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8 Task Forces to Guide Academic Reorganization

Overview of Reorganization Task Force and Committee
Structure, Charge, and Key Questions for Discussion
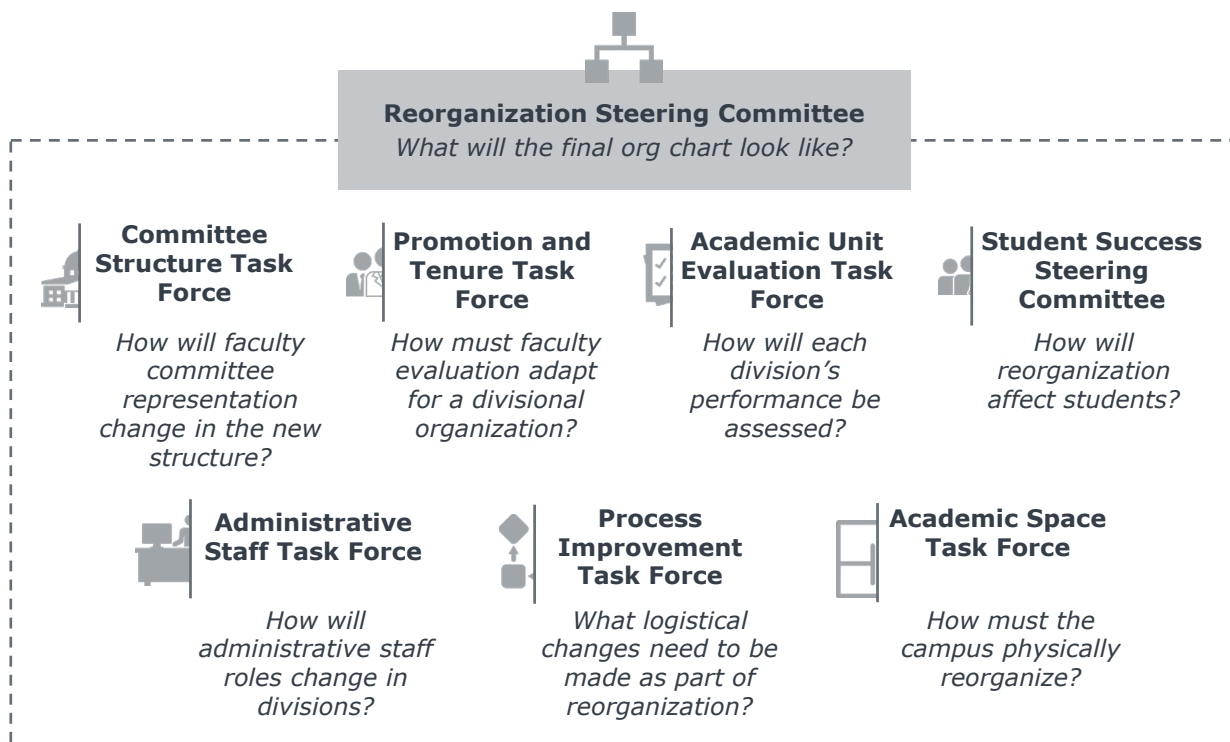
4 Ways to Use This Guide

- Determine necessary task forces and committees before initiating a multidisciplinary reorganization process
- Use as a template to draft the charge or mission statement of each task force while recruiting task force representatives
- Ensure that faculty are fairly represented and oversee key decisions in reorganization
- Check off key responsibilities of task forces as they are completed

Academic Affairs Forum

8 Task Forces That Guide Academic Reorganization

Use This Guide to Structure Faculty Participation in Organizational Decisions

During a multidisciplinary reorganization, task forces and committees help ensure that faculty, staff, and administrators have input into the structure and goals of the new divisional reorganization. These task forces provide dedicated spaces to discuss and make decisions around multiple aspects of the divisional model. However, task forces are not a substitute for presidential and provostial decision-making or for shared governance or collective bargaining. All reorganization committees and task forces should be sunset as soon as the reorganization process is complete.

Reorganization Steering Committee
What will the final org chart look like?

Committee Structure Task Force

How will faculty committee representation change in the new structure?

Promotion and Tenure Task Force

How must faculty evaluation adapt for a divisional organization?

