Faculty of Education
Academic Restructuring
Interim Report
February 2021

University of Alberta for Tomorrow Vision

The University of Alberta has embarked on a period of major transformation, building on its long history of leadership in the province and in Canada's post-secondary sector. The pressures facing the U of A today are significant and we must take urgent action. With fundamental systemic reform, we can set a bold new direction for the university of tomorrow. We can strengthen our core teaching, research, and community engagement mission and enrich student experiences, while addressing the current funding crisis. Together, we can renew and grow the U of A's global leadership in higher education and research, and drive even greater social and economic growth, innovation, and creativity for the public good of the province and beyond.

Education for the Public Good

In our Strategic Plan *Education for the Public Good*, the Faculty of Education advances a vision to be a flourishing, diverse and sustainable Faculty that excels, innovates and transforms society through high quality, meaningful teaching, research and service. As a means of advancing this vision, objectives specific to our structures, processes and resources are articulated. Of particular note is a commitment to review our current departmental organization with the aim to create efficiencies, improve stewardship of our human and financial resources, and strengthen teaching and research synergies across all program areas.

The Case for Academic Restructuring

The backdrop of our strategic objective is the *University of Alberta for Tomorrow* (UAT) initiative, which has arisen out of the need for profound change due to budgetary pressures faced by the institution. Aligned with our core mission of research and teaching, the structures and infrastructures currently in place at the University that make our work in the Faculty possible are undergoing a process of transformation. Within the Faculty of Education, our current academic structure has occasionally created barriers to collaboration and interdisciplinarity, and has required significant, and at times inequitable, investment of resources at the local level.

Given our strategic commitments, budgetary pressures, an academic hiring 'freeze', along with significant institutional change, we are at a critical point in the Faculty. We have an opportunity to think innovatively and creatively about our academic and administrative support structures, to strengthen teaching, research and service, and to ensure a high quality and meaningful student experience across all of our programs. However, this requires that we think differently about how we use our existing resources. Importantly, academic restructuring is not the restructuring of our programs (majors, minors, certificates, graduate specializations, curricula).

Guiding Principles

- Attention to the core values as articulated in *Education for the Public Good*
- an inclusive, supportive and transparent process of consultation
- recommendations for structural change are data-informed and future-focused
- considerations of equity, diversity and inclusion are core to the process
- financial considerations will be balanced with attention to high quality student experiences and advancing a rich and respectful working and learning environment
- innovation, collaboration and creativity
- adhere to governance processes, procedures and collective agreements
- retain talented staff
- maintain excellence and integrity of academic programs

Consultation and Feedback

- 4 DRAFT scenarios for Academic Restructuring circulated to faculty, staff and students in November
- 47 electronic responses to the DRAFT scenarios received in December & January
- 3 Round Tables: December 9th, December 17th, January 7th with approximately 200 participants
- 1 Support Staff Town Hall, January 11th, approximately 53 participants
- 5 drop-in Zoom conversations – 2 undergraduate student sessions; 1 graduate student session, and 2 open sessions in January & February
- Small group breakout conversations, February 2nd Education Faculty Council

Overall, the feedback demonstrated an understanding that academic restructuring within the Faculty is necessary (per Objective 29 in *Education for the Public Goo*d) and that it represents an opportunity to break down silos, strengthen collaborations, and enhance program delivery. However, many important questions were raised through consultation which this report aims to answer.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is the problem we are trying to solve?

   Budget:
   - *Since 2017, the Faculty of Education operating budget has decreased by **20%** and the Government of Alberta has signaled continued budget reductions for the University of Alberta in fiscal 2021 & 2022 in addition to the $127 million cut already incurred.*
   - *In order to manage these significant financial reductions, the University is transforming administrative services and academic structures.*
   - *Through SET, there will be 1100 fewer staff supporting the University of Alberta by the end of 2022.*

- *In the Faculty of Education, a 20% reduction in the number of FTEs by the end of 2022 means that we have to think differently about how we work and how we are structured in order to maintain a high-quality student experience.*
- *Academic restructuring within the Faculty allows us to combine and focus our existing resources on supporting students and supporting our core mission of teaching and research.*

