

REPORT
of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure
of the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Criminal Justice

Submitted to Provost Stephen W. Director
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Executive Summary

Following its charge to evaluate the academic impact of dividing and/or merging the largest and smallest colleges of Northeastern University, the Committee drew on several sources of perspectives and information in exploring the potential advantages and disadvantages of different structural models for the current colleges of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and Criminal Justice (CCJ): input from students, faculty, administrators, and other members of the Northeastern community; data on admissions and enrollments and external funding; and a scan of college structures and cases of college restructuring at other universities. Additionally, the Committee explored how various college structures might further the goals of the Academic Initiative. The Committee stresses that its exploration of the potential advantages and disadvantages of the various possible college structures presented in its charge is necessarily speculative and hypothetical, given the many variables involved in any large-scale institutional change and given Northeastern University's concurrent move to the new budget model. The word "might" appears frequently in this report, which offers hypotheses for the next phase of discussion and review rather than settled judgments.

Community Perspectives

Input from community stakeholders was strikingly disparate across the two colleges. Faculty and administrative perspectives dominated input gathered from and about CAS, while current students, alumni, and parents, in addition to faculty and administrators, came forward in numbers from CCJ. A significantly higher proportion of CCJ stakeholders attended meetings, and the vast majority of email messages and letters received by the Committee came from them.

CAS stakeholders in general focused their evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the various possible structures on issues of management and governance, resources, the student experience, interdisciplinarity, and external image.

Management and governance: CAS stakeholders viewed the advantages of the present one-college model as including economies of scale, ease of communication, support for women faculty members in the natural sciences from a larger and better gender-balanced CAS faculty community, and precedent. They viewed the potential advantages of a two-or three-college model as including more efficient decision-making in smaller and less diverse colleges; more shared setting of priorities; better access to the dean; better-informed tenure evaluations from more similar disciplinary knowledge; clearer intellectual vision for units from the dean; and more effective advocacy with the provost.

Resources: CAS stakeholders viewed the advantages of the present one-college model as including, again, both economies of scale and powers of scale, including advocacy at the University level for small departments such as those in the arts. They viewed the advantages of a two- or three-college model as including more appropriate allocation of resources by deans more knowledgeable of particular disciplines; as incentivizing the pursuit of external funding and the improvement of research administration in the physical sciences; and as better enabling deans to advocate for resources on the basis of academic excellence.

Student experience: CAS stakeholders viewed the present one-college model as better at facilitating an integrated student experience, upholding the value of liberal education across all the college's disciplines and incentivizing teaching to nonmajors, lowering administrative barriers to student exploration, enabling double majors, attracting undeclared students, and easing internal transfers. CAS stakeholders viewed the two- or three-college models as potentially better at providing more uniform policies and requirements for graduate programs; more sense of community among students; and more attention to individual instructional programs within each college.

Interdisciplinarity: CAS stakeholders viewed the present one-college model as more congruent with Northeastern's emphasis on interdisciplinarity, as structurally more supportive of interdisciplinary studies, as encouraging synthesis over specialization, as enabling students to register easily for courses outside their home departments, as directing resources towards interdisciplinary programs, and as fostering the development of a number of innovative interdisciplinary programs. Some CAS stakeholders saw a possible advantage to a separate college of sciences as possibly promoting more interdisciplinary activity because its dean would have fewer units to coordinate.

External Image: Some CAS stakeholders viewed the present one-college model as presenting a more obvious destination for students seeking a liberal arts education; as more congruent with the 21st century sense of the importance of bringing down boundaries; as potentially more attractive to a talented candidate for the deanship and to women faculty candidates in the physical and life sciences; and as more attractive to arts students who do not want the professional, specialized “arts academy” education offered by other local institutions with which Northeastern may not be well-positioned to compete. Some CAS stakeholders viewed the two- or three-college models as having advantages of visibility and prestige. Some believe that a science college, combining the CAS’s highest-ranking graduate departments, may be more visible and attractive to potential students, parents, and donors; that a college of arts and architecture would more successfully establish “brand identity” than in a larger unit; and that smaller colleges generally might confer more visibility on their programs.