Academic Unit Evaluation Task Force

How will each division's performance be assessed?

Student Success Steering Committee

How will reorganization affect students?

Administrative Staff Task Force

How will administrative staff roles change in divisions?

Process Improvement Task Force

What logistical changes need to be made as part of reorganization?

Academic Space Task Force

How must the campus physically reorganize?

EAB researchers identified eight task forces that most universities should create during the reorganization process, based on the experiences of institutions that have gone through reorganization. Very small and centralized institutions may not employ task forces to make reorganization decisions, but leaders often find that reorganization is more likely to be contested unless faculty lead critical decision-making processes, as enabled by reorganization task forces. Others may choose to combine two or more of these task forces, but it is important to ensure that faculty have enough dedicated time to discuss controversial or complex topics, particularly the final divisional structure and promotion and tenure requirements.

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Reorganization Steering Committee

Charge:

- Determine the appropriate number of divisions for the institution and their themes

- Collect input from the campus community through surveys, town hall meetings, and online feedback forms

Members:

- At least one faculty member from each college or school (5-8 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- One faculty representative from any multidisciplinary programs

- At least one academic advising or student success administrator

Committee Checklist
☐ Identify venues to collect input and feedback from faculty, students, community partners, staff, administrators, and alumni
☐ Determine how often to hold (virtual and in-person) town hall meetings
☐ Determine how often to conduct online surveys
☐ Ensure that the provost, or each academic dean, will oversee 3-7 divisions of approximately equal size in the new structure
☐ Review divisional themes to minimize overlap
☐ Identify structures and informal faculty groups to liaise between related divisions
☐ Ensure division names do not prioritize one discipline in titling (e.g., combining visual art and communication into Division of Communication)
☐ Ensure that divisional themes reflect the scholarly and academic strengths that make the institution distinct
☐ Consult students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners on distinctive institutional themes as well as referencing university strategic plans
☐ Ensure divisional themes are relevant to students in their academic and career exploration
☐ Determine whether (living-) learning communities based on each divisional theme could attract prospective students
☐ Ensure that divisional themes relate to areas of donor and community partner interest
☐ Determine whether the institution needs to keep specific words in division names to honor commitments to outside partners, including donors to endowed units and accreditors

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

University Governance Committee

Charge:

- Inventory committees, task forces, and working groups within existing academic and nonacademic units

- Determine standard set of committees by division

- Determine whether any institutional standing committees are now duplicating the work of divisional committees

- Develop standards for the election of faculty to standing committees where each department previously had one faculty representative

Members:

- At least one faculty member from each college or school (5-10 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- One representative of the academic senate

Committee Checklist
☐ Ensure that **institution-level** governance structures exist to oversee strategic planning, student populations to recruit, budget models and allocations, institutional branding, general education, international affairs, and campus master planning
☐ Ensure that **division-level** or **cross-divisional** governance structures exist to promotion and tenure, faculty hiring, academic space allocation, workload and schedule planning, and program-specific curricula
☐ Inventory existing committees and task forces to determine which groups can be consolidated
☐ Ensure that no two committees or task forces have the same or overlapping charges
☐ Identify processes that typically span multiple committees/task forces and/or multiple levels of governance and flag for streamlining
☐ Ensure that the proposed structure and standards create committees with interdisciplinary representation
☐ Ensure that proposed structure utilizes faculty time in committees for meaningful strategic work
☐ Ensure that no faculty member will spend more than the percentage of time specified in faculty contracts on committee service under the proposed structure
☐ Ensure that the proposed structure makes provisions to avoid placing an undue burden of committee service on underrepresented faculty

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Promotion and Tenure Task Force

Charge:

- Revise promotion and tenure guidelines to reflect divisional structures, flexible disciplinary boundaries, and an emphasis on multidisciplinary and engaged scholarship

- Create memorandum of understanding (MOU) template for joint hires and appointments

- Determine how cross-teaching and team-teaching will be credited in faculty workload

Members:

- At least one faculty representative from each college or school (5-8 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- 1-2 representatives from the faculty senate

- At least one representative from the office of the Vice President for Research

- If applicable: 1-2 representatives of the faculty collective bargaining unit

- If applicable: at least one representative from the institution's office of community engagement or engaged scholarship