Greater Cohesion
- *Separate from the reality of budget cuts, and in the context of our strategic planning process in 2017-2018, faculty and staff expressed the need to break down existing silos in the Faculty, silos that were felt to be a function of the current academic structure.*
- *Faculty, staff and students expressed a desire to consider different ways of organizing ourselves academically, to explore opportunities for synergies and collaborations across the Faculty, program areas and specializations. Academic restructuring presents new possibilities for interdisciplinary research collaborations across program areas and specializations, and opportunities for teaching across programs.*
- *The Undergraduate Program Review (2017-2018) also identified challenges in delivering the teacher education program across four departments. Again, academic restructuring creates opportunities for responding to and mitigating these challenges.*

Thus, we are attempting to solve both budget and organizational challenges as we propose new academic and administrative structures that aim to keep our core mission of teaching and research front of mind by creating structures that support these in a context of significant cost cutting.

2. Why can't we leave things as they are?

- *We will have 20% fewer staff in the Faculty by the end of 2022.*
- *Our budget reductions since 2017 mean that we are working with 25% less over a five-year period.*
- *If we do not seek to change in innovative and creative ways, we are in danger of diminishing the quality of the student experience and the supports available for teaching and research.*
- *Making incremental changes year after year to manage budget reductions is akin to death by a thousand cuts.*
- *There are also certain factors outside the Faculty that we have no control over but must respond to. These will result in substantial changes across the institution and within the Faculty.*

3. Does Faculty Leadership have a preferred model already in mind?

   No. The four draft scenarios were created at the request of Education Faculty Council. Members of DAC see the possibilities and challenges of each scenario and have consistently expressed an openness to other ideas.

4. How will academic restructuring impact / change programs?

   - *Programs will not be changed if our academic structures change but they may be relocated (similar to the relocation of the MACE program when the academic function of Extension was dissolved in June 2020).*
   - *Academic changes to programs require the adherence to governance processes, including UAAC and GAAC endorsement.*
   - *The Undergraduate Program Renewal process has been underway since 2018 and the Graduate Program Review with corresponding recommendations was completed in 2020. Currently, under the leadership of the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, a process to consider changes to graduate programs is underway, which involves extensive consultation and appropriate governance processes.*

5. How were the scenarios suggested?

   As noted previously, Education Faculty Council requested that the DAC create draft scenarios for academic restructuring for consideration and feedback. The DAC drew on feedback generated through the Faculty Strategic Planning process, the Thought Exchange data from the August retreat and informal conversations with faculty and staff. The DAC does not have a preferred outcome and there is diversity in the perspectives of members of the DAC with respect to the four scenarios.

6. What will happen to students if an academic reorganization takes place?

   The home department of graduate students may change, depending on where programs are situated, but students will continue in their programs as they are now. The undergraduate program is a Faculty-wide program and students will continue to be supported as they progress through their degree, regardless of academic structure.

7. Where will staff be situated in a restructured faculty?

   This is a detail that needs to be worked out depending on the academic structure endorsed by the Education Faculty Council, and dependent on what functions shift to the College and SET. If a departmental structure is maintained, there will need to be staff situated within the departments to provide the necessary administrative support including

programmatic support. If a non-departmentalized structure is endorsed, then staff will be situated within a Faculty Office and various Associate Dean portfolios.

8. How will faculty members maintain a sense of belonging in a non-departmentalized structure?

   Sense of belonging is important regardless of academic structure. Thus, the creation of communities of practice is one mechanism whereby a sense of belonging can be established regardless of academic structure. Program areas (already in existence) are another mechanism that shapes a sense of belonging in a non-departmentalized structure, as do opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations.

