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Faculty Association Review: School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences

This program change plan would create a School of Psychological and Behavioral sciences by merging two programs currently housed within the Rehabilitation Institute (the B.S. and the M.S. in Behavior Analysis and Therapy) with the Department of Psychology. This program change plan is thus unlike many others currently under consideration, insofar as it does not call for the merger of two (or more) entire basic academic units. Instead, this plan primarily entails the “elevation” of Psychology to the status of school, and prepares for the moving of Psychology to a college other than CoLA.¹ At the same time, the implementation of this plan, along with the current plan for a School of Health Sciences, would function to deconstruct the Rehabilitation Institute.

The FA has long made it clear that we support program and unit changes that are supported by Faculty,² so long as those changes follow the contract. The most relevant Faculty for program changes are of course Faculty directly affected by the proposed schools—Faculty in units which would end up, in whole or in part, in the new school. Faculty in Psychology have voted 11-2-2 in favor of this plan; Faculty in the Rehabilitation Institute have voted 8-1-0 (2 not voting) in favor of this plan. These votes are a powerful argument in favor of this plan.

Yet, we would like to call the attention of the Faculty Senate (FS) and Graduate Council (GC) to aspects of this plan that are problematic. In so doing, we intend to help faculty on the FS and GC conduct their independent review of this plan.

Some of the discussion below will point out contractual problems with this plan. We have filed grievances that identify prior contractual violations committed by the administration as it pushed its reorganization proposals through the Article 9 process. This is not the place to rehearse those grievances, which are now on their way to an arbitrator. Instead, we emphasize problems that will arise in the future if this plan is approved in its present form.

In section I, we lay out some general problems with this plan. In section II, we evaluate the extent to which this plan satisfactorily addresses the seven contractual components of a

¹ The program change plan provides the following information: “Upon the establishment of the School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, it will be housed administratively, on a temporary basis, in the Provost and

² In this document we use the convention by which capital-F “Faculty” are members of the bargaining unit, while the term “faculty” include faculty outside the bargaining unit (including NTT faculty).

“Program Change Plan” as they are laid out in Article 9 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

The FA would be happy to send a representative to meet with members of the Faculty Senate or Graduate Council to answer questions that may arise about this review.

SECTION I:

1. Faculty members in Psychology have expressed a number of concerns about the plan; these concerns stem from what Faculty in Psychology describe as the plan’s “lack of detail.”

- While the majority of Faculty in Psychology has voted in favor of this plan, the Faculty in Psychology have nonetheless issued a statement communicating that the plan—as it stands—fails to resolve a number of major issues. These issues include, but are not limited to: the status of individual graduate programs within the new school; the potential disconnect (and conflict) between, on the one hand, the undergraduate curricular requirements of the college in which the school will ultimately be located (i.e., The College of Health and Human Sciences) and, on the other hand, the curricula of undergraduate programs in psychology; how the plan, in particular its proposal to move Psychology out of CoLA, will affect existing course cross-listings and research collaborations between Psychology and units in CoLA; and, the precise mechanisms by which the operating paper for the new school will be written and approved.
- The statement by Faculty in Psychology thus raises an important question that pertains not only to this plan, but also to other plans currently under consideration: Why cannot plans be revised in light of Faculty concerns before Faculty are asked to approve the plans? Or, put differently, why should Faculty be asked to vote on plans in which significant loose ends, especially ones having to do with the creation of operating papers, have yet to be tied up?

2. The Plan fails to address crucial issues.

- The plan itself does not explain how the change will affect recruitment or retention of students. Given the dire situation of our institution at this time, this is a problematic omission.

