



Who Should Read

Presidents

Provosts

Faculty leaders

How Multidisciplinary Organization Supports Institutional Goals

Introducing the Divisional Model of Academic Governance

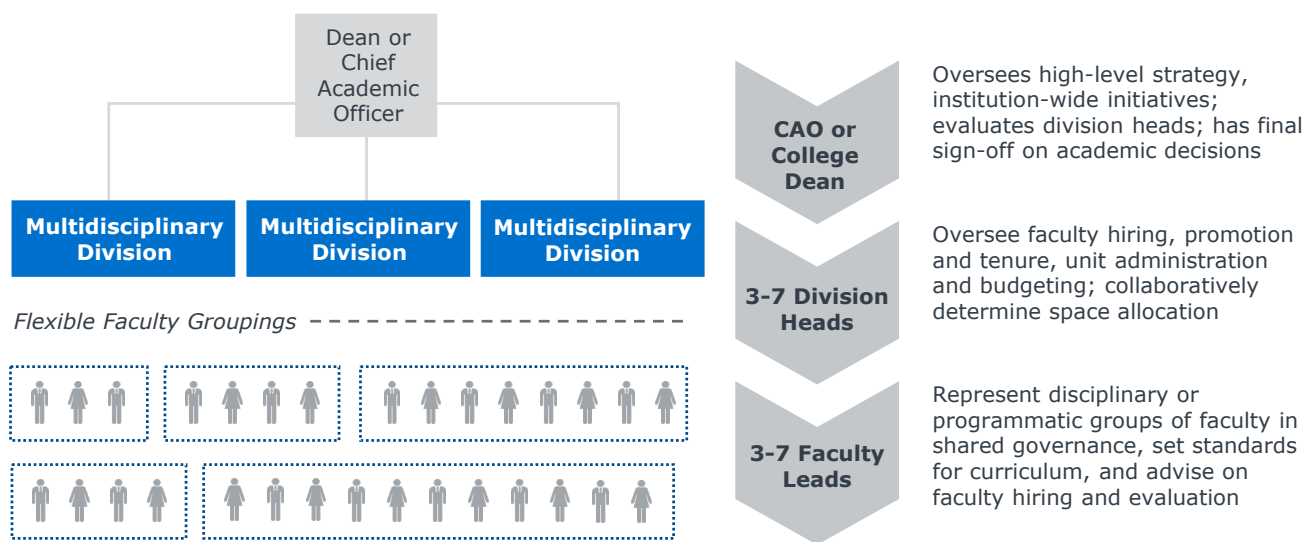
4 Ways to Use This Briefing

- Review your proposed unit and decision structures compared to the recommended multidisciplinary division model of university governance
- Pinpoint how divisional models address common strategic challenges
- Access supporting documents from other institutions that have undergone multidisciplinary reorganization
- Craft reorganization talking points for boards or other senior-level audiences

Key Elements of the Divisional Model

Recommended Ownership Structures for Multidisciplinary Academic Governance

Regardless of your institution's reason for reorganizing academic departments into divisions, academic leaders report that post-departmental models often fail to achieve their goals unless responsibilities are clearly distributed among the three levels of academic governance, avoiding any overlap or redundancy in decision-making. The model shown below is based on analysis of multiple institutions' organizational models and identifies the appropriate level of oversight at each level of governance.



Over time, the department chair position has evolved to become overly complex. Chairs simultaneously work to align administration and budgets with institutional needs and represent their disciplines in academic governance. To alleviate the burden on chairs and provide stable faculty leadership, the divisional model explicitly divides unit-level faculty leadership into two positions, one highly professionalized role with significantly elevated scope and one first-among-equals faculty leadership role with reduced responsibilities compared to traditional chairs.

Division heads are hired and trained for administrative, budgetary, and strategic oversight over multidisciplinary academic units. **Faculty leads** are elected to coordinate curricula and serve as shared governance representatives for flexible groupings of faculty in one or more divisions. Disciplinary or programmatic faculties can be launched or sunset at any time by faculty members.