9. What cost savings are associated with each scenario?

   Moving from five to two departments approximates cost savings as follows:
   - *Reduction in 3 Chairs = $144,000 (course release); $18,000 (administrative stipends); $25,000 (GRA Support)*
   - *Reduction in 5 Associate Chairs = $120,000 (course release); $15,000 (administrative stipends)*
   - *Reduction in 4 FTE Staff positions (accounted for in SET reductions) = $350,000
     Total = $672,000

   Moving from five to no departments approximates cost savings as follows:
   - *Reduction in 5 Chairs = $240,000 (course release); $37,500 (administrative stipends); $25,000 (GRA Support)*
   - *Reduction in 9 Associate Chairs = $216,000 (course release); $27,000 (administrative stipends)*
   - *Reduction in 4 FTE Staff positions (accounted for in SET reductions) = $350,000
     Total = $895,500

   However, a non-departmentalized structure may require the creation of additional leadership positions at the Faculty level to provide the necessary supports for teaching, research, and service. Thus, the total savings would not be significantly greater than those achieved by maintaining a department structure.

   * It is important to note that some functions may move from the Faculty to the College which may impact staffing & budget across the faculty.

10. Will the Departments be consulted concerning the naming of new units? How will decisions concerning Chairs or Directors be confirmed?

    Yes. It became very clear in the feedback that this is important, and that the Departmental names assigned in the DRAFT Scenarios were causing consternation /

concern. If we can agree on the organization of programs within a departmental structure, then the newly formed departments should play a central role in determining their names.

With respect to the selection of Chairs and Directors, the process as set forth in UAPPOL must be adhered to. Thus, a selection committee would be struck. For more information, please refer to the UAPPOL policy:
https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Procedures/Department-Chairs-Selection-Procedure.pdf

11.   Why were Centres and Institutes included in some scenarios but not others?

This was an oversight. However, Centres and Institutes are core to the work of the Faculty and transcend departmental structure. They are currently governed per UAPPOL with oversight by the Vice Dean. For more information, please refer to the UAPPOL policy:
https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Procedures/Academic-Centres-and-Institutes-Operation-Procedure.pdf

Summary

Change is never easy, and there were many expressions of concern through the consultation about the depth, breadth and pace of change at the U of A. However, there was overwhelming recognition that change can be beneficial in the short, medium and long term, especially as it strengthens our work as a Faculty in the midst of diminishing resources.

The consultation feedback revealed:

- that each of the four scenarios presented both opportunities and challenges;
- that considerable work would need to occur in any transition to a new structure;
- an overall preference amongst faculty, staff and students to maintain the departmental structure given our size and complexity;
- agreement that the role of Department Chairs and Associate Chairs in day-to-day decision making and in the provision of day-to-day support is preferable;
- the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs are core to our work as a Faculty and can function regardless of our academic structure;
- governance structures will need to be carefully considered and adjusted accordingly;
- we need to be future-focused as a Faculty, given the immediate challenges facing the institution;
- the importance of balancing financial considerations while maintaining high quality student experiences;
- a desire to enhance a culture of respect in a restructured faculty;
- a commitment to maintaining excellence and the integrity of our academic programs; and
- recognition that regardless of how we restructure ourselves academically, we are all members of the Faculty of Education.

Next Steps:

Given the preference to maintain a departmentalized structure, the next step is to determine how to situate programs/specializations in two rather than five departments. To that end, proposals will be solicited from each program/specialization that identify: 1). what other programs with which they would like to be co-located; and, 2). A brief rationale (more details to follow).

These proposals will be submitted to and reviewed by the DAC, who will use them to design a revised proposal for Academic Restructuring for the consideration of faculty, staff and students. Given necessary governance processes and timelines, potential endorsement would occur at Education Faculty Council in April.

The following list reflects our current program areas / specializations in the Faculty of Education:

- Elementary Education
- Secondary Education
- School of Library and Information Studies
- Social Justice and International Education
- Adult, Community and Higher Education
- Indigenous Peoples Education
- Education Administration and Leadership
- TESOL
- School & Clinical Child Psychology
- Counselling Psychology
- School Counselling
- Psychological Studies in Education
- Measurement, Evaluation & Data Science
- Special Education
- Technology in Education

*ATEP is not included in this list as they exist outside of the departmental structure.