

## Academic Affairs Restructuring Recommendation: CSUSM Community Website Comments

### Introduction

In October, Academic Affairs established a website to collect comments and feedback from members of the CSUSM community about the proposed restructuring of the university's instructional units. The purpose of these comments was to inform the Provost's final structure recommendation to the President. By the November 22 deadline, sixty individuals and groups had submitted their ideas online. Of these, just under a third were students (19) and slightly more than a third were individual faculty members, both tenure-track and lecturers (22). Six staff members and three administrators contributed feedback, as did two community members. Four groups, aside from the college/school governance groups, composed responses to the structure recommendation and submitted them to the website. Of the individual and group respondents who identified with a particular instructional unit, twenty-two were from the College of Education, nineteen from the College of Arts and Sciences, two from the School of Nursing, and two from the College of Business Administration.

	CoE	CoAS	CoBA	SoN	Other/NA	TOTAL
<b>Students</b>	12	4			3	19
<b>Staff</b>	3	1			2	6
<b>Individual Faculty</b>	7	10	2	2	1	22
<b>Group (excl. governance reports)</b>		4			1	5
<b>Community</b>					2	2
<b>Administrator</b>					3	3
<b>Other/Not Identified</b>					3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>60</b>

On November 29, Provost Cutrer convened a meeting, attended by members of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, the Academic Affairs Leadership Council, and college/school staff, to read the website responses and to identify key themes and issues. Based on that discussion, the Provost drafted a summary, which she distributed for feedback and corrections. The final summary follows. While no attempt has been made to respond to issues and concerns in the summary, the reviewers agreed that it was important to make a statement in this introduction about one concern voiced in several student responses—i.e., that restructuring would lead to the loss of faculty jobs and to fewer classes—and to assure the campus community that neither will occur. Indeed, the campus is preparing to embark on its largest round of faculty hiring in several years and has set aside funding to ensure that it can maintain our course offerings.

## Website Response Summary

The overarching theme in the sixty website responses was one of concern about the restructuring proposal and process, with more than half expressing opposition to the proposal itself. Most, though not all, of the respondents from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education expressed opposition, while respondents from the sciences, nursing, kinesiology, and human development were more favorably disposed to restructuring. Primary concerns included issues of (1) process, (2) rationale, (3) mission and culture of CSUSM, (3) cost, and (4) staffing/workload. At the same time, about a quarter of the respondents identified positive opportunities associated with the restructuring proposal, primarily opportunities associated with (1) external funding, (2) leadership transitions, (3) potential for future growth and development. Several individuals and groups offered suggestions about the proposed configuration of colleges. Although each of these subjects is discussed individually below, it is important to note that there is overlap among them and that a number of respondents discussed multiple issues in their comments.

Process: Concerns about process centered on several intersecting issues—shared governance, consultation, and the restructuring policy passed by the Academic Senate and recommended to the administration last spring. A number of contributors wrote that consultation has not been adequate and/or has been too rushed. As one respondent noted, “the proposed restructuring of Academic Affairs poses fundamental issues of process and shared governance in the University,” and this concern was echoed in several contributions. More specifically, several individuals referred to a policy drafted and approved by the Senate last year that developed a process by which Academic Affairs might go about restructuring. One individual indicated opposition to any restructuring until such a policy had been approved by administration and put in place. Another raised concerns that the Senate had not been properly apprised of administration’s concerns with the proposed policy and, in fact, believed that it had been acting at the Provost’s instruction. In a detailed set of quotations, that individual laid out what they saw as the Provost’s encouragement and support of the policy, only to see it rejected at the beginning of this year.

Another process issue raised in both negative and positive responses was timing. Numerous contributors indicated their perception that the timeline for accomplishing the tasks associated with restructuring is too short. As one wrote, “the timeline is, simply put, insufficient. In matters of deliberation, dedicated time is needed to explore fully the contours and ramifications of how colleges are restructured (not to mention all of the attendant policies and so forth that must be conceived anew.)” Another offered, “I don’t wish to drag things out, but believe that one additional year of self and external study would yield a much more thoughtful plan, and more important there would be significantly enhanced opportunity to develop a much broader level of faculty support with the reconfiguration.”

Rationale: Some respondents commented upon what they saw as the basic weakness of the proposal: its lack of a persuasive rationale for the recommended structural changes. Several students, for example, indicated that they did not understand why there should be any changes to the College of Education. A faculty member offered the opinion that the recommendation “reveals little thought, offers no educational rationale, and does not further the University’s mission.”

