

Academic Reorganization Working Group

Initial Findings-May 20, 2021



The University of Vermont

Background

Fall 2019-Fall 2020



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Timeline

2019-2020: UVM Faculty Senate Financial and Physical Planning Committee (FPPC), President Suresh Garimella, Provost Patricia Prelock, and the Council of Deans, engage in conversations regarding UVM's academic organization

May 2020 FPPC puts forward a resolution recommending a reorganization planning process

May 2020: Provost Prelock charges Academic Organizational Restructuring Working Group (AORWG)

Summer 2020: AORWG gathers data and historical information about UVM's evolution and models different academic alignments considering cultural and budgetary implications

Summer-Fall 2020 Regular consultation with Senate President and Senate Executive Council to update progress

October 2020: AORWG presents initial findings to President Garimella and Provost Prelock

November 2020: AORWG presents UVM 2050 as a conceptual framework for campus conversations

UVM 2050: Four Different Models— Informed by History, Data, and Culture.

UVM 2050 was the distillation of the draft

[“ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONAL
RESTRUCTURING WORKING GROUP REPORT
TO PRESIDENT GARIMELLA AND PROVOST
PRELOCK OCTOBER 7, 2020,”](#) which

imagined four different ways of
approaching UVM’s academic alignments:

1. Do nothing—allow programmatic change and academic structure to evolve as it has for the last 10-15 years.
2. Keep the current administrative structure but encourage Deans to make changes within units.
3. Develop a restructured university by consolidating colleges and moving departments to address discrepancies in size and kind. Capitalize on research synergies and create efficiencies.
4. Comprehensively reorganize UVM with a minimal number of colleges keyed directly to the themes of Amplifying our Impact and UVM’s Academic Success Goals. Share responsibility for undergraduate education and student success.

REIMAGINING A UVM 2050

CATALYZING the impact of our students and our distinctive research and scholarly contributions,

PROMOTING a culture of inclusive collaboration across disciplines, and

SPURRING innovation at all levels.

AGRICULTURAL, BIOLOGICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

“Ensuring a healthy environment—meeting our needs without compromising our future.”

SOCIETAL HEALTH

“Promoting & delivering on our commitment to building healthy societies.”

ARTS, LETTERS & THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

“A liberal education at our core—thinking critically and solving real problems.”

CONSIDER POSSIBLE
COLLEGES THAT MIGHT
LOOK LIKE THIS . . .

ENGINEERING, BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

“Entrepreneurship in responding to 21st Century needs for a healthy environment and society.”

FACILITATORS

- Interdisciplinary research institutes
- Land grant mission/engagement
- Nontraditional education
- Inclusion and equity
- Improved business/service practices

UVM 2050: Resetting the Conversation

What we hoped:

UVM 2050 would serve as a *conceptual framework* that spurred people to discuss how their work fit within a university that displayed strengths in certain broad areas.

What was heard:

UVM 2050 is *the plan* for the university, and it is being imposed on units from above without consultation or collaboration.

