



Who Should Read

Provosts
Presidents
Communications staff
Future division heads

Divisional Reorganization Talking Points

Guidance for Responding to Common Faculty, Staff, Student, and Leadership Questions About Multidisciplinary Organizational Models

- Talking Points for Faculty
- Talking Points for Students
- Talking Points for Academic Leadership

Three Ways to Use These Talking Points

- Anticipate common questions and concerns about divisional reorganization
- Draft talking points in preparation for meetings with key audiences
- Inform content of town hall meetings and publicly facing FAQ documents

Talking Points for Faculty

Common Faculty Questions About the Divisional Model

Anticipating Common Faculty Questions and Concerns

Faculty concerns about the transition from departments to divisions typically center on whether divisions will impact the employment of themselves and their peers, and whether divisions will penalize them for their work within disciplines.

Academic leaders should prepare for the following questions from faculty:

Role of disciplines in the new structure:

- Will faculty still have a voice in university governance without departments?
- Does the transition away from departments mean our institution no longer values academic disciplines?
- How do I know my discipline won't be overlooked in the hiring process?
- Will I be judged by another discipline's standards for promotion and tenure?

Promotion, tenure, and evaluation:

- How will promotion and tenure evaluation criteria change in a divisional model?
- Will my teaching be evaluated differently in a division?

Reorganization impact on faculty, staff, and students:

- Will there be faculty layoffs?
- Will we lose our department secretaries in the transition to divisions?
- Will divisions make it more challenging for students to navigate the curriculum and graduate on time?

Using This Resource to Draft Talking Points

On each page of the following resource, academic leaders will find more detail on each of the above questions from faculty, as well as recommendations on how to structure a response in one-on-one or small group meetings. Many faculty questions will have different answers depending on decisions specific to each institution and its leadership. In these cases, examples from other institutions are provided.

Before meeting with faculty to discuss concerns about the upcoming divisional transition, review the talking points on the following pages, and use the Notes space to draft your own talking points.

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will faculty still have a voice in university governance without departments?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- First, review the role of disciplinary faculty in university governance.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Faculty leads represent their disciplines or programs in senate and other governing bodies
- Next, review the divisional model’s emphasis on service to the university.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Division heads redirect faculty service toward university-level decisions
 - Faculty spend less time on unit-level committee work after departmental committees are consolidated into divisional committees
 - Divisional faculty evaluation rewards participation in university governance and strategy

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Does the transition away from departments mean our institution no longer values academic disciplines?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- First, emphasize the role of faculty lead in advocating for disciplines.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Faculty leads represent disciplines or programs in academic senate and other governing bodies
 - Faculty leads advise division heads on new hires
 - Faculty leads advise division heads on promotion and tenure decisions
- Next, discuss the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration in strengthening disciplines.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Enabling faculty to collaborate across disciplines on high-profile “grand challenge” research
 - Collaboration with “applied” disciplines reaffirms importance of basic research
 - Opportunities to find connections between course topics and research across disciplines
- Next, emphasize the role of divisions in supporting small single-discipline programs.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Collaborative teaching across disciplines reduces risk of program closure due to low enrollment

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

How do I know my discipline won't be overlooked in the hiring process?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- First, emphasize the role of faculty leads in the hiring process.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Faculty leads advocate for disciplines and inform division heads on disciplinary hiring needs, accreditor and associate requirements about faculty credentials
- Next, discuss how the divisional hiring process supports small disciplines and programs.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Cross-program hires allow vacancies in low-enrollment departments to be filled simultaneously with vacancies in high-need areas
 - One institution hired a professor with expertise in Italian film to teach low-enrollment film studies courses and high-demand introductory Italian courses. Both the Italian and film studies programs had a low number of majors

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will I be judged by another discipline's standards for promotion and tenure?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Review the composition of divisional promotion and tenure committees.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Disciplinary peers, including faculty lead, review candidates' work in a disciplinary context
 - Opportunity for cross-disciplinary peers to join to emphasize candidates' existing interdisciplinary work
 - Cross-disciplinary peers in the division identify opportunities for candidates to connect their work with other teaching and scholarship in the division

Detail from Case Studies:

- At many institutions with interdisciplinary promotion and tenure, cross-disciplinary reviewers undergo training before the review process begins.
 - Training focuses on assessing unfamiliar types of research products