EAB Resources:

- Divisional Model Promotion and Tenure Checklist (included in this resource center)

Task Force Checklist
☐ Ensure that the proposed guidelines emphasize cross-disciplinary and university-wide research, teaching, and service as being of equal importance to work within a single discipline
☐ Ensure guidelines are as specific and objective as possible, including identifying specific types of materials that can be submitted for faculty evaluation processes
☐ Articulate in guidelines how faculty whose work is traditional or single-discipline can be evaluated in a divisional context
☐ Develop guidance for flexible memoranda of understanding for faculty hires whose work will cross multiple divisions and/or research units
☐ Review guidelines for compliance with institutional policy and (if applicable) system-level policy and collective bargaining agreements; determine whether the institution will need to enter into the collective bargaining process to update tenure requirements
☐ Articulate division of responsibilities between division head (has decision-making responsibility) and faculty leads (give input and sit on committees) in hiring, promotion, and tenure
☐ Ensure that guidelines reflect the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusivity in faculty hiring and development
☐ Determine whether any language in the faculty handbook needs to be added to or updated
☐ Ensure that new guidelines are distributed to all faculty

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Academic Unit Evaluation Task Force

Charge:

- Create or adapt standardized templates and metrics for the annual evaluation of divisions

Members:

- One department chair from each college or school (or 3-7 department chairs, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- One representative from the office of institutional research or institutional effectiveness

- At least one academic dean or associate provost

EAB Resources:

- Academic Vital Signs (study available on eab.com)

- 50 Indicators of Successful Academic Reorganization (included in this resource center)

Task Force Checklist
☐ Determine level-appropriate, actionable goals for each division
☐ Establish a hold-harmless year in which divisions set a performance baseline against which they will be evaluated in the future
☐ Review divisional goals for alignment with institution-level reorganization goals and key performance indicators (note that most divisional goals will not be identical to institution-wide goals to ensure they are actionable for faculty and leaders)
☐ Design goals that incentivize faculty, staff, and academic leaders to work across disciplines and divisions in teaching, scholarship, and institutional service
☐ Review divisional goals for alignment with institutional student retention and completion goals
☐ Design goals that indicate division of responsibilities at each level in the organizational structure
☐ Develop process to communicate goals to faculty, staff, and students and regularly share performance updates
☐ Establish process for annual evaluation and goal-setting conversations between provost or dean and division leadership
☐ Determine process to regularly assess divisional model (approximately every 7-10 years) and determine whether the divisional structure should change

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Student Success Steering Committee

Charge:

- Identify academic programs with significant curricular overlap or duplication that may create barriers to students

- Determine the academic advising structure within divisions

Members:

- One faculty member from each college or school (3-5 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- Director(s) of Advising, if applicable

- One associate or vice provost overseeing student success strategy

- One administrator overseeing curriculum and/or one representative from the university curriculum committee

- One academic advisor from each college or school, if applicable; or 3-5 academic advisors representing a variety of advising offices on campus, if applicable

EAB Resources:

- Reorganization talking points for students (included in this resource center)

Committee Checklist
☐ Identify student success goals for divisional reorganization and venues for divisions to encourage open discussion about student progress
☐ Communicate reorganization to students, working with institution-wide communication offices
☐ Seek feedback on reorganization from student government
☐ Determine whether the institution will undergo curricular review and reform as part of divisional reorganization, and on what timeline
☐ Determine whether the institution will partially or fully reorganize student housing around divisional themes
☐ Determine whether the institution will revise general education requirements around divisional themes and/or add new required courses focused on making connections between disciplines
☐ Identify opportunities for students to engage with divisional themes through undergraduate research, entrepreneurship programs, community projects, and projects for study abroad/study away
☐ Work with Academic Space Committee to identify space requirements for student housing and learning based on divisional model
☐ Determine whether academic advising and/or career services structures will reorganize based on divisional structure

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Administrative Staff Task Force

Charge:

- Inventory current department and college administrative roles

- Create standard titles and position descriptions for administrative staff within division offices

- Identify opportunities for staff career development and networking across divisions

Members:

- At least one faculty member from each college or school (5-10 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- 1-3 representatives from the staff council and/or staff union, if applicable

- 1-3 associate VP-level staff from the chief academic officer's and/or chief budget officer's office

Note: Institutions without a significant number of departmental staff do not need to create this task force. At many smaller institutions, unit administration is overseen by faculty and should be examined as part of the service requirement.

