
MSU DENVER – THEATRE DEPARTMENT

TO: PROVOST VICKI GOLICH
FROM: SCOTT LUBINSKI, CHAIR OF THEATRE
SUBJECT: RESTRUCTURING FEEDBACK
DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2018

Provost Golich,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the proposal to restructure the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, as well as other areas within the University. It is a privilege to have the voice of the faculty heard as part of the conversation.

The brief comments below reflect not only conversations within our department, but conversations with the collective Chairs of CLAS and discussions with peers both inside and outside of MSU Denver. Any changes will certainly impact our future in anticipated and unanticipated ways. As we work to change our school's destiny one step at a time, we hope to insure our steps to change are not so large and overreaching, as to unintentionally shift our culture too dramatically. Certainly, we need to be in step with current economic and political resources, but, nevertheless, the process of change brings with it an atmosphere of thrill and delight as well as one of fear and trepidation. It will be our continuous and methodical efforts that will unlock our greatest potential and any building must be intentional and fully explored. It is with these ideas in mind that our responses are listed below.

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 restricting of any kind may be important to the way the University manages and runs, but at the end of the day, whether our students are aware of the need for change remains to be realized. Their expectations are about receiving a quality education, a balanced atmosphere and an embracing culture. As to whether a smaller unit (school or college) truly makes it easier to navigate a path to degree completion remains to be seen.

The clearest component that can be seen positively and negatively – is how departments are currently funded vs. how they will be funded in the future. This can directly impact our enrollment and retention efforts. Our CLAS departments currently collaborate in healthy and various ways and any shift in the way these collaborations are funded may impact their future and financial viability.

Our goals as a university has always been to 'attract a diverse student population'. Without having direct knowledge as to how smaller college directly impacts this – I'm not sure I can

address this. Perhaps being a smaller unit (school or college) may align the educational mission of that unit, there may be more clarity as a result.

- 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.**

Over the past years – there has been several attempts to align music, art, and theatre into a “college of the arts”. Both attempts (to my knowledge) have been unsuccessful in realizing the collaborative efforts of all three department. Having a school of the arts could directly impact our identity to our students, our faculty and to our mutual fundraising efforts. Each of the ‘art’ departments currently collaborate with each other without the definition of being a ‘school of the arts’. I am hopeful that any realignment will not prevent this collaboration. Being identified as a ‘school or college of the arts’ will most likely impact efforts to raise outside monies in support of those departments.

- 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.**

Any realignment will have consequences (intended and unintended) if the scenarios for change are not fully explored in initial conversations. A few examples would point to senate representation and to all college- or university-wide committees where a CLAS representative currently holds a seat on a committee. With many proposed colleges, there would be the need to address committee makeup in our current culture of shared governance.

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

If there were to be a significant shift in funding planning as a result of restructuring – then this may cause the need for a re-evaluation of all of our projects, especially our productions. If any realignment impacts our ability to receive funding from the SAB, then our program would be impacted dramatically. Art, music and theatre currently seek funding from the SAB individually. If a realignment impacted the nature of that relationship, then any and all upcoming events and projects could be jeopardized.

- 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?**

Any restricting would directly impact our structures of shared governance. For those committees that are only directed at the departmental level – there would be little change. For any committee or task force beyond the department, there would be significant change. The impact of those changes would be hard to predict.

- 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?**

One area of our external fundraising that exists is tickets sales for our productions (one dollar of every ticket sale is designated for student travel scholarships). We also have general giving that can be designated to the theatre department by choice of the donor. Our current endowed scholarship (The Marilyn Hetzel Endowed Theatre Scholarship) recently was able to provide a scholarship to a student last year. We are current in the process of identifying a recipient for this year. For the building of the endowment, we held several donor events to raise the \$25,000 minimum. There are no immediate plans for major fundraising events in the recent future.

A large portion of our fundraising is tied to our funds that are gained through SAB. Should the restructuring in any way impact this process, it would greatly cripple our ability to fund our four annual productions, as SAB is the primary source to pay for the cost of building sets, costumes, props, the hiring of contract designers, etc.

In the arts (used generally to include music, art, theatre, and dance), externally there may be some competition for funds. Donors tend to give directly to their passion. A donor who currently gives to music programs is less likely to give to art and/or theatre programs. Each area then is essentially competing for the same donor funding dollar externally. Should there be a realignment to create a school or college of the arts, the impact locally is unknown. Research into national trends may provide the needed information to formulate the best plan to support all the arts programs equitably.

Additionally – it is unknown how a restricting would impact the availability of faculty lines and administrative positions.

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?

Discussions with our faculty have been primarily focused on aligning the arts (music, art, and theatre). Faculty also suggested an alignment with the English department as the direct crossover with script writing and development, poetry, and studies in classical literature (Shakespeare, Moliere, etc.) are very closely associated with the performing arts.

Faculty are concerned with the equitability of funding across all the arts. All smaller departments within CLAS that are dependent upon the equitable sharing of funds is necessary to their success. Since any realignment potential takes aim at this funding structure, tensions tend to be running high surrounding the topic.