Mission and culture: Concerns for restructuring's impact on CSUSM's mission and culture ranged from broad philosophical concerns about the nature of the education that the university offers to issues of identity and relationships within the university community and with our broader community partners to questions about impact on curriculum and graduation requirements. One respondent, for example, indicated that the reorganization would weaken the College of Arts and Sciences and that this would send the wrong message about the importance of a liberal arts education. A faculty member from the College of Education echoed the concern that liberal learning is in peril of becoming a victim of restructuring. These faculty members also noted a national trend toward privatizing public education and warned that restructuring might contribute to that phenomenon at CSUSM. Several individuals also noted that discussions about reconfigurations had led to discord among faculty where it had not previously existed and expressed concern that such discord could prefigure interunit competition and also pose potential problems for interdisciplinary cooperation—both for existing and possible future programs.

One of the most often expressed concerns was about the College of Education and what might happen to its identity and culture if it joined with other programs in a newly configured College of Education, Health, and Human Services. Among the twenty-two respondents associated with CoE, more than half rejected the proposed configuration because of what they saw as the potential to dilute the college's mission to transform public education, to jeopardize carefully built, productive relationships with K-12 partners, and to weaken its reputation for quality. Several noted that a college that housed both education and nursing—careers that have been traditionally female—might be seen as a “women's college” to the detriment of its students and faculty. Others saw the problems that a broader college might create for specialized accreditations and licensing, particularly among student support staff. As one faculty member summarized their response, “I am concerned about the damage to the CoE internal community and both internal and external identity that may not ever be overcome.”

Cost: This issue appeared in a number of student and faculty comments. Some students expressed concern that restructuring was a cost saving measure that would mean the loss of faculty jobs and fewer course sections. (Please see response in the introduction.) The Academic Senate's Budget and Long Range Planning Committee (BLP) submitted a memorandum questioning whether or not the administration had fully thought through the costs beyond administrative salaries, where funding to cover additional costs might be found, and whether or not administrative costs would be funded at the expense of instruction. A faculty member pointed out that more new funds are being allocated to restructuring than to diversity initiatives, faculty and staff development, or student services. A concern in several comments was whether or not restructuring was a wise fiscal move in an uncertain budget environment.

Staffing/Workload: At least one staff member saw the reconfiguration as an opportunity to address staff workload issues. The Academic Senate's Budget and Long Range Planning Committee also pointed to the need for additional staff with restructuring. Several staff members and one administrator pointed out some of the staffing questions that would need to be dealt with—the case of staff members whose jobs might be split across college lines, additional workload associated with scheduling, the need for student support staff to have specialized knowledge. A recurring theme, as well, was the additional workload for faculty and staff during the

implementation period. At the same time, at least one staff member saw the reconfiguration as an opportunity to address staffing needs, which they believed were sometimes ignored because of faculty concerns.

Opportunities: A group of faculty from the science division submitted a memorandum to the website outlining what they saw as advantages of restructuring, including the potential for greater synergies and collaboration in curriculum and research, for hiring a dean with knowledge of science disciplines, and for external fundraising. (The faculty also acknowledged potential land mines to the success of a math and science college, which relate to concerns outlined previously, as well as their opposition to the restructuring process.) An individual faculty member from CoAS expressed the opinion that “our campus desperately needs to look and plan for the future and I believe that the organizational structure proposed by the Provost reflects the future areas of growth for our campus.” A member of the CoE faculty wrote that “I believe this restructuring effort presents a challenge and an opportunity for us to grow and to develop new ways to serve the community. . . . I believe that we can easily co-exist with the other two schools/departments if each of us can keep our identity and documents while we find commonalities and ways to collaborate.” A staff member pointed to the opportunity that leadership transitions offer and stated that “I also agree that with the two dean positions currently vacant now is the perfect opportunity to split the college in order to move our campus forward.”

Configuration: A number of respondents commented on the proposed configuration of the colleges, either expressing concerns about location of departments or offering specific suggestions for changes to the initial restructuring recommendation. The psychology faculty offered an analysis of their position as a department with ties to both natural and social sciences and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of the initial recommendation that they be part of the proposed College of Science and Mathematics. One faculty member suggested that thought be given to global education and its possible association with the College of Business Administration. College of Education faculty proposed alternate configurations with programs such as liberal studies, sociology, and psychology. Several faculty members recommended that the human development program move to the proposed College of Education, Health, and Human Services. The chairs/director of the kinesiology department, human development, and School of Nursing jointly submitted specific recommendations about the internal configuration of the proposed CoEHHS, including the establishment of schools—rather than departments—specifically a School of Education, a School of Health and Human Services, and a School of Nursing.

### Next Steps

The Provost is considering both the reports submitted through college/school governance groups (posted on the Academic Senate and Academic Affairs websites) and the restructuring website comments summarized in this document. She will submit a final recommendation to the President, who will announce her decision about college structure on December 10.