3. Central features of the Plan are in violation of University Policy and the current CBA.

- The procedures and processes for tenure and promotion that would govern the new school when it is placed under the administrative control of the provost would violate Article 13 of the CBA as well as university policies for the evaluation of tenure and promotion cases.
- The plan calls for Faculty from the former Department of Psychology and from programs in the Rehabilitation Institute to be the only ones to review Faculty formerly in their respective academic units for tenure and promotion. Other Faculty in the proposed school would not be involved in reviewing such tenure and promotion dossiers. This procedure would violate the CBA (including Article 13.05a), and it would also violate SIUC policy on tenure. Here is the most relevant language on tenure in university policy:

Basic Academic Unit: In conducting reviews at the basic academic unit level, all tenured faculty shall have an opportunity to vote on a tenure decision, and only tenured faculty should vote on the decision.³

The basic academic unit, if this plan is approved, would be the new school; and, if the proposed plan is implemented, all tenured Faculty in the basic academic unit would *not* be afforded the opportunity to vote on tenure decisions within what would now be their basic academic unit (i.e., the new School of Health Sciences).⁴

SECTION II

Article 9 of the CBA requires that merger proposals address seven items. In this section, we respond to the seven sections of the plan, which follow this list of seven required items.

A. Description of the proposed change(s)

- The temporary administrative housing of the resulting new school directly under the provost presents a series of problems. The CBA requires that the college dean participate in the process of the assignment of Faculty workload (8.01.c, which states every faculty member's workload assignment "shall be subject to the approval of the Dean"). Yet, according to the changes outlined by the plan, the Faculty in the new school would not be part of any college, and thus they would serve under no dean. This issue is not addressed in the plan.
- The plan also fails to address how the absence of a relevant dean will affect annual reviews of untenured Faculty. If such reviews are done by the provost, this would create an unforeseen problem at the time a final tenure decision is to be made by the provost, because the candidate would already have received a provost-level evaluation.
- As Chancellor Montemagno himself acknowledged when introducing his reorganization plan, the drafting of new operating papers will require "heavy lifting."⁵ This plan, like other new school plans, describes the status of operating papers as follows:⁶

During the period of creation of the School Operating Paper, day-to-day management of the unit will be guided by applicable provisions of each division's former department/school operating paper and form college operating paper.

This policy, which is an addition since the original presentation of the school proposals last fall, is a positive step from the FA's perspective. It would, to some extent, help avoid the "state of nature" problem that would occur were Faculty to be thrown into new schools without any operating papers at all. However, it may well be difficult to synchronize the various operating papers within one basic academic unit in a way that

³ <https://policies.siu.edu/personnel-policies/chapter3/ch3-faps/tenure.php>

⁴ The CBA does require that if "guidelines and procedures" for promotion and tenure are changed, Faculty can use the old procedures (13.01.b). But the CBA cannot and does not guarantee that faculty will be evaluate by the same people who were colleagues when they were hire or last promoted. Faculty are not normally evaluated for tenure and promotion by former colleagues. And current colleagues should have the right to evaluate candidates for tenure and promotion. The administration's interpretation of the contract is presumably meant to reassure faculty by changing as little as possible about tenure and promotion. But this plan would violate the spirit as well as the letter of university policies and the current CBA with respect to tenure and promotion procedures.

⁵ https://chancellor.siu.edu/_common/doc/messages/state-of-the-university-9-26-17.pdf

⁶ This common language applies to most school proposals, but we have altered it since our earlier reviews (those for ESS, Computing, Biological Sciences, and Human Sciences).

treats all Faculty in that unit equitably. Appointed school directors will presumably have to rule on such discrepancies.

- Moreover, the plan does not guarantee that the interests of the smaller ‘division’—in this case, the Faculty and programs in Behavior Analysis and Therapy (BAT)—will be protected within the new school and its operating paper. In a 5/7/18 memorandum to the provosts, faculty in BAT note that “BAT has far fewer faculty than psychology (only four tenure-track), yet is very healthy in terms of extramural funding (about \$1.8 million), numbers of students (about 200), and productivity in research and scholarship.” BAT faculty therefore communicate that they “support an organizational model that ensures that [they] have an equal voice and representation in the new school that is proportionate to these performance indices.” While the plan recommends “consideration of operating paper language” that could help to protect BAT Faculty and their programs, and while the administration indicates that it “is committed to the programs involved in the school being equal partners,” the fact remains that a new school operating could be drafted—and approved—against the wishes of the Faculty in BAT, so long as this operating paper is approved by the majority vote of all Faculty in the new school and by the administration. (Conversely, the administration would be in a position to veto current provisions in operating papers even if new Faculty colleagues vote to include them.) In our view, the section on the organizational structure of the new school is thus not satisfactory.

