



SIUC Faculty Association

IEA – NEA

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FA Review of Proposed School of Justice and Public Safety

The school proposal in question would add the program in Paralegal Studies (currently a free-standing program within CoLA) and programs in Public Safety Management and Public Safety & Homeland Security Administration (currently housed in the School of Architecture) to the Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice (CCJ).

The only bargaining unit faculty in the new unit would be those currently in CCJ, who voted 9-1 in favor of the plan. TT faculty in the School of Architecture are also “affected faculty,” as some of their programs would be reassigned to the proposed school; they voted 9-0 for the proposed school. Thus no faculty from the programs that would move to the new unit cast ballots in this vote, as they are all NTT faculty and the votes were limited, in accordance with the FA contract, to bargaining unit faculty.

The FA has long made it clear that we support program and unit changes that are supported by faculty, so long as these changes follow the contract. Faculty serving on the FS and GC, however, are asked to determine whether the plan is in the best interest of the university as a whole, and when we say that we approve changes supported by faculty, we certainly include faculty members serving on the FS and GC.

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 our other 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 the shared concerns about restructuring can consult our earlier article nine reviews. The FA would also be happy to provide a representative to discuss any of our concerns with the FS or GC.

In what follows we raise a number of issues the FS and GC may want to consider as they evaluate the current school.

1. NTT faculty should be fully consulted about the plan

The present school essentially adds two programs to CCJ, but those added programs are taught entirely by NTT faculty, who do not have voting rights under the FA contract. Their voices should be heard. The only comment from an NTT faculty member in the materials provided is from Dan Silver (director of Paralegal Studies), who supports the name change to “Justice Studies” but does not otherwise comment on the school proposal. To be clear, we have no reason to believe that NTT faculty in any of the programs going into this school object to its formation, but they should be asked for their views, and the FS and GC, rather than the FA, are the right bodies to do so.

2. The plan as currently formulated is essentially a one-department school

The proposed school would house only 10 tenured or tenure track faculty, all currently in CCJ. As is the case with several other proposed schools (those in Accounting, Applied Engineering & Technology, Computing, and Psychological & Behavioral Sciences), this plan essentially “elevates” a given department to school status, where other current departments would be demoted to division status. Our CCJ program is a strong one whose faculty do important research and teach many students, but the plan itself provides no details justifying this elevation of CCJ to school status. Colleagues whose units are not benefitting from this elevation may well want to see data that justifies elevating some units while others are being demoted.

In addition to possible issues of equity, one-department schools are unlikely to produce savings, as existing department chairs would presumably be promoted to school directors (and presumably given raises to reflect their news status).

3. The planned additions to the school are controversial

One justification for forming a School of Justice and Public Safety is the potential addition of a program in forensic science and a police academy. While not formally part of the plan under consideration, these proposals have consistently been listed in documentation of the chancellor’s restructuring scheme, and their presence is arguably essential to the status of Justice and Public Safety as an independent school. They should thus be part of the discussion of whether to found this school.

The controversy about the police academy is too well-known to require further discussion here.

The possible addition of forensic sciences has not, to our knowledge, generated public controversy, and this school may well be a suitable place for such a program, if the school is founded and such a program is developed. But as forensic science is an interdisciplinary field, all stakeholders would need to be consulted about the most appropriate location for such a program.

4. The status of the pre-law area is muddled

Dan Silver, head of Paralegal Studies, raises an important question about the presence of pre-law as an area (of undermined nature) under this school in the chancellor’s restructuring proposal

(see Silver's letter included with the program change plan). Silver recommends removing the box from the chart, noting that many units in CoLA have been working on an interdisciplinary pre-law minor.

We raise this here because the continued presence of a pre-law "box" under the current school suggests that the new school may be slated to monopolize pre-law training. (Silver's own initiative in raising this issue shows, admirably, that this is not his intent.) As a number of academic disciplines provide traditional paths to law school, discussion of this plan may be an appropriate time for the FS to weigh in on how SIUC should serve students interested in legal careers.

While the RME and Article 9 plan under consideration would not formally establish a pre-law program (any more than they would formally establish forensics or a police academy), the consistent presence of pre-law in documentation for restructuring does suggest an intention to make this school the premier location for students interested in law. This could be taken to help justify the formation of a "one-department school," but could also obviously raise concerns for colleagues in units outside of the proposed school who have traditionally trained students headed to law school.

5. Peers identified by the administration do not provide real parallels

Here it is necessary only to cite the administration's own language from the program change plan to show the absence of models among peers for the proposed school.

The proposed academic unit, organized as a School, bears similarity to Departments and Schools of Criminology and Criminal Justice that are housed in many doctoral research universities, *with the additional academic focus of Paralegal Studies and Public Safety Management*. (Emphasis added)

The administration has thus failed to identify any peer institutions that show the wisdom of this particular arrangement of programs.

CONCLUSION

This plan is supported by all but one of the bargaining unit faculty involved, which is a powerful argument in its favor. NTT faculty involved should also be consulted, however, and the approval of faculty within a given area does not exhaust the need for FS and GC review of the proposal.

The major concerns we have identified regarding this program boil down to this: The relatively minor additions to the CCJ department that are formally under consideration here may not justify promoting the resulting unit to school status, and the future additions suggested by the chancellor may prove controversial.