

SOAN Response to Provost's questions regarding realignment

The majority (70%) of our department prefers to keep the academic structure as is and remain in a College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences. In general there is concern that the graphic presented suggests an implicit value being placed on academic departments, with the more “sexy” or money making programs literally being placed on the top of the chart. The social science category appears to be more of an afterthought given that three of the included programs are more interdisciplinary than social science per se, one doesn't fit at all (i.e., Journalism & Technical Communication), and several departments that could (should) be considered solidly in the social sciences (e.g. Communications Arts and Sciences, Economics, and Psychology) are not in the grouping. Several of our faculty indicated that the category being called “social science” was more of a potpourri than a meaningful grouping. If one of the goals of smaller colleges is to increase fund raising by creating more coherent collective identities, the suggested break downs do not appear to work well for us.

Questions for Academic Departments:

1. How do you think an academic re-org, like the ones in the graphic, would impact your department – both positively and negatively – in terms of the following enrollment-related topics? Please explain.
 - a. Student recruitment
 - b. Student retention
 - c. Student graduation rates

We are happy to support policies that increase enrollment and retention. However, we do not have either factual or theoretical basis from which to evaluate these questions. Simply put, we do not understand how a realignment will have the touted effects. If evidence exists, we would be eager to see it. We are concerned about policy being made on the mere hope that realigning programs will increase recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. We simply do not know enough about the issue, nor has it been adequately conveyed to us.

On the other hand, there are ways that the university could assist with recruitment, retention, and graduation rates which involve hiring more student related support services, both academic and personal. For example, our students often complain that the various tutoring services on campus don't provide support specifically needed by sociology or anthropology students (e.g. SPSS, professional citation methods, knowledge of theory and methods, etc.).

We are also concerned that realigning will consume valuable campus space. Our departmental retention efforts would be better served by creating more student centered locations than extra Dean's offices. We are in need of additional departmental space for spearheading projects that could both draw and retain students (e.g., Human Identification Lab, expanded area for survey research projects, more inviting student hang-out/study space, etc.).

2. How do you think an academic re-org, like the ones in the graphic, would impact your department – both positively and negatively – in terms of the following identity-related topics? Please explain.
 - a. Professional recognition
 - b. Department reputation/image
 - c. Department revenue
 - d. Program accreditation

Some of our concerns on this topic are expressed in our opening paragraph. While sociology and anthropology primarily identify as social sciences¹, many of the other departments in our category do not. We are not so much concerned that this will impact our standing within our respective professions, but rather that it indicates that MSU does not understand what we do and that will potentially impact distribution of resources or the veracity with which a Dean of “social science” could advocate for us. We also have concerns that biological anthropology might get overlooked as they are a STEM. It is already the case that they were not given lab space in the science building, I am told this was an oversight. But that is exactly our concern.

3. How do you think an academic re-org, like the ones in the graphic, would impact your department in terms of the following internal university topics? Please explain.
 - a. Voting representation (such as on Faculty Senate and Council of Chairs & Directors)
 - b. Collaboration with other departments

It is possible that being in the same college could help with collaboration, though we currently work with programs across and within colleges. Ultimately it would depend on if separating into smaller divisions created a situation where people closed ranks in order to protect their resources or felt working together is the best route. It has been our experience that some of the larger departments tend to close ranks and the smaller ones are more willing to work with each other (regardless of which college they belong to). We feel that our representation on Faculty Senate (which is currently allotted by department size) and council of chairs (which is currently 1 rep per department) should not be impacted by restructuring per se. It is possible, however, that as part of a smaller college we might receive more individualized attention from the Dean, but if a large portion of their job will be fund raising, then perhaps they will still have less time regardless of the number of departments that they represent.

¹We would like to note that anthropology also contains a biological component that fits squarely in the natural sciences.

4. Are there current projects or projects in the planning stages that you feel would be disrupted by an academic re-org? Please explain.

Potentially – we are in the middle of putting together an MOU between CLAS and Tokyo Metropolitan University (TMU). Ultimately we would like to extend this to the University level, in which case the restructuring would not present an issue. We have interest from programs all across campus, not just CLAS.

5. Are there specific policies or procedures that your department uses that reference or use the current school/college structure? How would they be impacted by an academic re-org?

None that we can think of.

6. Does your *department* currently engage in external fundraising? Do you think an academic re-org into smaller colleges (such as the 7 shown in the graphic) would impact fundraising for your department? How about for your college?

No and it is not likely to impact fundraising.

7. Using the graphic re-org as a point of discussion, how would your department feel about being in the 5-college version? In the 7-college version? Should MSU Denver continue down the path of collegiate restructuring, where do *you* think your department belongs? [Remember, these are being put forward as models to promote discussion. They are not finalized plans being voted on.]

Our opening paragraph speaks to this question