L&S Policy on Creating, Restructuring, or Discontinuing Departments, Programs, and Department-like Units

“A department shall consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests” (FP&P 5.01(A)).

As scholarly interests change over time, circumstances arise that require the faculty to reexamine the existing (or incipient) organization of the departments, programs, or other academic units with which they are affiliated. This introspection may lead to a request to substantially reorganize these entities to better reflect faculty interests. Faculty policy defines “substantial” change that warrants deep consultation: “Substantial restructuring includes, but is not limited to the merger of departments, the transfer of groups of faculty in or out of departments, and the establishment of department-like bodies” FP&P 5.01(A). When such reorganization is desired, FP&P dictates that it may proceed in a formal process that includes a period of study, development of clear recommendations, and approvals granted by the affected departmental/unit executive committees, College and University Academic Planning Councils, Chancellor, and Senate. Throughout the process, the unit is expected to consult extensively both with the Deans’ offices, the APCs, and others who may be affected by the change.

The following L&S policy on the Creation, Restructuring, or Discontinuation of Departments and Programs seeks to ensure that FP&P 5.01 is followed and that affected individuals are afforded an opportunity to engage in these discussions. In preparing recommendations for restructuring, four broad questions should be addressed concerning the substantial changes to departments, programs, and other “department-like” units:

1. Centrality: To what extent is the mission and purpose of the unit fulfilling a need that is central to the overall mission of the college and/or university?
2. Quality: What is the quality of the department or program?
3. Service: In what ways, and how well, does the department/program meet the needs of undergraduate and graduate students?
4. Cost effectiveness: To what extent is the department/program cost effective? If it is not cost effective, does the centrality of its role and quality of its performance (as conveyed in items 1, 2 and 3 above) outweigh the need to be cost effective?

If restructuring is desired, the answers to these questions may be incorporated in a memo to the Dean and L&S Academic Planning Councils. The memo should convey a candid response to these questions, and express clearly the rationale for change.

When the request is endorsed by the APC, the next step is to develop a plan to address practical matters related to the desired change. Since different situations will precipitate change and each situation will bring its own set of questions to be answered, there is no template for this plan; however, units are encouraged to consider several categories of issues that should be addressed:

- Governance and process (decision-making processes that allow all affected parties to participate in discussions about restructuring; adequate communication and consultation with stakeholders; careful attention to relevant campus policy);
- People (personnel, including untenured faculty, classified, and academic staff; students, current and former; other stakeholders, such as boards of visitors);
- Resources (financial and physical);
- Ongoing responsibilities (e.g., management of or revisions to academic programs, ensuring students’ ability to complete those academic programs; continued administration of grants and contracts); and
- Time (stages of implementation and deadlines for accomplishing them).
Requests for change will generally proceed through the following steps:

1. Conversations about department/program creation, restructuring or discontinuation will, in most cases, be initiated by the faculty; however, the dean may, after consultation with the Academic Planning Council, present a request that the faculty initiate these conversations.
2. In the event that these conversations lead to a decision that restructuring is warranted, the faculty should inform the Dean and APC via a memorandum seeking to create, restructure, or discontinue the department/program organization.
3. Consistent with FP&P 3.08 B.3 (b), the APC will invite the department chair or program director (or an appropriate member of the faculty in a leadership position) to be present at and participate in a discussion of the matter.
4. Following this discussion, the planning process should be undertaken in a period of not less than six months. (If circumstances suggest that a shorter period is both reasonable and desirable, by mutual agreement of the unit, the deans, and the APC, the “start date” for planning may be adjusted to include some portion of the discussion period preceding the memo.)
5. Development of the plan will be led by the program faculty. The faculty may designate leaders who will consult extensively with the Associate Dean and the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning as the plan is prepared.
6. During the planning phase, faculty representatives, the relevant Associate Dean, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning should negotiate with other APCs if needed.
7. When it is complete, the unit approves the plan and submits it to the Dean and the APC.
8. Per FP&P 3.08 B.3(b), appropriate representatives of the department/program faculty will be present and invited to participate in the APC discussion of the plan.
9. If the APC approves the plan, it is presented, with a description of procedures followed, to the UAPC. (If more than one APC is involved, all APCs should approve the same plan. If necessary, impasses between the APCs and/or deans will be adjudicated by the chancellor before the plan is sent to the UAPC for consideration.)
10. The UAPC will either approve the plan or return it for revisions.
11. When approved by the UAPC, the plan is presented to the Chancellor and to the Faculty Senate.

Given the gravity of a substantial reorganization of a department or department-like unit (including changes that create new, merge existing, eliminate, or transfer units to other schools/colleges), it is highly desired that a preponderance of the faculty and staff who are affected by the change desire (or at least, accept) the proposed change. While a simple majority vote may suffice for many important decisions, it may not be sufficiently compelling to justify such a substantial change. Units that are considering changes of this magnitude are encouraged to seek the greatest degree of consensus possible under the circumstances, and where consensus may not be achieved or where opinions are deeply divided, they should communicate with their Associate Dean to determine how best to proceed.

Questions about this policy and process should be addressed to the Dean, the Associate Dean, or to the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning.

Attachments: FP&P 5.01 and 5.02
5.01. DEPARTMENT.

A. A department shall consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests. A department shall be created, substantially restructured, or discontinued by the chancellor after consultation with the University Academic Planning Council, subject to the approval of the Board. Substantial restructuring includes, but is not limited to the merger of departments, the transfer of groups of faculty in or out of departments, and the establishment of department-like bodies. The University Academic Planning Council shall not make any recommendations to the chancellor without obtaining and considering the recommendations of the relevant college/school academic planning councils and deans. The school/college academic planning councils will seek recommendations and approval from affected departmental executive committees and affected individuals a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed actions. Recommendations concerning the establishment of new departments or the substantial restructuring or discontinuance of existing departments shall be reported to and discussed by the senate. Criteria applied to restructuring shall be developed (5.02) and related to the missions of the university and relevant schools and colleges.

B. Other groups may be designated by the chancellor, after consultation with the University Academic Planning Council and subject to approval by the Board, as equivalent to departments for any of the purposes of these rules.

C. Schools or colleges defined in 3.01. that are not organized into departments shall operate as departments or may, by vote of the school or college faculty, organize in other ways to fulfill the objectives of this chapter.

FP&P 5.02. DEPARTMENTAL RESTRUCTURING - GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA.

Broad guidelines for the substantial restructuring, creation or discontinuance of a department shall be developed by the University Academic Planning Council. Following these guidelines, each school/college shall develop its own criteria for the substantial restructuring of departments. The special needs of affected untenured faculty shall be considered. The procedures shall provide opportunities for the affected executive committee and faculties to consult with the school/college academic planning councils and the deans during all stages of restructuring consideration and implementation. If two or more affected school/college academic planning councils cannot reach consensus, the chancellor shall seek to negotiate an agreement in consultation with the University Committee.