B. Rationale

- The rationale for this particular merger is not unique to this plan, but is instead the same as the rationale for the other merger plans that make up the current restructuring scheme. The main rationale for the merger is “to create opportunities for greater collaboration among students and faculty . . . this plan aligns programs that relate to each other in order to foster synergy and innovation.” This language is common to the other plans for new schools.
- Equally troubling, the plan does not in fact explain why the proposed new unit should be a school and not a department.

C. Impact on Faculty lines and Faculty workload (including redistribution of work)

- The most serious impact on Faculty lines is likely to be the natural result of a school formed by merging two programs from one academic unit with a larger academic unit—a school which is then put under pressure by the chancellor to identify a single “top-ten” program. Again, there is nothing in the plan that ensures that the interests of BAT will be protected and promoted within the new school. Indeed, there are no provisions in the plan to guarantee the continued existence of the ‘divisions’ that would constitute this school.
- There is also the afore discussed issues of the plan’s promotion and tenure process; see Section I.3 of this review.

D. Impact on students and the ability to maintain the curriculum

- Because of the potential of one department or program being swallowed in slow motion by a larger one as a result of a merger, the CBA specifies that Program Change Plans should explain how Faculty would be afforded the “ability to maintain curricula,

particularly in the case of mergers.” Yet, this plan does not establish mechanisms that would protect the programs in BAT and ensure the delivery of their curricula long-term.

E. Financial costs

- The current plan would not produce any savings.

F. Comparison of similar programs at peer institutions

- The plan does not explain how the proposed merger of the Department of Psychology with programs in BAT will produce a unit “highly similar in terms of programs and focus to Departments of Psychology and Departments of Psychological Science at US research universities.” More problematic, perhaps, is the absence in this plan of any attempt whatsoever to explain why, first, there are in fact schools, rather than departments, of psychology at Clark U., Oregon State U., and Xavier U. and, second, how the existence of these schools should help faculty in the GS and FS to assess this program change plan. More research needed to be done here.

G. Possible consequences to the University’s Carnegie status

- The Plan states: “The proposed change will have no direct / explicit impact on the University’s Carnegie Status. However, one of the goals of the campus-wide reorganization plan (see point B) is to invigorate, enhance and expand Faculty research and creative activity by increasing synergy and collaboration. This includes the goal of expanding extramural grant / contract activity and increasing Ph.D. production. The reorganization plan will contribute to the broader institutional goal of increasing the University’s Carnegie Status to R1 (Highest Research Activity).” These goals are laudable, but this section of the plan is devoid of information, evidence, or argument. It would be much closer to reality to state that at this time there is no reason to believe that this plan will have any positive impact on the University’s Carnegie status. A carefully drafted plan would have addressed the actual consequences of this plan for the University’s Carnegie status.

CONCLUSION

Faculty in the units directly affected by this plan have voted in favor of it, yet there are number of problems with the plan in its present form:

- the plan leaves many questions about the ramifications of its implementation unanswered;
- the plan does not make clear how its implementation would help with recruitment and retention;
- the plan does not include mechanisms that would protect programs in BAT; and,
- the plan would run afoul of university policies and the CBA, particularly regarding promotion and tenure.

Many of the problems with this plan are likely due to the haste with which this plan and the others were developed. As we’ve noted in other reviews, the chancellor’s restructuring plans employ a cookie-cutter approach in which the same plan is applied to every unit on campus, whether it fits or not. Once again, we are told little or nothing specific about potential costs, impact on recruitment or retention, or the effect of the proposed plan on academic programs and

their continued viability. The plans are not so much specific proposals for actions as general templates for program mergers.

Faculty who are not in the habit of supporting major initiatives without specific argument or evidence may find it hard to support such plans. In this case, in addition to the general absence of evidence or argument that is endemic to these plans, we have seen that Faculty affected by the plan have themselves raised numerous questions about how the plan would work, questions that are not answered in the plan. Members of the GC and FS may wish to pursue answers to these questions—to know exactly what they are voting on and why—before casting final votes on this plan.