



# SIUC Faculty Association

IEA – NEA

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## FA Review of Proposed School of Analytics, Finance, and Economics

This proposal would merge the departments of Finance and Economics, and add to them the BS in Information Systems Technology.

While more faculty voted for this plan than against it (9-6 with one abstention), each of the three units involved believes that IST is a poor fit for the proposed school, meaning that its largest unit (if we include the numerous NTT faculty in IST) would be out of place. Given this fundamental problem, and other concerns outlined below, the FA recommends rejection of this school proposal.

In our other reports on proposed new schools, the FA has outlined various common concerns with the restructuring process, including:

- Diminished faculty role in selection of unit leaders;
- Loss of current operating papers, and the need to draft new papers that will be subject to administrative approval;
- Changes to the tenure and promotion process;
- The absence of specific argument or evidence in support of the plan, particularly regarding enrollment or fiscal issues.

As most in the intended audience will already have read those reports (and heard a good deal from the FA on these topics in other venues), we will here restrict ourselves to matters specific to this proposed school. Readers interested in a presentation of these arguments can consult any of our earlier article nine reviews. The FA would also be happy to provide a representative to discuss our concerns with the FS or GC.

### 1. IST does not belong with Finance and Economics.

Faculty in all affected units are agreed that the IST program does not belong in the proposed unit. IST faculty themselves indicate that they would prefer to go to the School of Accountancy; Finance faculty report a “mutual understanding” that IST would go elsewhere, and Economics faculty explain at some length why they believe the IST program would be a poor fit.

Materials provided with the packets reveal that the administration indicated some level of administrative support for moving IST elsewhere, but Associate Provost DiLalla was admirably clear about saying that there is “no guarantee” that IST will be moved (in materials attached to faculty votes). Faculty in units and in the FS and GC are thus left solely with the proposal in front of them. Faculty in IST seem to have been put in the difficult position of either supporting this school proposal or being left as “orphans,” and thus voted for the proposal despite their reservations about it. Finance faculty originally tried to split the difference by noting the mutual understanding that IST would move while voting for the plan; asked to cast a simple up or down

vote, they voted yes. Economics faculty, who had an alternative plan before them that they supported (the proposed College of Social Science and Humanities) voted no. Thus while faculty seem agreed that the proposed alignment of programs is poor, it was those who had been presented with a developed alternative (Economics) who voted against the proposed school. Faculty in IST and Finance should also be provided with an alternative to this school proposal.

Our IST program is a strong one, as shown most obviously in the success of the Saluki Security Dawgs. But the program is a poor fit for this unit. As the dissent from Economics (included in updated form with the voting materials) demonstrates, our IST program is not a Data Analytics program. Nor does it appear to be a program in Business Analytics. It may well be advantageous for SIUC to develop a program in Data Analytics or Business Analytics, but we should not do so by trying to pass off our IST program as something it is not. The very name of this proposed school would thus be an example of false advertising.

Several alternative locations for IST are mooted in the attached materials (either Accountancy, which is the preference of IST faculty, or Management and Marketing). Another possibility would be the School of Computing; the dissent document from Economics notes that several IST faculty are likely to end up in that school. Still another possibility would be the proposed school of Applied Engineering and Technology (where the rest of the ISAT department is headed). Unfortunately, the attached materials show no indication of whether these alternatives were given serious consideration, or whether faculty in alternative homes for IST would welcome the program. We would urge the FS and GC to inquire as to possible other homes for IST.

In our view it would be foolish to establish a new academic unit premised on the notion that the largest part of that unit will probably be spun off to a new home. This would not be fair to any of the units or faculty involved, above all to the IST faculty.

## **2. The fate of the Agribusiness Economics program remains unsettled**

The program change for this school was revised to include the following language.

*The undergraduate degree program in Agribusiness Economics will be jointly delivered by the School of Agricultural Sciences and the School of Analytics, Finance and Economics. Details regarding this jointly delivered degree will be determined by the respective faculty of the Schools, in consultation with the Deans of the Colleges and the Provost, and in keeping with all requirements for implementing program changes. The administration agrees to support establishment of two Agribusiness Economics degrees in the University catalog, one in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and one in the College of Business and Analytics . . . . Prior to entering their final year in the program, students completing the major would elect whether to earn the ABE degree in Agricultural and Life Sciences OR the ABE degree in Business.*

More detail on this issue can be found in the the materials provided for the proposed School of Agricultural Sciences and the FA review of that school. Here suffice it to say that while Agribusiness Economics faculty strongly believe that their program belongs with Agriculture, the administration continues to insist that the program be split between the proposed schools of

Agricultural Sciences and of Analytics, Finance, and Economics, maintaining that students may major in either school, and that new faculty hires may be made in either school. The muddled state of the ABE program was one reason given by faculty in agriculture for voting against their own proposed school.