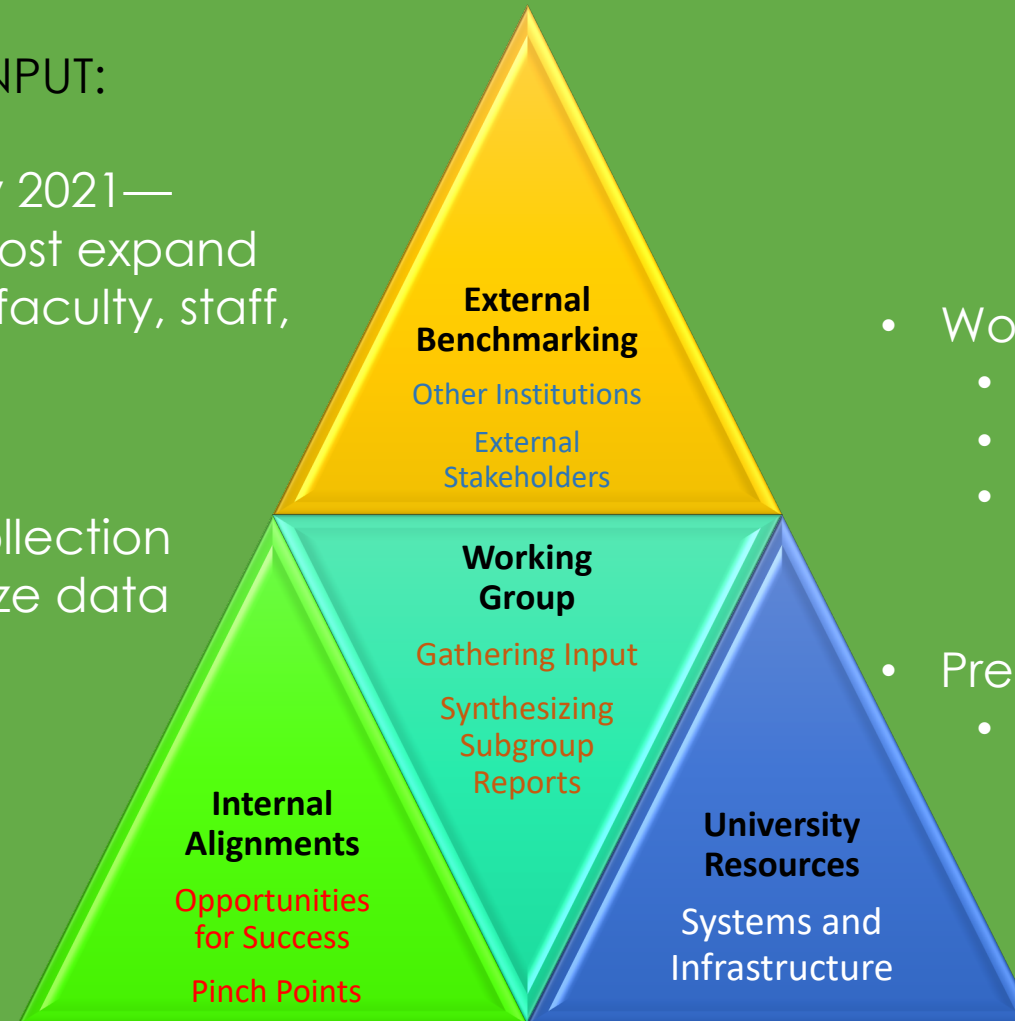
How do we reset the conversation?



2021—Expanded Academic Reorganization Working Groups

IN RESPONSE TO CAMPUS INPUT:

- December 2020-January 2021— Faculty Senate and Provost expand the working group to 22 faculty, staff, and students
- Expand timeline
 - Spring 2021: data collection
 - Summer 2021: analyze data
 - Fall 2021: present recommendations



- Working Group commits to:
 - Openness
 - Transparency
 - Multiple opportunities for input
- President and Provost affirm that:
 - There is *no* predetermined outcome

Campus Input

February 24-May 20, 2021

22 Working Group members

25+ Meetings, Open Forums, and information sessions

Groups ranging from 10 to 400 participants

Most themed meetings (6) have had 50-75 attendees

90+ responses on the Provost's reorg website

28 Breakout sessions during all-campus brainstorming session

~200 participants

10+ Proposals for structural change/maintaining status quo

Over 1000 different points of input

(Conservatively) over 1000 hours spent by working group members on the project.

What did we hear?

Initial Findings, spring
2021



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Recurring Question: Why Reorganize?

In May 2020, the Faculty Senate Financial and Physical Planning Committee brought forth a resolution recommending a new reorganization planning process, with the following key reasons to consider a new effort at reorganization. These included:

Enhancing the student experience.

Reducing complexity and redundancy.

Reducing barriers to student and faculty success created by the current university structure.

Increasing academic alignments that are contemporary and forward thinking and responsive to the [Amplifying Our Impact](#) strategic vision.

Reducing administrative costs.

Why Reorganize?

Enhancing the student experience:

- Current retention rates are 85% (lower than our peer and aspirants). Advising is inconsistent across (and sometimes within) units.

Reducing complexity and redundancy

- UVM has one very large college, six smaller schools and colleges, and a college of medicine, each of whom have undergraduate and graduate research and teaching in their portfolios. CAS needs to achieve flexibility and nimbleness to make strategic decisions and investments. Smaller colleges need critical mass to achieve potential.
- Numerous programs overlap and/or are duplicative.
- Need for coordinated strategic oversight for educational stewardship.

Why Reorganize?

Reducing barriers to student and faculty success created by the current university systems and structure

- SCH, F&A, and research support are not administered evenly across units.
- Academic alignments make collaboration, faculty development, and student mobility challenging.

Increasing academic alignments that are contemporary and forward thinking and responsive to the [Amplifying Our Impact](#) strategic vision

- While we have many outstanding faculty in their individual fields, we have few nationally ranked programs.
- UVM is currently ranked 118 in US News and World Reports; in 2011-12 we were ranked 82 (academic reputation is one factor).

Why reorganize?

The stakes of reducing barriers and promoting research collaborations are high: retention and research expenditures drive our reputation, our financial health, and our ability to deliver world-class education for our students.

While University systems need to be continually evaluated for their effectiveness, so too do the academic alignments that support student success and research productivity.

Reorganization is not about cutting programs. It is aimed at identifying areas of strength, aligning complementary programs, and investing in areas that correspond to our values and our potential.