▶ For more information on the division of labor between division heads and faculty leads and position description templates, see *Division Leadership Position Descriptions*.

How Divisions Address Institutional Challenges

Multidisciplinary Governance Reduces Siloing and Facilitates Collaboration

Institutions that have reorganized around multidisciplinary themes report a common set of goals that led them to initiate the often time-consuming and controversial process of reorganizing departments into divisions. Use the chart to evaluate whether your own divisional model will address these challenges and to craft high-level talking points about the benefits of reorganization.

Reorganization Goal	Benefits of Divisions in Supporting Strategy
Facilitate faculty collaboration across disciplines in curriculum, pedagogy, and program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty are housed together in the same academic unit across multiple, related divisions and programs Faculty have the freedom to identify with a divisional tenure home and multiple informal faculty cohorts (“faculties”) regardless of which programs they teach in Faculty share office and classroom space with peers across multiple disciplines
Reward innovative interdisciplinary work through faculty hiring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty are tenured in a division based on their work’s contribution to the division’s needs as a whole Division heads are incentivized to support interdisciplinary growth in divisions Divisional organization facilitates scholarship and teaching around higher-order themes and transdisciplinary “wicked problems”
Reduce the cost of academic administration and streamline bureaucratic organizational structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Division heads take on the responsibilities of multiple department chairs, deans, and academic affairs staff Merged academic units enable the creation of smaller, more professionalized administrative offices
Align instructional costs with student demand without drastic program cuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each division supports a wide variety of programs; new programs can be launched without creating new academic units Division heads coordinate curricular streamlining across multiple programs, allowing programs to sustain themselves without requiring a large number of dedicated faculty
Help students succeed in critical courses and navigate curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divisional planning encourages faculty to design courses and curricula for applicability across programs within their division Faculty evaluation in division promotes course redesign for student success
Establish a financially sustainable structure for the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overhead costs are shared across a larger number of academic programs and faculty in each division rather than in a department model Faculty lines are allocated by division, enabling division heads to carry out a more sustainable strategy of joint hires without impacting the sustainability of individual programs
Align program offerings, academic structures, and incentives with areas of institutional distinctiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divisional themes are designed to highlight areas of institutional strength Divisional strategic planning conversations, program evaluation, and faculty evaluation encourage faculty to embed areas of distinctiveness in curriculum and scholarly work
Refocus faculty time toward core responsibilities and reduce reliance on part-time instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a small number of division heads have administrative leadership requirements above and beyond the in-load service requirement Faculty participate in a smaller number of division-level committees Faculty have more opportunities to teach across the curriculum, allowing faculty in low-enrollment programs to teach in high-enrollment programs rather than relying on part-time instructors to meet student need
Recognize and develop emerging faculty leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Division heads have elevated managerial responsibilities and more intensive training compared to traditional department chairs, given their longer term of service, and are well equipped to transition into dean or provost roles

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Divisional Model Resources

Guide to Institutional Reports and Reorganization Planning Documents

There are a small number of institutions that have fully implemented post-departmental organization models, aside from new and experimental institutions designed around nondepartmental structures. A growing number of institutions are in the process of consolidating and reorganizing departments. To further guide your reorganization process, use the links below to review results and process documents from existing complete, partial, and in-progress divisional reorganization efforts.

Institution Name	Link to Reorganization Resources
Arizona State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Change Magazine</i> article by former Arizona State University provost Elizabeth Capaldi detailing the philosophy and results of Arizona State's reorganization from departments into interdisciplinary schools: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ857131
Berea College	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article by Berea College leadership team on the impact of restructuring departments into divisions: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273497152_Restructuring_Academic_Programs_into_Larger_Divisions
Plymouth State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cluster model portal: https://www.plymouth.edu/academics/our-learning-model/
SUNY Fredonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic affairs reorganization portal: https://sites.google.com/fredonia.edu/aareorganization/home
Southern Illinois University Carbondale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision 2025 portal: https://chancellor.siu.edu/vision2025/
University of Southern Mississippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision 2020 portal: https://www.usm.edu/provost/vision-2020-initiatives



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