



# SIUC Faculty Association

IEA – NEA

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## FA Report on Proposed School of Education

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The proposed school would house the house the following units and their programs in an independent school with its own dean.

- Counseling, Quantitative Methods and Special Education (CQMSE)
- Curriculum and Instruction (CI)
- Educational Administration and Higher Education (EAHE)
- Workforce Education and Development (WED)

The proposed school was rejected by two-thirds of faculty who voted (16-7) and three of the four units involved (all save CI). Given these votes, and the arguments made by faculty, the FA recommends that the Graduate Council and Faculty Senate reject this proposed school.

In our other reports on proposed new schools, the FA has outlined various common concerns with the restructuring process, including issues regarding the selection of unit leaders, operating papers, tenure and promotion, and the absence of relevant argument and evidence, particularly regarding enrollment or fiscal issues. But given that most in the intended audience will already have read those reports, we will here restrict ourselves to matters specific to the proposed School of Education.

### **1. The plan does not explain why education programs should be “elevated” to the status of an independent school outside of any college.**

- Education would be unique among the proposed schools in being independent of the college structure. But the Program Change Plan contains no rationale, argument, or evidence for why this status would be in the best interest of education programs or the university as a whole.
- Independent school status for education is presumably meant to bring education to something like the status of our current free-standing professional schools in law and medicine. But the proposed School of Education would serve predominantly undergraduates, while medicine and law serve only graduate students.
- Isolation in an independent school of education would undermine current collaborative efforts within CoEHS, and not replace those ties with connections to any new colleagues within a new college.
- The Program Change Plan includes the boilerplate language about the “school model at SIUC,” but fails to note that these schools are situated within colleges. It notes that it is routine for schools of education to be headed by deans at research universities, but

provides no examples, does not identify the sorts of programs found in such schools, and concedes that many peer retain departments within schools of education.

If existence as a freestanding school were truly an “elevation,” one would have expected faculty to support it. Instead, most faculty who would be assigned to the proposed school evidently view the loss of departmental autonomy and missed opportunities for collaboration with college colleagues as doing more harm than any special status the independent school would bring them.

## **2. The special status of education would raise campus-wide issues.**

- The dean of the proposed school would be in an anomalous position: s/he would in one sense be equivalent to school directors, many of whom would oversee more faculty, and would in another sense be the equivalent of deans, all of whom would oversee rather more faculty.
- Where committee membership is determined at the college level, the proposed School of Education would presumably be represented on par with entire other colleges. This could raise issues of equity, as the School of Education would have a status equivalent to that of much larger and more complex college units.

Thus there are reasons both for faculty within the proposed school to question whether they are being “elevated” or isolated and for faculty outside the proposed school to wonder whether the promotion of this one school to pseudo-college status will result in inequitable treatment of their own programs. The plan simply fails to address (or even raise) these issues.

## **3. The plan does not address unique aspects of the promotion and tenure process for a school without a college.**

In the current school proposals, all schools would be temporarily housed directly beneath the provost. The proposed School of Education would have that status permanently. This would permanently remove a layer in the promotion and tenure process for education faculty, introducing potential issues of equity given that other bargaining unit faculty go through the P & T process at both the department/school level and the college level.

In addition to not addressing the permanent status of a school without a college, the proposal appears to treat education faculty differently during the transitional period before new operating papers are drafted (a process that would also apply to any faculty who choose to use the older procedures for their next promotion at any time in the future). Where faculty outside education would have their dossiers reviewed both by their new school director (who would play the role currently played by chairs or school directors) and the dean of their former college, only the dean of the new school would play any role in the review dossiers of faculty in education. The new dean would oversee both the review process at the basic unit level and the process meant to provide a simulacrum of the previous college level review. It is unlikely that the same administrator could provide separate, independent reviews of the candidate’s performance according to departmental and college level standards.

#### **4. There is an unresolved dispute about the identity of the proposed unit.**

A resolution to rename the proposed school as the “School of Learning and Development” has been discussed by faculty. The proposed change appears to reflect a fundamental question about the identity of the unit: is it to be a pre-professional school aimed at producing teachers for PreK-12, or is it to have wider ambitions to include lifelong education and development? This is not simply a matter of nomenclature. Note that the resolution (included with the faculty vote materials) lists “adult rehabilitation” as a focus of this unit’s faculty, whereas the Rehabilitation Institute would be located outside the proposed school. And the faculty in Workforce Education and Development have indicated an interest in an alternative structure that does not tie them too closely to the education programs (see their “We have a vision” document in the Program Change Plan). Thus the debate about naming reflects basic questions about the nature and breadth of the unit that should be resolved before any new structure is put in place.

#### **5. The proposed school rejects possibilities for improved collaboration that have faculty support.**

- A proposed merger of CQMSE with the Rehabilitation Institute would, among its other advantages, have greatly simplified and lowered the cost of the CACREP accreditation process, given changes in that organization’s policies (see the documentation provided in the Program Change Plan). This merger has support from faculty both in CQMSE and Rehab. But the chancellor is instead proposing that the Rehabilitation Institute be split between proposed schools of Health Sciences and Psychological and Behavioral Sciences.
- CQMSE faculty have also noted the possible synergies with colleagues in psychology, and proposed an alternative college model in which the proposed school of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences would reside within a College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences.

#### **Conclusion**

We have only touched upon the major arguments made by faculty against this proposed school. We urge faculty on the GC and FS to review the assembled materials carefully; note that there are substantive faculty comments, questions, and alternative proposals both in the Program Change Plan itself and attached to the materials on faculty votes.

As is generally the case with these school proposals, there is precious little evidence, argument, or specificity in the Program Change Plan, which is limited to the same generalities about synergy and collaboration that are found in every other plan presented by the chancellor. The materials included with this Program Change Plan do include a substantial presentation on the proposed school by Christie McIntyre, head of the one unit in the proposed school (Curriculum & Instruction) in which the majority of faculty support the proposed school. But little in that presentation is specific to the proposed structure, and much of it includes matters not addressed

in the plan (including possible incorporation of DSS and CTE, and the need for two associate deans in the proposed school).

Finally, in addition to the concerns internal to the proposed school, we urge the FS and GC to consider the potential problems of “elevating” one school to a special status, as well as the lost potential for collaboration with units that would be located outside of the proposed school (including the Rehab Institute and the School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences).

As in the case of other proposed schools, the FA would be happy to send a representative to discuss this report or related issues with the Graduate Council or Faculty Senate.