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

How will promotion and tenure evaluation criteria change in a divisional model?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Review Divisional Promotion and Tenure Checklist for detailed list of recommended changes to faculty evaluation.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Promotion and tenure committees include cross-representation to help surface and support opportunities for faculty to work across disciplines
 - Institutions with divisional tenure do not punish faculty for single-discipline work in the evaluation process

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will my teaching be evaluated differently in a division?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Review changes to teaching evaluation criteria in divisional promotion and tenure review.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Typical changes include rewarding culturally relevant, innovative, and collaborative pedagogy that fosters interdisciplinary understanding
 - Promotion and tenure review facilitates discussion of teaching across disciplines and how to support student learning across majors
 - For example, first-year mathematics faculty might have divisional peers in physical sciences programs. A peer reviewer could advise on how to teach mathematics so that physics majors will have the appropriate quantitative skills to succeed in the major
 - Teaching is credited to a faculty member’s home division for instructional costing purposes

Notes:

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will there be faculty layoffs?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Emphasize distinction between elimination of faculty positions and returning chairs and deans to the faculty.
 - Frame divisions as a reduction of administrative positions, not of faculty positions

Detail from Case Studies:

- If layoffs are necessary, institutions with the divisional model have found it productive to complete layoffs and offer retirement incentives *before* beginning divisional reorganization.
 - Avoid confusion about goals of reorganization
 - Frame reorganization as an opportunity to reevaluate how the institution should be organized to be sustainable with a smaller number of positions
 - Discuss difference between divisional model and models that actively encourage layoffs and position reductions (example: eliminating colleges and departments entirely)
 - If these models were considered, discuss the considerations and benefits of divisions
- Institutional leaders report that some faculty may choose to leave the institution because the divisional model does not align with their career goals and interests.
 - Leaders report faculty may perceive these departures as peers being asked to leave due to their lack of buy-in for divisional redesign
 - To avoid this challenge, discuss any faculty departures transparently with the campus community wherever possible, and encourage faculty to share any concerns or feedback on the divisional model in multiple venues

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Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will divisions make it more challenging for students to navigate the curriculum and graduate on time?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Review divisional incentives to streamline curricula.
 - In departments, it is more difficult to justify faculty hires while reducing curricular complexity
 - In divisions, new hires do not have to teach courses in their "home" program

Detail from Case Studies:

- At many institutions with divisional models, divisional reorganization has been an opportunity to revisit common barriers to graduation caused by department silos. Reforms include:
 - Creating a coherent set of graduation requirements
 - Increasing the number of cross-listed courses by encouraging teaching across disciplines
 - Centralizing course catalogs, registration systems, and academic support
 - Training academic advisors to support students if they switch majors or minors within the division
 - Redesigning general education to be more streamlined and coherent

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Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

Will we lose our department secretaries in the transition to divisions?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Emphasize difference between centralized staff model and divisional administrative hubs.
 - *Talking points to emphasize:*
 - Divisional staff are still collocated with faculty offices
- If staff layoffs are necessary, discuss how tasks will be reassigned and professionalized.
 - Encourage faculty to discuss their concerns with the academic staff committee (see *8 Task Forces to Guide Academic Reorganization*)

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A Note on Talking to Staff About the Divisional Model

Part of the goal of transitioning to divisions is to reduce the reliance on often-bureaucratic and overly complex administrative models. As a result, institutional staff members are the only group who commonly faces layoffs as part of the transition to the divisional model. Most institutions focus on eliminating already-vacant positions and on rehiring laid-off staff for new positions created by the divisional transition. Unfortunately, some staff losses are still typically necessary.

It is important not to underemphasize the challenges and anxiety that staff will face during this transition. If at all possible, provide severance pay and employment search support to staff members whose positions are being eliminated.

Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

What will happen to our current department chairs, deans, and associate deans?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Emphasize reduction in administrative burden for department chairs who transition into faculty lead roles.

