COVID-19 updates

See our health and safety guidelines, and our plan to return to campus.

Office of Academic Affairs

Initiatives

Faculty affairs

About us

FINAL REPORT

Redesign of the Academic Structure

May 28, 2020

The University of Akron community has had ongoing discussions over many years about the interdisciplinary academic collaboration and efficiency gains that may result from a redesign of our academic structure. Several ideas have surfaced at varying levels of detail over the past decade, resulting in some minor restructuring. The academic community has mixed opinions on how and what to restructure, but there is general understanding of the potential benefits of a new academic structure.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a disrupting agent for the world's economy and has forced us to look at all options to meet our mission in the best possible way. The attached appendices contain more detail on our financial concerns but also on our vision to position The University of Akron for sustainable and meaningful growth post COVID-19. The academic redesign has been an idea that has been debated for some time without taking that bold step to move forward. Given our current realities, The University of Akron community has committed to taking that bold step now to position ourselves for future success.

The plan reduces administrative overhead while enhancing the student and faculty experience and academic/scholarly excellence (including research and graduate programs). Fundamental to these opportunities, collaboration and sharing will be nurtured and embraced in our pursuits. This plan has gone through multiple iterations starting with the deans, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the University Council Executive Committee, the broad campus (via Brightspace discussion boards and confidential forums), and the Faculty Senate (special meeting on May 22, 2020). Under ideal circumstances, we prefer additional time for feedback and discussion, but the urgency of our current financial situation requires a quick, but shared, decision-making process. We all should take pride in the depth and breadth of engagement that occurred over one short month to get us to a proposed structure from which to build our academic enterprise post COVID-19.

PROCESS SUMMARY

In late April 2020, President Miller and Interim Provost Urgo recognized the value and need to redesign our academic enterprise given the urgency and severity of the financial stress facing The University of Akron in the coming fiscal year. The deans of the academic units were charged with developing a new academic structure, with a reduced number of colleges having a unified intellectual and pedagogical approach. Over the course of several weeks, the deans developed a draft proposal to be shared with the larger community for further input.

This draft plan was shared broadly with The University of Akron community on May 6, 2020, by the new Executive Vice President and Provost, John Wiencek, via a short video which explained the draft structure and how it would be enmeshed with a ground-up budget building exercise in the academic enterprise. Feedback was solicited through a discussion board in Brightspace as well as a confidential submission form. There were more than 280 confidential feedback submissions. Also, 22 distinct threads with more than 100 replies and comments were placed on Brightspace. In addition, some faculty and departments offered short letters or position papers directly to various leaders, many of which are attached as appendices here. This active participation and professionalism are welcomed, and the leadership is grateful for our community's involvement and guidance throughout this entire process. Stated simply, "Thank you!"

The feedback was reviewed and considered resulting in a second draft structure which was circulated to the community on May 20, 2020. The second draft was forwarded to Faculty Senate for final review and additional recommendations pursuant to Rule 3359-10-02. The Faculty Senate's response is attached in the Appendix and summarized below within the text of these final recommendations to the Board of Trustees. This redesigned academic structure will continue to evolve in the future, but it is the launch point for that future.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE AFTER FACULTY SENATE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Faculty Senate provided seven specific recommendations to improve the draft structure. Each of those recommendations was carefully considered by the president and the provost. Many of those recommendations are incorporated into the proposed structure that will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for further consideration. The following summary paragraphs address the Faculty Senate's discussion.

- **STEM College**. The University leadership agrees with Faculty Senate that the idea of a STEM college merits more conversation going forward. The final proposed structure does assemble many of our applied and pure sciences along with engineering disciplines into a new college that has many, but not all, of the elements that would comprise a STEM college. We welcome working with Faculty Senate in the

future on continuing to explore this concept as the next stage of our evolution.

- **Math/Statistics**. The leadership agrees with Faculty Senate that Math and Statistics should remain in the redesigned Buchtel College of Arts and Science for now. Pending further discussions about the formation of a STEM college or, in the case of Statistics, a desire by the faculty to move to another college, we will reconsider the location of these important programs.

- **CAST and Wayne College**. There were no specific recommendations from Faculty Senate, but concerns were raised. The merger of the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) and Wayne College was revisited but no strong recommendation was offered. This merger was discussed by the deans and leadership. This idea would generate a sixth college and would sacrifice alignment among the engineering and technology programs. It also would be challenged by the distance between the Wayne campus and main campus. Since no clear alternative was suggested, leadership will advance the mergers of CAST programs as recommended by specific Faculty Senate recommendations in the next section .