The materials provided with the proposed School of Analytics, Finance, and Economics give us no indication whether faculty in this school wish to share ownership of the ABE program with their colleagues in agriculture. In the absence of any such indication, we would assume that the arrangement suggested above is an administrative rather than a faculty interest. We would suggest that the GC and FS determine what faculty in both schools would prefer for the fate of ABE, and support faculty's view, rather than leaving this matter as a source for contention in the future.

### **3. The Economics Department's Ph.D. program would be out of place in the College of Business**

Joint programs in Economics and Finance are common enough, as the administration's selection of peer institutions shows, and are often located in colleges of business. None of the peer institutions listed, however, has a Ph.D. in Economics. SIU's economics department features a strong Ph.D. program. It would be the only Ph.D. program in our college of business, and the economics faculty have well-grounded concerns that this would make their Ph.D. program a low priority for the college.

### **4. Economics would better be placed within the proposed College of Social Sciences and Humanities**

As Economics faculty note in their dissent (provided with the voting materials), the RME proposing a College of Social Science and Humanities would provide a more suitable home for the Economics department.<sup>1</sup> Faculty note research synergies with other social science faculty and graduate students, and a shared commitment to graduate education. Economics is a social science; a unit advertising itself as such (whether as a college or as the administratively proposed school of social sciences) ought to include economics.

### **5. The administration's own selection of peers provides no support for the proposed school.**

The administration lists five institutions as parallels: Louisiana Tech University; Mississippi State University; Southern Utah University; University of Arkansas at Little Rock; University of Dayton; and William and Mary. Of the six schools listed, the first five feature departments of economics and finance in colleges of business, but none of these departments has a program in analytics, and none has a Ph.D. in economics. The sixth, William and Mary, has two separate economics programs, one in economics and finance within their business college, and one a department of economics in their college of arts & sciences. William and Mary offers a program in business analytics, but that program seems to be largely separate from economics and finance.

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<sup>1</sup> The RME can be found here: <https://siucfa.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/final-cossh-rev.pdf>

## CONCLUSION

The proposed school would be a forced marriage of units that agree that they do not belong together. Faculty have been given some assurance by the administration that a divorce will be forthcoming, but this is a poor argument for a marriage.

Faculty have apparently been told that the administration is continuing to push this school, despite their own agreement that IST does not belong in it, in order to make restructuring “more efficient” (see the exchange with Finance faculty in the materials included with faculty votes). Surely it would be more prudent to determine the best structure before we restructure, rather than throwing together programs in a slapdash manner simply to move the process forward.

One of the difficulties of the chancellor’s scheme is that his commitment to rearrange every single unit in the university requires that every single unit find a new home. As noted above, there are a number of other possible locations for IST, and Economics has presented a compelling argument for their placement in the proposed College of Social Sciences and Humanities. In the first version of the chancellor’s restructuring scheme, Finance was slated to be included together with Accounting; we do not know why this structure was abandoned, and it should perhaps be reconsidered.

The administration has said that it is open to faculty alternatives, and has held collegial discussions with faculty who are proposing the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and faculty proposing alternatives in other areas. But by continuing to push the School of Analytics, Finance, and Economics, the administration is demonstrating a willingness to implement its own plans even while saying it is open to alternatives. We fear that FS or GC approval of this plan would undermine ongoing efforts by faculty across campus to develop alternative plans that meet both faculty and administrative interests.

At an absolute minimum, if the administration is going to override faculty views as to the best structures to advance their own programs, it is incumbent on the administration to provide reasoning and evidence for the structures they are insisting on. The administration’s Program Change Plan contains no such reasoning or evidence.

We would therefore urge the FS and GC to ensure that alternatives with faculty support are encouraged and given full consideration, and that they reject this plan unless the administration presents compelling arguments to show that faculty alternatives are impracticable.