

Subject: Important Update: Organizational Structure Considerations and Shared Services Planning

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Thank you for your feedback during the recent listening sessions and the responses you've provided in the survey. An initial look at the data indicates some faculty and staff feel concern about shared services, particularly regarding losing localized expertise, as well as uncertainty about which services will be shared and how services will be designed. We recognize and appreciate these concerns, and our next steps will be tailored to respond to this feedback. For more information on the project and responses to common questions, please visit the project [FAQ webpage](#).

Our goal with shared services remains to enhance support across all academic units in ways that will allow the university to reach ambitious goals for advancing student success and our research impact. To do this, we must preserve local expertise and maintain high-quality service while streamlining operations. Sharing services is a common practice at many research-intensive universities, with nearly 70 percent of AAU public institutions combining administrative support across liberal arts and sciences. Peer institutions have found ways to share services that address practical challenges and foster consistent, high-quality service among departments. We will draw on our peers' experiences as we plan, and we will also draw on the deep expertise of our own staff, faculty and college/department leaders, paying close attention to the specific needs of our colleges, departments, programs and contexts. These changes will prepare the U for achieving excellence in an environment where we are called to have a deeper impact. (See a summary [online](#).)

To move forward thoughtfully, our next step is to appoint leadership responsible for overseeing the design of a comprehensive shared services plan. This leader will involve faculty, staff and department/college leadership deeply and centrally in the process, ensuring a continued focus on localized support and expertise. We are evaluating two options: 1) appointing an executive dean for all four of these liberal arts and sciences units or 2) maintaining the current structure for the College of Science but appointing an executive dean for the College of Humanities, College of Social and Behavioral Science and School for Cultural and Social Transformation.

We want to reassure you that a new organizational structure is not a merger of colleges, and each college will continue to maintain its autonomy, including having its own dean. This change will not impact shared governance elements such as faculty appointment; Retention, Promotion, and Tenure; Tenured Faculty Review; career-line review, reappointment, and promotion; annual review processes; and curriculum management processes and policies. Instead, it is focused on ensuring equitable, efficient service delivery across departments regardless of their size or budget, supported by an executive dean who will consider the value, skills, perspectives and needs of each academic unit, while overseeing the design and implementation of shared services.

Whichever structure we choose, the executive dean will consider all feedback gathered through recent listening sessions and the survey to determine which services will be shared and how to implement the changes. Feedback so far indicates some faculty and staff are concerned that shared services are aimed at staff reductions. We appreciate that concern and want to emphasize that this effort is not about reducing staff, but rather about improving support and addressing challenges. Data show that many departments operate in relative isolation, smaller units struggle with access to funding and other resources, insufficient training and infrastructure hinder effective onboarding for new staff, and service disruptions occur during staff absences or turnover. While shared services can effectively address these issues, faculty and staff desire for locally responsive services and the retention of local expertise are top concerns and priorities. Once in place, the executive dean will work with the deans and other college/school and department leadership to guide the design and implementation of shared services tailored to the specific needs of faculty and staff across the colleges/school. While appointing additional leadership may seem counterintuitive to enhanced efficiency, having a dedicated leader ensures that shared services will be developed to meet each unit's unique needs in the best ways possible.

The decision-making process is ongoing, with input from and consultations with the leadership teams of the relevant colleges, as well as attention to feedback gathered through listening sessions and the survey. Ultimately, the president and provost, with approval from the board of trustees, will make the final decision about which structure we will use. Our team is committed to maintaining transparency throughout this process.

We expect to decide on the structure by the end of the calendar year. This timeline will allow us to initiate an internal, university-wide search for the executive dean in January. Beginning in spring of 2025, the leader will oversee the design of shared services and ensure staff, faculty, and college/school/department leadership are involved in the process, tapping their expertise to build effective and practical support systems.

Your voice is crucial, and we appreciate your feedback. We will continue to update you and engage with you to ensure thoughtful transitions. If you have additional feedback or questions, do not hesitate to use the form on the [project webpage](#).

Thank you for your attention and continued dedication to the U.

Sincerely,

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