



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

ACADEMIC REORGANIZATION STEERING COMMITTEE

TO: Provost Steven Moser

FROM: Jeff Wiggins - Chair, Academic Reorganization Steering Committee

DATE: October 19, 2017

RE: Reorganization Committee Progress Update

Provost Moser,

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of faculty and staff across the university, the academic reorganization implementation effort is proceeding effectively and impressively. As Week 5 of committee work comes to a close, I am pleased to inform you that the faculty and staff groups have been taking their charges seriously, working to identify key elements of the new structure that require adjustment, striving to realize a Vision 2020 for the reorganization, and making progress through creativity which is certain to bring positive change to Southern Miss.

To recap: on September 15, 2017, the four committees—the Academic Reorganization Steering Committee, the Academic Structure and Evaluation Committee, the Faculty Governance and Representation Committee, and the Academic Staff Structure Committee—received their charges. Each had specific tasks to guide the first phase of Vision 2020: The Plan for Academic Reorganization, with these aspirational goals in view:

- Design evaluative practices that allow for greater flexibility and innovation as we recognize and expand upon the strengths in our community;
- Increase our ability to respond to changes in the external environment, particularly appropriation rescissions and/or reductions; and
- Attain administrative coherence, consistency in practice across disciplines, and opportunities for collaboration from arts to sciences and in professional programming.

The charge for the Academic Reorganization Steering Committee (ARSC) is to guide the committees in identifying key elements of structure, evaluation, shared governance, and representation that must be defined or revised with the reorganization. ARSC adopted a process to generate pre-proposals and full proposals to address those elements, and two ARSC members serve on each committee as *ex officio* members, facilitating communication as necessary. By the end of the semester, these activities will coalesce into a **series of recommendations** by the ARSC. Key milestones towards this goal include:

- Sept. 15 – 22: Committees Charged and Preliminary Planning
- Sept. 25 – Oct. 13: Committees Define Proposal Scope and Submit Pre-Proposals
- Oct. 20: ARSC PRELIMINARY Feedback to Committees Complete
- Oct. 23 – Nov. 17: Committees Finalize Full Proposals

- Nov. 22: ARSC FINAL Feedback to Committees Complete
- Nov. 30: Committees Submit FINAL Recommendations and Proposals to ARSC
- Dec. 18: ARSC Submits Recommendation to the Provost

Although ARSC has recommended general guidelines for the proposals, the committees have been encouraged to determine both the scope of proposals and the manner in which they are developed. Each committee has established a unique organizational structure to address the charges, adopted best practices for communications, and developed procedures by which to engage external participation and experts as needed. So, the hard work has truly begun. My perception is committee members are thinking big, putting the future of the university ahead of personal or local agendas, coming together with a cross-functional purpose, and working through the challenges which naturally arise when large-scale change is in process. ARSC is currently reviewing ten pre-proposals, and anticipates receipt of several more in the coming weeks. Current topics by Committee include:

Academic Staff Structure Committee

1. Academic School Staff Operations Manual
2. Maximizing Operational Efficiency in Academic Processes

Academic Structure and Evaluation Committee

1. Annual Evaluations of Faculty Performance
2. Vision 2020 Faculty Handbook
3. Promotion and Tenure Criteria

Faculty Governance and Representation Committee

1. Uniform College Level Documents
2. Enhancing Faculty Involvement in the Selection of Academic Leaders
3. Standing Committee Definition and By-laws
4. Aligning Faculty Governance and Representative Bodies with Vision 2020
5. Developing School-level Policies and Procedures

I am confident that all the committees will remain focused and work diligently over the next six weeks to continue the aspirational goals for addressing the question, *“What can we do within our existing resource realities to highlight our strengths, cultivate creativity, and distinguish ourselves as an institution?”* Bringing varied perspectives, experiences, and expertise to bear, the committees are forging ahead with conviction to identify meaningful and innovative organizational change that will enhance our institutional mission, values and identity and take academic affairs at USM into the future.