- **Cybersecurity and Digital Forensics**. These two programs within CAST were initially assigned to the merged college including the engineering disciplines. There are significant faculty and curricular integration of these Computer Information Systems (CIS) degree tracks with the Disaster Science and Emergency Services (DSES) faculty/curriculum. DSES proposed moving these two programs from CIS to DSES. Faculty Senate recommended that CIS retain these programs going forward. Subsequent discussion was held among the CIS and the DSES programs to follow up on the Faculty Senate discussion. CIS has agreed to move the Digital Forensics degree program to DSES which will redesign the curriculum and remove the CIS tag, but will retain the Cybersecurity degree within CIS. This action is pending all normal curricular processes. Given this additional adjustment, the leadership accepts this path forward .

- **Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering (PSPE)**. The leadership agrees with Faculty Senate that the PSPE faculty should remain a cohesive unit as a School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering . PSPE offered that they would be willing to reduce their administrative and support expenses substantially as part of the budget resetting process. As a School, the PSPE faculty can continue to build the School's prestige and impact, which brings distinction and recognition to The University of Akron. As recognized and discussed in the Faculty Senate meeting, this change will bring a significant downsizing of administrative and infrastructure support budgets for PSPE, much like many other units will endure during our budget resetting process. The leadership recognizes that our PSPE faculty are great role models and mentors for graduate and undergraduate students. The

faculty also offer an interdisciplinary approach that pulls our faculty together to address perplexing questions. Given the significant reduction to support budgets and the advantage of continued integration of the faculty across disciplines, the leadership recommends placing the School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering into the merged college with Engineering and CAST. This will allow for shared utilization of core infrastructure and administration in support of the scholarly and educational excellence of our PSPE faculty. It also sets the stage for additional conversation about a potential STEM college.

- **LeBron James Family Foundation School of Education**. The leadership agrees with Faculty Senate that a move to BCAS is a positive step forward and additional conversations with peer faculty in BCAS will enhance this new structure.

In summary, the new structure will include four colleges and the School of Law; the names of the colleges will be developed after obtaining collective feedback from the faculty who will now comprise those colleges. The academic programs in each of these colleges is summarized in the tables below. Some of these programs may share administrative support services and a department chair going forward. Those decisions will rest with the college faculty and their dean. Wayne College will be designated as the Wayne Campus and its faculty will continue to serve students who attend UA at Wayne (and other regional academic centers) while aligning with the main campus program offerings. The School of Law is unaffected by this redesign. The Graduate School, though retaining its name, will be operated as an administrative unit in the Office Academic Affairs. The Williams Honors College will be administered by BCAS going forward. All changes will be summarized in a resolution for the Board of Trustees to consider at its special meeting on May 29, 2020.

LEARNING AND EVOLVING

As we conclude this phase of the redesign exercise, it is useful to reflect on what has happened and to learn from it as we move forward. First, we have come together and moved fast in this moment of emergent crisis. The process used here was accelerated and many would have preferred more time for deliberation and acceptance of the ideas, but we also understand the need to move forward to define our own future together. The University of Akron community takes pride in the fact that it continues to embrace shared governance, along with its messy and chaotic nature, in a time of stress. This is a new starting point for The University of Akron. We will continue to work together to improve upon this starting point. Together we rise.

College 1	
(Buchtel College, LJFF College of Ed, Williams Honors College)	
Art	Psychology
Music	History
Biology	Sociology
Chemistry	Anthropology
Geosciences	Political Science
Physics	Communication
LeBron James Family Foundation School of Education	Criminal Justice Studies
English	Public Administration / Urban Studies
Modern Languages	Dance Theatre and Arts Administration
Philosophy	Mathematics
Statistics	Organizational Supervision / Associate of Tech Studies Corporate Partnerships
Williams Honors College	

College 2
(College of Business Administration)
Accountancy
Finance
Economics
Management
Sports Studies
Marketing

College 3
(School of Law)

College 4	
(Health Professions)	
Disaster Science and Emergency Services (including Digital Forensics)	Social Work
Allied Health	Child & Family Development
Nutrition and Dietetics	Speech Language Pathology
Sport Science and Wellness Education	Audiology
Counseling	Nursing

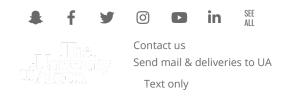| College 5	
(College of Engineering + CAST + CPSPE)	
Biomedical Engineering	Electrical & Computer Engineering
Chemical Engineering	Electrical & Electronic Eng. Technology
Corrosion Eng / Corrosion Tech	Computer Science
Civil Engineering	Computer Information Systems
Construction	Surveying
Mechanical Engineering	Manufacturing
Mechanical Eng. Technology	Aerospace Systems Engineering
School of Polymer Science & Polymer Eng	

DOWNLOADS

📄 Redesigning UA: Final Report

📄 Appendices

See all messages and multimedia for Redesigning UA →

Information For:

Future Students
Accepted Students
Alumni & Friends
Current Students
Faculty and Staff
Parents

SEE ALL

Contact us
Send mail & deliveries to UA

Text only