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Website Archive - Frequently Asked Questions, Design Team

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Frequently asked questions, design team

Who was on the Design Team?

The eight-member Design Team included Professors Bruce Clary, Lynne Miller and Jeannine Uzzi, who were selected by the Faculty Senate, and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Kate Forhan; Chief Operating Officer and Dean of the School of Business James Shaffer; Vice President for Human Resources and Senior Adviser to the President Judith Ryan; Executive Director of Public Affairs Robert Caswell; and Special Assistant to the President for Planning and Project Development Timothy Stevens. President Selma Botman asked the team to draft a reorganization proposal to be submitted to her and the USM community on February 26 (delayed until March 1 due to storm) for further discussion.

The document released on March 1 is a first draft, subject to community feedback and the approval of President Botman and, ultimately, the University of Maine System Board of Trustees.

What is the overall goal of the draft proposal?

The goal is to create an organizational structure that is academically robust and synergistic, serves the needs of students and the state, and helps make USM fiscally sustainable over the long term.

This proposal groups academic disciplines together in ways that break down silos, creating opportunities for greater faculty collaboration and for students to engage in new and exciting interdisciplinary study. The design team worked hard to meet President Botman's criteria for a proposal that serves students, the region and state; makes academic sense; and identifies administrative savings that can be used to help bridge future budget gaps and invest in academic programs.

What is the proposal?

The draft proposal calls for USM's eight schools and colleges to be reorganized into five colleges. USM's Lewiston-Auburn College and the University of Maine School of Law, an administrative unit of USM, are not affected by this proposal.

The remaining six schools and colleges -- the School of Applied Sciences, Engineering, and Technology; the College of Arts and Sciences; the School of Business; the College of Education and Human Development; the Muskie School of Public Service; and the College of Nursing and Health Professions -- would be reorganized into three colleges to be known as the Muskie College of Public Service, Management & Society; the Communication, Culture & the Arts College; and the Nursing, Health Professions & STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) College.

What's the specific rationale behind the proposal for the schools/colleges?

In the case of the Arts and Sciences, the Design Team has proposed a draft that brings a renewed sense of focus to, and enhanced support for, the arts, the humanities and the sciences.

In the case of ASET, the Design Team has proposed a draft that will help build a better prepared workforce through integrating the liberal arts, experiential learning opportunities and STEM disciplines which currently are distributed among three distinct colleges.

In the case of the School of Business, the Design Team has proposed a draft that gives students, and by extension the business communities the university serves, access to a rich array of disciplines in the social sciences and in the public policy arena. This can only serve to enrich the highly regarded business programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Finally, the School of Business will maintain AACSB accreditation.

In the case of Education and Human Development, the Design Team has proposed a draft that maintains distinctive graduate programs and marks a return to USM's roots with a university-wide focus on undergraduate teacher education. This program would respond to the needs of our students and the demands of our state by preparing educators for the 21st century who are firmly grounded in those subjects they will be teaching.

In the case of the Muskie School, the Design Team has proposed a draft that provides opportunities to strengthen its academic offerings and applied research and training programs by building upon the richness of undergraduate disciplines in the social sciences and programs in business and management. This proposal will result in a structure and depth characteristic of the nation's best named schools in public affairs and public service, thereby advancing Senator Muskie's legacy and vision.

And in the case of Nursing and Health Professions, the Design Team has proposed a draft that will help build Maine's nursing workforce for the 21st century through an integration of the liberal arts, experiential learning opportunities and STEM disciplines, which currently are distributed among three distinct colleges.

What is the schedule?

Feedback on the draft plan released on March 1 will be taken until March 15, with a final draft submitted to President Botman on March 19. President Botman will then take additional feedback, make revisions, if necessary, and will forward a reorganization proposal to the University of Maine System Board of Trustees by April 24 for discussion and approval at the May 24 Board meeting. Implementation will begin after Trustees' approval. As noted below, that implementation would involve the various faculties and new deans of the newly reorganized colleges.

What are the cost savings of this draft proposal?

This draft is intended to generate long-term savings. The easiest to calculate is the net reduction of three dean's positions (eight schools/colleges to five). True, some of the deans have the right to return to the faculty, but they will fill existing faculty lines, retire or otherwise leave USM. A conservative projection -- assuming a generic dean's salary of \$140,000 plus benefits of another \$70,000, and related office costs -- pegs the annual savings at \$750,000.

