Cornell Social Sciences Review
Summary of Faculty Feedback on Organizational Structures
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Introduction

In this document, we briefly report on the faculty feedback we received on organizational structures over roughly the last year (based on the Organizational Structures Report). We have intentionally kept this document brief in the interest of providing an informative but not exhaustive summary of the conversation to this point. We have provided the Provost with this summary, and he now also has the reports from the Ideas Committee and Administrative Structures Committee.

1. **Overview of activities**. In this section we provide a summary of our activities and efforts over the fall semester to give a sense of the scope and depth of our interactions with faculty. In addition to the seven open meetings we held in the fall of 2018, we also had a series of lengthy email exchanges and many informal meetings with individuals, small groups, and departments. We interacted with the following groups (sometimes multiple times) through a combination of email exchanges, informal conversations, and formal conversations:
   a. Anthropology
   b. Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (including the Field of Public Affairs)
   c. Communication
   d. Dyson School
   e. Economics
   f. Government
   g. Human Development
   h. Industrial and Labor Relations
   i. Policy Analysis and Management
   j. Psychology
   k. Sociology
   l. Current social science center directors
   m. "Future" social science center directors

   There were also additional units and departments represented in the seven formal meetings, including Development Sociology, Science and Technology Studies, Neurobiology and Behavior, and Global and Public Health Sciences, among others.

   We met in a small group with most of the directors of the topical centers on campus, as well as with a small (and certainly not exhaustive) group of midcareer faculty who we identified as likely future center directors. We also met individually with a number of vice provosts and deans.

Over the semester, we received 8 white papers, most of which were presented at the recent series of formal meetings. Those that were not presented were either more about implementation or were sufficiently rough that the authors did not feel that presenting them in the open meetings would be productive for the group.

In order to allow the authors of white papers to retain control over their distribution—or to retain anonynomity if they desired—we have not released any white papers to faculty unless the faculty member(s) who drafted them have provided permission for us to do. We see this as facilitating interaction while making sure that faculty who express controversial ideas would only be associated with those ideas if they wanted to be.

2. **Summary of feedback**. In this section, we describe and characterize the nature of the feedback we've received about each of the organizational structures. First, we describe how we arrived at a summary for each structure (the data we used). Then, for each idea, we refer to the extent of support and any concerns about which there was consensus.

   a. **How we compiled the feedback**: As we generated the summary for each structure, we referred to three sources of data:

      i. **Written informal feedback from others**: we referred to emails people sent us throughout the process, and also the white papers that people submitted.

      ii. **Notes from formal meetings**: we referred to the minutes taken for each of the formal meetings.

      iii. **Our own notes and conversations**: after every informal and formal meeting, the two of us talked extensively about the feedback and tried to synthesize people's opinions and concerns. We also wrote down our interpretations and then referred back to them as we were compiling the summaries.

   b. **Summary of feedback about each structure:**

      i. **Cornell Center for Social Sciences:** there was broad support for the idea of a center for the social sciences at Cornell, though there are some caveats to this statement. There is strong support for two main components of a Center. The first would involve programmatic spending. This would cover much of what ISS does, including the very popular small grants program and the faculty fellows program, as well as doing something larger to incubate large externally funded projects (e.g., flagship datasets and training grants) and centers. The details for the larger projects were a bit murkier, but there seemed to be consensus,

especially among the members of the faculty who would be most likely to write these sorts of grants, that having some more direct central incubation would be a strong positive. There also was a broad sense that the current model of asking individual colleges to bear the majority of the cost for seeding large proposals was not optimal and was partially to blame for the small number of externally funded centers we currently have at Cornell in the social sciences.

The other arm would oversee the infrastructure of social sciences research and scholarship. This would bring some of the current functions of OVPR under the Center and would greatly facilitate (and consolidate) administrative services and support. One clear objective of this reorganization would be to provide better pre- and post-award support and increase external funding for individual social scientists and potentially topical centers. To this end, there seemed to be support for (1) folding in Cornell Statistical Consulting Unit (CSCU) and (2) adding staff – someone in proposal development and a dedicated science writer who is a social scientist or is well-acquainted with social science – to the infrastructure. Many of the conversations around infrastructure revolved around the need to seriously reconsider how we do computing in the social sciences. Although the provost has already created a position to help improve infrastructure in the social sciences (the Associate Vice Provost for the Social Sciences), faculty feedback on this issue was clear.

