



Vice President for Academic Affairs

TO: Alaric Williams, AVPAA and the Restructuring Committee

FROM: Laurie Geller, VPAA
Steve Shirley, President

RE: Charge to Academic Restructuring Committee

DATE: July 12, 2023

This memorandum outlines the background and reasons for restructuring, actions taken by Faculty Senate and administration, and the charge to the committee. The previous work of the Ad Hoc Committee for Academic Design and the School Chair Model should be used for reference as you complete your charge. Dr. Williams will keep us up-to-date on this committee's progress.

Background

The restructuring discussions started in 2017 when the deans were eliminated as part of the NDUS budget cuts. This change led to variations in structure and reporting, and prompted an investigation of academic structure in 2019-2020. An Ad Hoc Restructuring Committee was formed and presented four models to Faculty Senate (FS) in February 2021. The committee was reconstituted by FS for the 2021-2022 school year as the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Design (AHCAD). During that year, AHCAD completed the following activities:

- Weekly 90-120-minute meetings
- Online surveys of faculty and staff
- Interviews with all university chairs
- Interviews with the Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies directors
- An open innovative design forum that was attended by 52 faculty and staff members and two students
- Presentation to FS on March 24, 2022 for the purpose of gathering feedback.
- Preparation and presentation of a final model based on feedback gathered on April 21, 2022.

That final School Chair Model is included in the [AHCAD's final report](#), which is included in the FS Teams site.

Reasons for Restructuring

The AHCAD provided a thorough list of "problems to solve" in its [final report](#):

- (1) inequitable access to the VPAA, which has been remedied with the hiring of the AVPAA as recommended by AHCAD;
- (2) anticipated budget shortfalls;
- (3) inequities in chair and other duties;
- (4) inconsistencies in policies and procedures which exacerbate inequities, inefficiencies, and low morale;
- (5) need for increased engagement; and
- (6) need to regularly review policies, procedures, and processes.

The AHCAD also provided recommendations to address each of the above problems, and indicated, the School Chair Model would result in:

- Fewer direct reports to VPAA to allow more focus on academics and strategic planning
- Equity of access to administration
- Equity in teaching loads due to oversight by AVPAA

- Fewer adjuncts as some current department/division chairs can return to teaching
- Aspirations for innovation
- Enhanced collaboration
- Equity amongst schools
- Equity in release time/compensation and workload for individuals with administrative responsibilities
- Clear communication lines from individual faculty to Program Coordinators, to School Chairs, to the AVPAA, to the VPAA, and to the Academic Council.
- Clear lines of accountability
- Easy to spot and resolve problems/fix bottlenecks if they occur
- Clear performance management, including faculty and School Chair evaluations.

Faculty Senate and Administrative Actions

At the [April 21, 2022 FS discussion meeting](#), during which the School Chair Model was discussed, the following motion was made and passed:

Motion to forward the final report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Design to the VPAA and President to develop an actualized model and then bring it back to the Faculty Senate for a potential vote of the faculty body. (Willoughby, Weston) 12 yea, 5 nay, 1 abstention

During summer 2022, the search for an AVPAA began. This position, originally held by Dr. Kana, was revised to include the AVPAA duties as drafted in the AHCAD final report, as well as to assist with the transition to a revised academic structure. This position wasn't filled until mid-February 2023, which has delayed moving forward with the AHCAD's recommendations.

Now that Dr. Williams is serving as AVPAA and has gotten to know the campus community, he had learned about and had time to consider AHCAD's report and their recommendations. Dr. Williams has met with us (Dr. Geller and Dr. Shirley) multiple times this summer. These meetings have resulted in a School Chair Model based on the one developed by the AHCAD, formally received by Faculty Senate, and sent to Dr. Geller and Dr. Shirley for development.

As such, this committee is charged with reviewing and providing feedback about the model Dr. Williams will share in preparation for initial implementation starting fall 2023.

We recognize that all details of such a change cannot be known in advance, which is why we need your feedback to help guide us. Don't reinvent the wheel. The AHCAD did a lot of work that you should consider. Much of it is in their [final report](#), which we recommend you read. We also recommend you read the [minutes of the April 21, 2022 FS meeting](#). Nothing new is perfect. As noted in the AHCAD final report, once a model is implemented, feedback should be gathered; changes should be assessed periodically; and improvements should be made where needed.

In closing, we appreciate your willingness to serve on this committee. You have been selected to represent a specific area of campus and for your experience, insight, and dedication to Minot State and student learning. As part of this committee, you are expected to provide feedback that benefits the entire institution, not just one area. We need all of your voices, perspectives, and ideas; thus, I hope each of you is willing to speak your mind without fear of judgment, while also respecting the ideas and perspectives of your colleagues. Thank you for giving up some of your time this summer to be a part of this process.