Detail from Case Studies:

- At most institutions that have transitioned into the divisional model:
 - Department chairs with interest in and aptitude for leadership have transitioned into division head roles
 - Some associate deans may also transition into division head roles, if they are tenured faculty
 - Deans and school directors, if applicable, have either transitioned into division head roles or, in some cases, returned to the faculty
 - Ensure that a plan is in place to determine how deans will be compensated if they return to the faculty

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Talking Points for Faculty

Guidance for Responding to Faculty Concerns

How can one division head manage the roles of multiple chairs and/or deans?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Emphasize increased professionalization of the division head role.
 - Highlights include course release time, 12-month contract, and semipermanent nature of the division head position as compared to a traditional department chair
- Review *Divisional Leadership Position Descriptions* for more detail on division of labor between division head and faculty lead.
- Leaders at institutions with the divisional model report that consolidating departments into divisions typically eliminates duplicate and redundant work, including multiple levels of sign-off for key decisions, which lessens the burden on division heads.

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Talking Points for Students

Common Student Questions About the Divisional Model

Anticipating Common Student Questions and Concerns

For many institutions, the transition from departments to divisions is largely invisible to students. Since divisions do not immediately impact the program portfolio or graduation requirements, students may not have a clear rubric for evaluating why the change to divisions is happening at all or how it will impact them or their professors. Most student questions will focus on the day-to-day impacts of the new organizational model.

However, students do benefit from divisions. The evaluation of faculty and academic programs in divisions, if structured correctly, incentivizes program and course offerings that are aligned with student outcomes and interests.

Academic leaders should prepare for the following questions from students:

Logistical and process challenges:

- **Will divisions make it harder to register for courses?**
- **Will my professors be moved to new offices?**

Distinction between divisions and programs:

- **Will the language on my diploma change?**
- **Will I still be able to major in a traditional subject such as math or English?**
- **Will I have to take more courses to finish my degree?**

Using This Resource to Draft Talking Points

On each page of the following resource, academic leaders will find more detail on each of the above questions from students, as well as recommendations on how to structure a response in one-on-one or small group meetings. Many student questions will have different answers depending on decisions specific to each institution and its leadership. In these cases, examples from other institutions are provided.

Before meeting with students to discuss concerns about the upcoming divisional transition, review the talking points on the following pages, and use the Notes space to draft your own talking points.

Talking Points for Students

Guidance for Responding to Student Concerns

Will divisions make it harder to register for courses?

Detail from Case Studies:

- At most institutions with the divisional model, the transition to divisions has made registration easier for students.
 - Consolidating and streamlining registration systems and processes
 - Sharing classroom spaces across multiple academic disciplines to reduce prime-time conflicts
 - Division head has enough oversight to ensure critical corequisites are not scheduled at conflicting times
- If course lengths and course numberings are being standardized as part of the transition to divisions, these changes have the potential to be confusing to students.
 - Ensure that these changes, if necessary, take place *after* the transition to divisions is complete

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Talking Points for Students

Guidance for Responding to Student Concerns

Will my professors be moved to new offices?

Detail from Case Studies:

- At most institutions with the divisional model, faculty have moved to new offices.
 - Some institutions house all faculty offices in a single division together
 - Other institutions create new office spaces across multiple divisions, collocating offices with shared teaching and research spaces
 - The transition to divisions typically reduces the number of faculty who need two separate offices to be in proximity to their classrooms and lab spaces
 - Emphasize that it will be easier for students to find faculty if they have a single office

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Talking Points for Students

Guidance for Responding to Student Concerns

Will the language on my diploma change?

Detail from Case Studies:

- Institutions with the divisional model have not made changes to the names of existing credentials.
 - Typically, diplomas bear the name of the program that awards each degree

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Talking Points for Students

Guidance for Responding to Student Concerns

Will I still be able to major in a traditional subject such as math or English?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- First, emphasize that changes to each program’s academic unit home and/or curriculum will not affect the number and type of degree programs available.
- Next, share information about interdisciplinary program offerings that are planned as part of the transition to divisions.

Detail from Case Studies:

- Institutions with the divisional model have not eliminated traditional majors as part of the reorganization process.

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Talking Points for Students

Guidance for Responding to Student Concerns

Will I have to take more courses to finish my degree?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Review institutional goals for student completion and the importance of timely graduation.
 - Help students find degree-planning resources or refer students to an academic advisor for further support

Detail from Case Studies:

- Institutions with the divisional model have not increased the number of course requirements for a degree.
 - Typically, faculty in divisions use division-level meetings and program review sessions as an opportunity to identify redundant courses across disciplines and make it easier for students to transfer credit between related majors
- Institutions that have added new interdisciplinary courses (e.g., to general education requirements) as part of the transition to divisions do not typically require continuing students to complete these courses.