The only contentious issue remains how to coordinate the Center with the topical centers on campus. There are some concerns that the Center would dilute the brand of the smaller centers, complicate instead of simplify administrative structures, and drain faculty time and service. These concerns seemed mild overall though, and most people thought that these issues could be worked out with an "opt-in" model whereby topical centers can decide how and to what extent they want to affiliate with the Center. It is also worth noting that some of the current center directors thought that allowing centers to affiliate centrally could provide a community for existing centers and a springboard to generating funds that would lead to financial independence for newer centers.

One key thing which these concerns about coordination across centers suggests is the need for the Center to likely not have a specific thematic focus. Instead, the Center should be there to facilitate research excellence across the university in a way that enhances rather than detracts from the current centers.

ii. **Health Structure**: prior to the series of formal meetings, we did not receive much informal feedback about a health structure. However, we

did receive a white paper on health and it was presented at the formal meeting. The white paper and related discussions made it clear that there is a disconnect between social scientists doing health-related scholarship across campus. There are many pockets of health research, but these pockets do not often coordinate, and often many faculty have never heard of others doing similar kinds of work. There is broad support to improve coordination, collaboration, and visibility among faculty in this area and we did receive one white paper for a new structure on health (a health center for the social sciences). However, it may be that the first step is seriously investing in social science scholarship on health and then exploring the possibility for a new structure thereafter.

iii. **Policy Structure:** there is wide and strong support for doing something around a policy structure, although there is also a great deal of the anxiety among faculty and administrators because any structure around policy would be easiest to envision with changes to existing structures on campus. In some of the units that might be most heavily affected by the implementation of a policy structure (e.g., PAM, GOV), there is some objection from some faculty who prefer things to remain largely the same structurally and from some junior faculty who are concerned about their tenure prospects.

Nonetheless, the strong consensus across units and departments was that we should do something significant or nothing at all. There was strong agreement that we should have a public policy school (or college), which would increase the visibility and eminence of Cornell in this area. There was also strong agreement that a public policy school would effectively combine and strengthen the theory-based scholarship on policy with more applied, translational scholarship on policy. In addition, there was considerable enthusiasm for the idea that a school of public policy would be aligned with and capitalize on the Land Grant mission of the university and that it might also provide a mechanism for broadening our involvement globally in a way that has been somewhat difficult for area studies absent an explicit policy focus. Faculty thus expressed a strong preference that any school reflect both international and domestic policy. One notable aspect of the support for the general idea of a public policy school is that it was across many different units and departments.

We received a white paper on creating a school of public policy and it was co-signed by mid-career faculty who are moving into prominent positions in the university across units including Government, Sociology, Economics, and Policy Analysis and Management. This white paper focused on the idea for a school of public policy—the enthusiasm around

doing so and the need for doing so—but did not go into ideas about implementation.

There were several areas of concern. The first has to do with the 2012 proposal for a school of public policy. People were reluctant to engage in the effort of thinking about a school of public policy given that the last proposal (which followed lots of investment from faculty in terms of time and effort) ended up not happening. This generated some suspicion that nothing would happen this time around as well. There were also concerns about why it failed the last time, and whether it will be possible to avoid whatever obstacles existed the last time.

Another very strong concern is about how the school would be created. Although the idea of a virtual school was raised, there was support for this only among a very small number of faculty, and many faculty members were actively against the idea—seeing it as better to do nothing at all than to pursue this path. There were many conversations about how CHE would engage with a school of public policy—whether it could be reconfigured into a college of public policy; whether a school of public policy could reside within it; and whether a school of public policy could be shared across colleges (but with a "real" footprint that would go beyond a virtual school). The possibility of a school of public policy being located within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) was also voiced as a possibility among a small number of faculty.