Task Force Checklist
☐ Identify any tasks conducted by administrative staff that are duplicated or redundant across multiple departments or colleges (e.g., clerical work, in-house IT support, and social media or web management)
☐ Ensure that most divisions have 3-5 administrative staff (This may be increased in divisions with significant, specialized research and advising needs.)
☐ Surface examples of successful technology implementation in academic units and determine a plan to scale all divisions
☐ Identify tasks conducted by administrative staff that can be done centrally (e.g., freshman orientation planning, instructional technology, [some] research grant support, course room assignments, management of high-impact practices such as study abroad, and [some] student advising)
☐ Draft position descriptions that explicitly discuss the benefits and requirements of working in a multidisciplinary organization
☐ Identify specialized administrative staff roles that can professionalize and deduplicate existing staff work (e.g., scheduling specialist, web specialist, social media specialist)
☐ Determine career path and evaluation process for specialized administrative staff, working within human resources policies
☐ Inventory any administrative staff roles specific to individual disciplines and determine whether there is any overlap across disciplines
☐ Work with Academic Space Committee to identify office space reorganization needs and whether any current administrative office space can be repurposed

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Process Improvement Task Force

Charge:

- Determine processes, systems, and functions that need to be adapted to the divisional structure

- Collect feedback from faculty and staff on process improvement

- Identify overlapping or redundant processes across academic units

- Recommend areas for the institution to invest in technological solutions to process challenges

Members:

- At least one faculty member from each college or school (5-10 faculty members, at institutions without colleges or schools)

- 1-3 administrators representing the registrar, campus budget office, and human resources

- At least one faculty or staff member with expertise in project management, if applicable

Task Force Checklist
☐ Identify processes, systems, and functions specific to disciplines or departments within the university (e.g., budgeting and cost calculation, expense reporting and tracking, faculty workload and research tracking, course scheduling, human resources, student advising, student-facing forms and approvals, and inter-unit liaisons)
☐ Determine whether processes, systems, and functions can be streamlined in divisional structure
☐ Survey academic units or conduct listening tours to surface and scale best practices for process and system streamlining
☐ Update language in unit-level academic and administrative policies to reflect divisional organization and leadership and determine any policies that need to be rewritten entirely
☐ Review faculty handbook and bylaws to identify any language referring to departments or chairs and update to reflect divisional model
☐ Audit email communication and determine a triage process to reduce non-urgent messages sent to all faculty
☐ Update department codes in personnel systems, student information systems, etc. (Academic program codes and course codes do not need to be updated.)
☐ Work with institutional finance staff to update cost centers as needed
☐ Collect any project and process management resources from academic units and determine process to share them centrally

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Academic Space Task Force

Charge:

- Realign campus spaces with multidisciplinary needs

- Set timeline for faculty to move offices where needed

Members:

- One facilities administrator

- One representative from campus housing

- One faculty member from each discipline with specialized spaces (labs, studios, etc.)

EAB Resources:

- Maximizing Space Utilization (available on eab.com)

Task Force Checklist
☐   Determine whether, and how, the organization of campus space needs to change to reflect divisional structures
☐   Ensure that faculty and administrative staff in divisions are collocated
☐   Identify teaching and research spaces that can be shared across disciplines or divisions
☐   Assess resource needs for divisional space updates, and work with advancement leaders to determine how to cultivate funding sources for division-related capital planning
☐   Determine whether the institution will develop multidisciplinary spaces such as open laboratories, business incubators, makerspaces, modular labs, shared research/teaching labs, flexible meeting spaces, and/or flexible classrooms designed to support active learning formats
☐   Flag new or underutilized spaces to (re)develop as cross-disciplinary spaces; e.g., offer office space in new or renovated buildings only to faculty who volunteer to vacate a departmental office
☐   Create space guidelines to ensure faculty office spaces place faculty from different disciplines in proximity wherever possible, to diversify communication and collaboration
☐   Ensure that meeting spaces are available for informal faculty cohorts to gather to socialize and discuss disciplinary and programmatic needs

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.