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Talking Points for Academic Leadership

Common Questions from Cabinets and Governing Boards

Anticipating Common Cabinet/Board Questions and Concerns

Communication to cabinets and governing boards typically focuses on the impact of divisional redesign on high-level institutional strategy. Many common leadership questions are answered in *How Multidisciplinary Organization Supports Institutional Goals*. This guide provides additional detail for a few specific questions that presidents and provosts have encountered as part of the divisional transition.

Academic leaders should prepare for the following questions from high-level audiences such as the president and provost's cabinet, boards of trustees, university system officers, and/or state boards of regents:

- **Will this reorganization help the institution be more financially sustainable? What will reorganization cost?**
- **What challenges to divisional reorganization can we expect from accreditors?**
- **What challenges to divisional reorganization can we expect from the faculty union?**

Using This Resource to Draft Talking Points

On each page of the following resource, academic leaders will find more detail on each of the above questions from cabinets and governing boards, as well as recommendations on how to structure a response in one-on-one or small group meetings. Many of these questions will have different answers depending on decisions specific to each institution and its leadership. In these cases, examples from other institutions are provided.

Before meeting with members of cabinets or boards to discuss concerns about the upcoming divisional transition, review the talking points on the following pages, and use the Notes space to draft your own talking points.

Talking Points for Academic Leadership

Guidance for Responding to Concerns from Cabinets and Governing Boards

Will this reorganization help the institution be more financially sustainable? What will reorganization cost?

Guidance for Academic Leaders:

- Emphasize that long-term efficiencies enabled by the divisional model are much more significant. Some of the most effective items to emphasize include:
 - Transition from single-discipline to a multidisciplinary hiring and tenure model reduces instructional costs associated with launching and sustaining academic programs
 - Over time, division-level space management realigns the campus footprint with institutional needs
 - Reduction in single-discipline research, teaching, and service redirects faculty time toward activities with cross-disciplinary and institution-wide impact
 - Reduced need for part-time instructional staff
 - Faculty are no longer incentivized to add single-major courses to preserve programs

Detail from Case Studies:

- Institutional leaders who have transitioned to a divisional model report that a small reduction in up-front academic costs results from reducing the number of administrative leadership and staff positions.
 - Consolidated services reduce the total number of staff required to perform daily administrative tasks
 - Transition from chair to division head model reduces the number of academic stipends
 - Many institutions also reduce the number of deans or school directors in the transition to divisions, leading to additional stipend reductions
- Typical costs associated with reorganization focus on space management and building renovation.
 - Most institutions have sought investors from donors or state boards for large-scale planning projects associated with improved student-learning outcomes and institutional distinctiveness

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Talking Points for Academic Leadership

Guidance for Responding to Concerns from Cabinets and Governing Boards

What challenges to divisional reorganization can we expect from accreditors?

Detail from Case Studies:

- Leaders at institutions that have transitioned to divisions report that accrediting bodies appreciate the benefits of divisions in helping students bridge connections across disciplines and better understand the context of what they are learning.
- Institutional leaders report the following challenges from accreditors:
 - A set percentage of faculty may be required to hold a PhD in a given discipline
 - Professional school accreditors such as business, nursing, and engineering typically have stricter requirements and may discourage curriculum-sharing with traditional undergraduate programs
 - Proactively discuss these challenges with division head candidates and emphasize them in division head training so they are not overlooked in faculty hiring and evaluation
- Leaders at institutions with the divisional model report that division heads should take an active role in supporting assessment for accreditation.

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Talking Points for Academic Leadership

Guidance for Responding to Concerns from Cabinets and Governing Boards

What challenges to divisional reorganization can we expect from the faculty union?

Detail from Case Studies:

- Leaders at institutions with faculty unions report that divisional reorganization rarely requires changes to collective bargaining agreements.
 - Challenges from unions are usually the result of failure to fully and transparently engage faculty in decision-making as part of the transition to divisions
 - Note that department chairs and division heads are often ineligible for union membership due to contract type and managerial role, but faculty leads typically are eligible

Notes:



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