Academic Structure Task Force
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Introduction:

Charge: The primary purpose of this task force is to discuss the question: How do units want to organize themselves in relation to the College of Design? As part of the process we will analyze structures in other UMN colleges as well those in other universities.

Tasks:
- Identify issues with current unit structure: survey and interviews
  Benefits and limitations
- Discuss the role and operations of a department
  Workload responsibilities
  Leadership
  Discuss governance at the unit and college levels
  Sustainability and accountability
- Explore alternative structures
  Consider both teaching and research/outreach
  Develop maps of possible structures

Our working questions
How do we create new kinds of models to preserve identity, promote autonomy and develop collaboration across the disciplines and units in the college?
How do we share? What can we share? How do we learn to share?

Recommendations:

In asking “How do units want to organize themselves in relation to the College,” feedback indicates two main structural challenges:

1. The units in DHA lack visibility
2. The College is split between two campuses

Our structural recommendations, therefore, are that 1) all programs in DHA become departments in name and identity, and obviously that 2) all departments in the college be located in a single building.

1. Programs in DHA become departments in name and identity.
Maintain the shared organizational and economic structure currently known as DHA. Figure out how to do this in an economically feasible way without massive changes in terms of time or money. There are issues of governance that would need to be resolved. Department directors should meet with DHA Chair/Head as a new administrative group. Departments should have a greater voice in shaping the their vision.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
There is value in having disciplines identified as departments. It increases identity both within the University and to those outside such as prospective students. What if each program becomes a department? This may be the best solution. Departments have better status within the University. What is required of programs? How can we change perception by having departments without massive internal changes? Can we develop a structure that creates departments for some activities and a unified unit for others for administrative efficiency? What about having chairs instead of heads for departments in DHA and heads for programs?
Programs need more flexibility and autonomy in spending. Programs need to have the ability to purchase some things without the procedural impediments of the current system. Each program should have a designated amount budgeted that can be used on a more immediate basis.

2. Space and equipment
We need to have a plan and timetable/schedule for the move into a single building that will house the College of Design.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
The College needs to holistically consider all aspects of a unit/program when deciding where to locate the physical and operational (finance, colleagues, staff support) resources of the program.

Apart from these two actual structural changes there is great interest among all those surveyed in changing the actual way we operate as a College, particularly in relation to how decisions are made. In our surveys, concern was often voiced over financial and decision-making transparency, concern over what seems to be valued in the College and the need to reevaluate what value and success might mean for individual units and also College-wide, the need for much more interdisciplinary opportunities throughout the college, the need to elevate the value of service in our College culture, and the need for the College and individual units to work together to identify, define, and communicate to all a clear vision of attainable goals and measurable outcomes.

3. Increase transparency regarding financial status of departments and programs
Faculty need to know why and how decisions are made regarding program and collegiate budgets.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
Income and expenditures should be disseminated as well as the annual budget including summary report totals of salaries for faculty, staff, graduate students, and adjunct faculty. Faculty should be included earlier on in the decisions regarding compact requests (even before the compact requests are formally invited by the University administration). Financial data are provided, but we need to know how decisions are made. There is a lack of transparency in how decisions are made. We need transparent procedures regarding finances and spending, appointments to committees and initiatives, and decisions about hiring. How do we communicate more effectively so that people feel more connected?

Student credit hours (SHC) should not be the only measure of success in the college. There seems to be a disconnect between the counting of SCH and other activities. Faculty are evaluated on research output; this is very different from SCH. Faculty are evaluated via the department’s 7-12 document; SCH data is only a portion of the data needed to examine teaching costs and benefits. What about other issues such as contributions to the discipline?

4. Work towards equity
Educate people about the value of the teaching and research that occurs in all units of the college. Re-evaluate what is valued and considered successful in the college.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
Every unit has value, but many units do not feel valued by the College. How is value established and communicated? How are teaching, research, outreach, and service measured on both an individual and program level? Feelings and perceptions regarding behavior, conversations, and equity among the faculty is an issue. Two questions arose during this discussion:
   a. Is there a structural reason that causes or contributes to conflicts?
   b. How can we foster open and honest dialogue that contains different opinions without having conflict or misperceptions?
3. Increase interdisciplinary teaching and research
Increase flexibility in course scheduling, pre-requisites, course level (i.e., 3xxx, etc.), and room in major programs for electives. Reduce impediments that keep students from taking courses that would be interdisciplinary if students from across the college take them. Provide collegiate incentives for interdisciplinary work.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
The college needs to work to reduce impediments to interdisciplinary activities and courses. The difference in class times between campuses and the modular system in Architecture need to be adjusted to allow students to take courses outside of their major.

5. Value service
Elevate the value of service among other responsibilities (e.g., teaching, scholarship) to the college. Leadership opportunities need to be equally shared.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions
College citizenship as service on university, college, and departmental committees varies widely in the college. There seem to be two opposing views. One is that service in a civic responsibility to our community. As a citizen of the university we are obligated to devote a portion of our time and attention to service. A competing viewpoint is a sense of malaise that committees don’t really make a difference and so why bother with them. Is there something in the college structure that does not engender a healthy attitude toward service? Toward research? There needs to be a better match between ability and assignments. Many of us have not had the leadership experience that develops needed skills.

6. Identify clear goals regarding College initiatives and events.
Clear goals and sustained effort are needed.

Summary of Task Force’s discussion and questions:
The College needs a consistent focus over time. At this time we seem to change our focus every year or two. Focusing on the quality of specific goals is more important than following trends. If we shift ideas or goals too fast it is difficult to resolve issues.

We need to be concerned about the balance between effectiveness and the issue of equitable resources. Measureable outcomes must be identified.

Who is asked to participate often seems arbitrary and the same people seem to be asked time and again which raises the question of why are these people are usually involved? Initiatives should be tracked to identify who is working on initiatives or events, if interested people are involved and how the outcomes are achieved. Also, how do the various initiatives integrate across the college?