Other projected savings -- at this draft stage -- are difficult to specify. The three new deans and their associated faculties and staff members will need to reorganize their respective colleges within guidelines provided by Provost Forhan. One of those anticipated guidelines is that departments or faculty units should have a minimum of 16 faculty members. This would prompt a move to fewer, larger departments, resulting in reduced release time, chair stipends and administrative support staff. If eight departments, for example, were to merge with other units, the savings could be between \$390,000 and \$630,000 annually, depending on a range of variables.

This draft proposal is not a short-term solution to our fiscal challenges. These savings would not be effective until after the 2010-2011 academic year. Yet USM must break this cycle of incremental budget cuts year in and year out. The only way to do that in an ongoing, sustainable way is to address our structural costs, and do so in such a way that also enhances the educational experiences for our students. This takes time.

When will we know if there are faculty and/or staff lay-offs?

It will take at least a year for the various faculties and the new deans to conduct the necessary discussions and planning to reorganize the new colleges. It's impossible to nail down a date at this stage. Given more than a year to plan, we anticipate that significant staff reductions can be achieved by attrition and reallocation of existing staff.

PLEASE NOTE, however, additional processes are underway that are separate and distinct from this draft proposal to reorganize our schools and colleges. We currently are planning strategic reductions in non-academic areas designed to save an estimated \$1 million in the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2010 (Fiscal Year 2011). Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Kate Forhan also is continuing an academic program review focused on reducing expenses in Fiscal Year 2011 and beyond. In addition, we are continuing to review academic programs as part of the Trustees' mandate to examine programs that produce five or fewer graduates and courses with 12 or fewer students.

We anticipate announcements related to these processes later this spring. Any and all actions will respect university governance procedures and honor contractual obligations.

How will tenure guidelines be affected?

There will be no changes during the 2010-2011 academic year. Eventually, we expect the newly defined academic units to develop new promotion and tenure guidelines, consistent with the AFUM contract. Current probationary tenure-track faculty would have the choice of continuing with their existing tenure guidelines or switching to the new ones.

My department isn't listed in the proposed draft. Does this mean it's being eliminated?

No. The lists of departments in the draft are not intended to be a complete list of all departments. The list simply underscores the interdisciplinary nature of the academic departments within each of the proposed new colleges. As noted above, the deans, along with the faculties, will reorganize the academic structure within each college during the implementation phase. These new internal structures of each newly proposed college will arise from facilitated conversations in keeping with administrative, academic and contractual principles. The [Open Space Technology](#) process featured in the second convocation could be used during the internal reorganizations of the colleges.

How long with the current deans serve?

Transition planning will begin after Board of Trustees' action on May 24. The current deans and everyone else will have an important role in the transition.

Will there still be department chairs? How will that structure be reconfigured?

Yes. The new structure will have departments of no fewer than 16 faculty members with a chair for each.

What's the role of USM LAC faculty in this proposal?

The faculty at USM LAC will be encouraged and invited to work with the faculty of any of the newly organized colleges. There are academic synergies and related opportunities that can be created and built upon throughout the university.

Are there physical moves associated with this proposal?

At this point in time, the draft does not call for any changes in the physical locations of the schools, colleges and departments.

How does this draft affect the Core Curriculum?

Under this draft proposal, responsibility for implementation of the general education Core Curriculum will become a college-level, rather than a departmental responsibility. This will facilitate curricular development and involvement of faculty within the colleges.

How were the discussions from the two convocations factored into the decision-making process?

The Design Team members reviewed the feedback from each of the convocations. The community's thoughts on such issues as greater interdepartmental collaborations and interdisciplinary teaching and research opportunities; the STEM disciplines; "responsibility-based" budgeting; empowering faculty and staff to "cross-fertilize"; and a streamlined administrative structure informed the team's deliberations. The team also reviewed the "white paper," the reorganization ideas posted on the Web, and a "priority statement" submitted by student leaders.

How does this draft proposal fit with the University System's "New Challenges, New Directions Initiative" and with USM's Strategic Plan, "Preparing USM for the Future: 2009-2014?"

The draft proposal responds to several System goals, such as the implementation of organizational changes to serve the shifting educational needs of the state and to help bring spending in line with resources. The draft also will serve to advance several goals in our own [Strategic Plan](#), among them to make student success a core university priority; provide distinctive graduate and professional education; support faculty research, scholarship and creative activity; and to help ensure the university's fiscal sustainability.

What mechanism will there be to make comments or register concerns?

E-mail reorgcomments@usm.maine.edu.

The proposal released on March 1 is a draft and as such it can only benefit from an open and vigorous public discussion. You also are encouraged to use that e-mail address if you would like members of the design team and others to attend a meeting to hear your questions and concerns firsthand. Planning also is underway for campus forums.

You also can contact a Design Team member directly:

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