



TO: University of Vermont Faculty and Staff

FROM: Patricia A. Prelock, Provost and Senior Vice President

DATE: May 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Academic Organizational Restructuring Working Group

Early in the Fall 2019 semester, our deans and Faculty Senate Financial and Physical Planning Committee (FPPC) colleagues began discussing a reexamination of our academic organizational structure. Since then, they have been considering questions often raised in the past, but which now carry increased urgency: *Can we create administrative efficiencies and eliminate redundancies within and across academic units? Does our current structure enhance or impede the continued development of our research and curricular strengths? Could restructuring units create interdisciplinary synergies that are more contemporary and forward-thinking?* A consensus emerged that we are well positioned for meaningful change; our academic leadership team is committed to being a part of the institutional transformation they wish to see and our Faculty Senate leaders are open to collaborating and providing counsel throughout this process.

As the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic's financial impact on higher education became clear, the FPPC and the deans turned to the University's academic organizational structure with an eye for efficiency and effectiveness. A primary directive was how to approach restructuring while not losing our focus on ensuring student success, investing in our distinctive research strengths, and fulfilling our land grant mission. In response to requests from both leadership groups, I have appointed an Academic Organizational Restructuring Working Group to examine our current academic structure and propose possibilities for reorganization. Given the Honors College's interconnection with all of the academic colleges, I have asked David Jenemann to chair the committee. In addition, Bill Falls, Linda Schadler, Nancy Mathews, Jennifer Dickinson, Kirk Dombrowski, Alex Yin, and Shari Bergquist have agreed to serve on the Working Group as academic and operational leaders who can provide insights on the diverse benefits and impacts of reorganization.

Dean Jenemann and I also consulted with Senate President Thomas Chittenden and with the FPPC chairs, Don Ross and Jane Knodell, to ensure the Faculty Senate would be able to offer its input throughout the process. To capitalize on the expertise of the Faculty Senate Executive Council we established periodic points of contact throughout this past month and into the summer. This includes a special meeting of the Executive Council scheduled for late June to provide advice on the working group's preliminary recommendations.

The Working Group has been charged with delivering a set of recommendations for academic organizational restructuring that will:

- Reduce administrative costs, keeping paramount the overall strength of the institution;
- Identify options for organizational changes that better support faculty and students by reducing complexity, redundancy and other barriers to success;

- Increase academic alignments that are contemporary and forward thinking, with an eye towards enhancing both student outcomes and research productivity;
- Commit to a more inclusive and equitable institution; and,
- Promote the strategic imperatives identified in the Amplifying our Impact document, as well as our Academic Success Goals.

Our structure is fundamental to all that we do, and has evolved over a period of more than two centuries; its periodic review and recalibration is essential to our continued success. I recognize that the prospect of change can be difficult, particularly as we all face many uncertainties. To be clear, this is the beginning of a larger process. The group's role at this time is to propose possible scenarios and plans for a path forward, one that will include opportunities for campus input and reflection. As we pursue restructuring, we will employ a robust, transparent, and inclusive process to assess the working group's recommendations and evaluate their feasibility.

Following review by the Faculty Senate Executive Council, the working group will present its recommendations to the President and me by June 30. Based on our review, we will then announce next steps in the process. If you have any questions about the group's work, please don't hesitate to contact David Jenemann to share your thoughts.