To put it succinctly: There is great enthusiasm for the idea of a policy structure on campus, but there is also apprehension around how we can get there. Although we would not necessarily suggest further study for some of the organizational structures—many of the discussions seem to have progressed to a point that a decision can be made, such as with the Center —we would caution, based on feedback both from faculty and from chairs and deans, against making a decision around the implementation of a policy structure without gaining some additional feedback.

We reiterate here that the objective was for us to assess the degree of broad enthusiasm around a public policy structure, and not to assess the support for particular ways of implementing a structure. The idea all along has been that if the Provost decides to invest in a policy structure, then he will provide guidance in terms of next steps for figuring out how to do so.

iv. **Interdisciplinary units**: we did hear from interdisciplinary units that they valued their unit and wanted things to continue unchanged or to be

strengthened. In general, this message came across most strongly in formal departmental meetings, where one could reasonably argue (and faculty from those units did argue to us privately) that those meetings did not represent an opportunity for open dialogue around next steps, especially for junior faculty. However, some interdisciplinary units were open to major restructuring, but only if it happened in the context of a school of public policy.

Many faculty maintained that they want to continue to be in some kind of space that is explicitly interdisciplinary. We received two white papers that were related to this theme of interdisciplinarity. One white paper was for a Center for Interdisciplinary Developmental Science. This proposal is an innovative set of ideas by HD faculty. The other white paper was on a Center for Behavioral Economics and Decision Research, which included faculty from Psych, Econ, College of Business, and HD.

v.   **Core disciplines of Econ, Soc, and Psych:** We focus our discussion here on Econ, Soc, Psych, HD, and PAM because those are the units that seemed most engaged in the initial conversations about super-departments.

There was moderate to strong support from Economics over the idea of creating a super-department (i.e., making the recently merged department even larger). There was moderate support for adding PAM economists to the department, but PAM economists only appear interested in this idea if there is a school of public policy—and, indeed, some of the core PAM economists seem sufficiently against such an intergration that any policy structure may choose to have some number of faculty who opt not to participate in a super-department (if that is an avenue that is pursued). In this way, most PAM economists would be in the school of public policy but have a disciplinary home in economics, while some might opt to not affiliate with the economics department.

The same story is generally true for Sociology, and we received a white paper advocating for a super-department of Sociology (for the time being including the Sociology Department and the sociologists from PAM) and comprehensively detailing all of the various ways that sociologists have tried to collaborate short of forming a super-department, all of which had either failed or worked imperfectly. Most PAM sociologists would only be interested in this if there were a public policy school.

Because PAM junior faculty would be especially affected by a policy school and super-departments, we had a conversation with just them to hear their concerns. Although they did have some concerns, they seemed cautiously optimistic—and also indicated, consistent with the mission of

the entire review of the social sciences, that having a policy structure and super-departments could well help us achieve our goals.

Some Psych faculty remain open to the idea of some kind of super-department (depending on details of course), but many HD faculty remain opposed to it. And, indeed, this is the one instance in which the majority of faculty we heard from seemed opposed to any possibility of a super-department. It is important to note that the more informal conversations we had indicated that this reluctance is not shared across all faculty, and some more junior faculty suggested some openness to thinking about how to better coordinate with other psychologists on campus. And, indeed, some faculty in the HD department seem likely to be open to a more formal collaboration with Psych (depending on details).

Although Communication faculty were involved in conversations about the center, we did not involve them heavily in discussions of super-departments (given that they indicated opposition to the idea and because the "fit" between Communication faculty and disciplinary units was less clear). Although we did not engage with the Communication faculty extensively in this stage of the conversation, if steps are taken toward a policy structure, they are of course essential to these conversations.

We also received a white paper (presented at the disciplinary meeting of Psych) on starting an organizational structure of Faculty of Neuroscience. This was supported by some faculty in Psych, HD, NB&B, and other units on campus (e.g., Biomedical Engineering). It would be modelled off of the original governance structure for Faculty of Computing and Informational Science.