Reorganization alone will not solve our structural budget challenges, but along with addressing systemic challenges, academic reorganization imagines how we can invest in our strengths for future success.

Things we've heard . . .

- Many areas of strength on campus and reasons to celebrate successes
- Lack of communication about program innovation and opportunities between (and sometimes within) units
- UVM's organizational and operational challenges are systemic and structural
- Areas of the university overlap and duplicate each other
- People are more eager to discuss and address administrative systems that need reworking
- People less eager to rework university structures
- Lack of familiarity with/embrace of Amplifying our Impact and Academic Success Goals
- Lack of consensus on pursuing R1 status
- Sense of lack of participation in administrative decision making

Things we've heard . . .

- Limited engagement with question of how DEI fits into academic organization
- Although overall campus participation has been broad, a smaller group of people have engaged consistently
- Could be better support for collaboration, cross-college research, and advising
- More coordinated support for graduate students and program development (including housing and wages)
- Strong appetite for more interdisciplinary research centers
- Hunger to consider work in the context of 'one university' with an investment in strength areas

Things we've heard: considerations for immediate impact

Establish consistent F&A and pre-and post award support across colleges

Initiate coordinated professional advising

Enhance focus on graduate student housing and support

Decouple undergraduate SCH and graduate and research expenditures to reduce competition.

Encourage Senate to take responsibility for academic stewardship & address overlap and redundancy

Engage BIPOC faculty more intentionally in reorganization conversation

Review and update as needed IBB algorithms to reflect (or account for) any new alignments following restructuring recommendations

Subgroups

Internal Alignments
External Benchmarks
University Resources



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Internal Alignments

Provided guidance for university communications

Met with VP for Research and Director of the Office of Institutional Research

Organized existing data pertinent to academic reorganization (NSSE data, climate study, etc.)

Provided guidance for the data collection process

Created facilitation guides for listening and brainstorming sessions

Helped determine themes for April brainstorming sessions

Ongoing: Developing strategy for data analysis and reporting

Ongoing: Providing analysis of program overlap

External Benchmarking

- **Process:** 550+ hours invested in this effort in group meetings, Focus Groups with alumni, donors & state legislators; related research and prep work; and Open Forums.
- **Resources compiled:** Data base of over 110 articles on restructuring @ other institutions; developed rubric for comparison.

Recommendations & Next Steps

- **Comparison with Other Institutions:** Apply rubric at university and unit levels for competitive analysis using overall objectives. As working group recommendations emerge, ask decision-makers: Why and how did they reorganize? With what outcomes?
- **Continue to revisit past restructuring efforts.** Each context is unique making it critical to learn from our past. Both positive and negative outcomes have emerged from University-wide/unit-wide initiatives.
- **Sponsorships & Donor Implications:** Before finalizing any restructuring, clearly understand implications for donor sponsored current funding and future possibilities.
- **Career Outcomes:** Degree programs should highlight clear-sighted career trajectories.
- **Regular Review of General Education Requirements** to ensure all UVM graduates have necessary skills for career success.
- **Tell UVMs Story Better Internally and Externally.** Focus on institutional strengths and uniqueness.
- **Strategically Position UVM as a Regional Hub** of world class education, research, arts, sports, and community. Use locational advantages year-round.

University Resources Subgroup Charge:

Analyzes and evaluates university infrastructure relative to our academic organization

Catalogues academic administrative tasks and services likely to be impacted by re-organization (Staff committee looking at non-academic administrative tasks and broader software impacts)

Identifies opportunities for more effective support for academic programs that would result from reorganization

Evaluates the financial impact of selected organization models

To date:

1. Put the tools in place to predict faculty / student / staff numbers for a college per a reorg model.
2. Put a financial tool in place to use #1 to develop financial impact for reorg model once we have one.
3. Created a labelled map to more easily see the location of depts and the impact of re-org on proximity.
4. Started a list of administrative impacts that will require resources (e.g. workload guidelines, college bylaws, RPT documents, etc.).
5. Developed a simplified way to look at the DE data and are preparing to do the same for the newest data.

Awaiting a model to begin analyses

Next Steps

May-October 2021



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The Next Six Months:

- Consult with Art and Science Group regarding findings (late spring)
- Determine adjustments to Working Group and Subgroups pending availability, workloads, etc. (late spring)
- Complete comprehensive qualitative analysis of data gathered this semester (summer)
- Consult with Deans regarding status of internal college/school program alignments (summer)
- Encourage Faculty Senators to conduct department/program-specific conversations (summer and fall)
- Communicate detailed findings with campus community & receive additional feedback (summer and fall)
- Present recommendations to Senate and Board of Trustees (October-November)