the departments and the VPAA.
- Does not create a more equitable voice for Arts and Sciences at the table. In order to accomplish this, one person asked, “Could the Associate Deans attend meetings with the Deans of the four colleges?”

This model would require additional staffing, that is, upgrading the current Assistant Dean position to an Associate Dean position, creating a new Associate Dean position, and adding at least one more classified staff position.

The general opinion of the groups that discussed this model seemed to be that it created too many layers of administration, frustrating communication/decision making and advocacy, and creating at best an uncertain reduction in workload for the Dean.

### **Model II:**



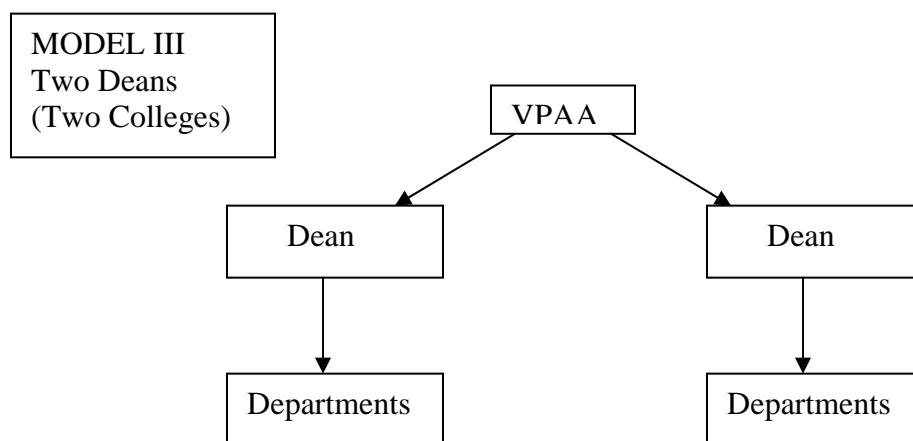
This model is essentially the present organization of the College, augmented by adding staff to the Dean’s office. This model would allow the Dean to keep the full range of activities with the departments and the faculty that the Dean now has, but would allow the Dean to delegate major projects and areas of responsibility, such as part-time faculty, equipment and student help budgets; special programs (BGS, IS, Universitas, etc.); management of faculty searches; and graduate assistantship management and budgets, to the two Associate Deans. The current Dean estimates that 70% of her time is used for personnel issues. Under this plan, the Dean could off load some of her administrative responsibilities and some of her personnel work, but would retain the bulk of her interactions with faculty.

## Comments

- Would keep the College intact and maintain the ‘identity’ of Arts and Sciences.
- Would allow faculty to maintain current level of direct access to the Dean.
- Should make a significant difference in the administrative workload of the Dean in non-personnel issues and allow for the creation of some new initiatives.
- Would require additional oversight and coordination of the Associate Deans.
- Would not reduce appreciably the workload of the Dean regarding personnel issues, approximately 70% of the current workload.
- Would not significantly improve communications/decision-making and advocacy issues between the Dean and the VPAA or within the College, and could hinder them, depending on the assignments/functioning of the Associate Deans.
- Would involve less abrupt change.
- Would provide a "transitional", more comfortable, option to morph ultimately to the division of the College into two colleges, seen by some as the desirable, if not inevitable, result.

This model offers the comforts of familiarity and less dramatic change. Implementation would require upgrading the current half time Assistant Dean position to a full time Associate Dean position, adding a second Associate Dean position, and probably adding one more classified position to the Dean’s office. Some questioned whether two Associate Deans would be required. If not, then the additional classified position would probably not be justified.

### **Model III:**



The effects of this model are the easiest to visualize, since it is simply the division of the current College into two colleges, each with programs and activities that are similar to the current situation except that the content of most activities is reduced by about 50%.

Comments:

- Would substantially reduce the workload of each Dean as compared with that of the current Dean. Although the workload would be greatly reduced, it would not be reduced by 50% as one might think on first impression.
- Would significantly improve communications/decision-making between the Dean and VPAA and also within each college
- Would significantly improve advocacy issues between the Dean and VPAA and also within each college.
- Would provide more direct access to the Dean by faculty and departments.
- Would provide more complete understanding of department and faculty needs by the Dean.
- Represents a more dramatic change compared with the other options, unsettling to some but not a problem for others.
- Option III has all the advantages of the other two options but it does not preserve the present physical unity of Arts and Sciences. There are mixed opinions as to how it would affect the 'identity' of Arts and Sciences.
- The manner in which departments would be assigned to the two colleges might help to protect the 'identity' of the Arts and Sciences.
- Could create competition or inequitable distribution of resources between the two Colleges.

In terms of staffing, implementation of this option would involve, for example, converting the present half time assistant dean's position to a full time dean's position, and might not require the addition of additional unclassified staff. Office spaces would need to be provided that are suitable for two deans and their colleges, and that would be true for the other two models, which involve new assistant dean and classified staff positions, as well.

Departments could be divided mostly along reasonable disciplinary boundaries. As much as possible, and as is appropriate for each of the three models, it would be desirable to make allowances to accommodate interdisciplinary, cooperative, and general education programs that are already in place and to anticipate emerging interactions between departments.

### **Super Departments and Schools**

Most of the other concepts discussed by the various groups could be considered in terms of the three models listed above. Two of these concepts, super departments and schools, offer some options that should be explored in strategic planning.

The super department, which is probably what most people would label as a division, would involve the merging of two or more disciplines (current departments) into a larger unit with a single chairperson. An example of such a combination would be the Department of Social Sciences, which includes a variety of disciplines. Superficially at least, there seems to be an inequity in work load in some regards between the chairs of departments with large numbers of faculty and those with fewer faculty. On the other hand, the organization now in place seems to have provided adjustments that have resulted in full loads for all the chairs, and so this option would require some careful analysis if it were considered for implementation.

One of the clear advantages suggested for this structure was that it would reduce the number of chairpersons required, thus freeing up resources to support the reorganization of the College. Otherwise the advantages and disadvantages of this option would be similar to those for Model I above. A serious concern about this option would be the effect on the morale of the faculty involved in a merger and perhaps even for the viability of a department that is merged with another or into a large unit, especially for some areas of specialization within the department.

The creation of a school, either within the College of Arts and Sciences or separately from it, would involve combining existing departments under a dean of the school. This suggestion was offered during our discussions, and discussed in terms of a school of nursing and allied health sciences, a concept that has arisen from time to time in other discussions on campus. The Department of Nursing is already a natural stand-alone entity or anomaly in the College of Arts and Sciences, not only in terms of its subject matter, but also in terms of the staffing requirements, faculty qualifications and expectations, course structures and format, complexity of cooperative agreements that must be articulated with a variety of medical facilities and professionals, and accreditation standards and requirements. Other disciplines on campus that deal with human/family wellness and justice issues might be integrated into such a school to create a center providing enriched experiences for the students in those disciplines and also various health and well being services to the region. The creation of such a school would provide the advantages and disadvantages discussed above for Model III.