CCJ stakeholders similarly focused their attention on issues of *management/governance, resources, student experience, interdisciplinarity, and external image.*

Management and governance: CCJ stakeholders see CCJ’s current autonomous standing as an advantage for flexibility and effectiveness in decision-making around budgets and faculty hiring as well as academic programming; for tenure and promotion decisions; for grant management and management of student inquiries. The autonomous structure has precedent — in CCJ’s successful 41-year history — as well as the verdict of external rankings of the college’s programs as advantages. A few CCJ stakeholders believe that CCJ may be too small to be efficiently managed and may be somewhat isolated from potential collaboration in its present position.

Resources: CCJ stakeholders see the College’s current autonomous structure as providing independent decision-making power over budget allocation, which has enabled CCJ to direct resources towards student service personnel, faculty, office space, equipment, graduate assistants, and faculty development funding. They see the autonomous college as advantaged in the pursuit of external funding and in its relation to co-op employers as well as in its ability to attract students and support tuition revenue. CCJ stakeholders are, however, concerned about the current decline in undergraduate CCJ enrollments and its implications for the economic viability of the autonomous College of Criminal Justice.

The Student Experience: CCJ stakeholders see the autonomous college as supporting smaller class sizes, more advisors, more student-faculty interaction, more sense of identity and community. They associated special value on the fact that they initially selected and would eventually receive a diploma from a college rather than a department or school. They see the CCJ as easy to navigate for students and as offering significantly more coop resources to students than CAS. Some stakeholders see advantages for students in a merger that would

provide CCJ students with more routine contact with students from other majors (and vice versa) and that might improve the pre-law advising process.

Interdisciplinarity: CCJ stakeholders see the autonomous college as already supporting a wide range of interdisciplinary activity, with links to the life sciences, the social sciences, law, computer science, and engineering, and preferred this presently wide range to a more focused alliance with the CAS social sciences. Unlike a number of CAS stakeholders, CCJ students who reflected on the ease of majoring or taking courses across college boundaries reported no difficulty in doing so, at least with other units in CAS. Some stakeholders, however, suggested that Criminal Justice should not be separate from the social sciences, since most of the discipline is based on the social sciences, and proposed that merging CCJ would facilitate collaboration.

External image: CCJ stakeholders see the autonomous college as a major asset to the program's external image and view a merger as seriously damaging the leadership status and visibility in the field currently enjoyed by the program. CCJ stakeholders see the external image of the independent college as a significant advantage in faculty and student recruitment, in co-op and post graduation hiring, and in the practical impact of the CCJ's research on urban crime and security issues. No CCJ stakeholder saw a merger as advantaging the external image of the criminal justice programs or the University.

Concerns about the restructuring process shared across CAS and CCJ: Stakeholders across both colleges requested more time for input, more open and honest discussion, more clarity on the impact of hybrid budgeting and on the potential costs of restructuring, more intellectual as opposed to managerial perspective on the Committee's charge, a better sense of the motivation for considering the restructuring, and more research on other institutions' structures. Stakeholders in CAS seek a declaration of strategic purpose for the division if CAS is to be restructured.

Restructuring and the Academic Plan

Urban Engagement and Global Dimensions The social sciences of CAS and CCJ have a number of overlapping and in some instances collaborative initiatives underway in urban engagement, such the School of Social Science, Urban Affairs, and Applied Public Policy in CAS and the Institute on Race and Justice, combining the efforts of the CCJ, the School of Law, and the several departments in CAS. CAS has originated major undergraduate international programs that are now University-wide, such as the Dialogue of Civilizations programs. CCJ has recently emphasized comparative international research in criminology and is engaged in significant international program development.

Potential advantages in restructuring: CAS has made a significant investment in urban affairs in founding the School of Social Science; if the School became a signature initiative of a more focused college, it might gain in visibility. Bringing Criminal Justice into a college with the social science disciplines of CAS might also strengthen the University public profile in practice-oriented urban policy. International initiatives in the social sciences, humanities, and arts disciplines might also attain more visibility on a two- or three-college model for CAS.

Potential disadvantages of restructuring: A division might distance the physical sciences from the policy arm of the CAS social sciences, possibly inhibiting future collaborations on cross-disciplinary urban and global themes. A division might increase the distance between students in the physical sciences and the cross-cultural competences fostered by the humanities, arts, and social sciences. A merger of CCJ with the social sciences might diminish the focus and high visibility attained by CCJ's global initiatives.

Creative, Aesthetic, and Ethical Dimensions: Although these themes transcend particular disciplines, this area of the Academic Plan also specifically recognized the emergence of arts and humanities disciplines at Northeastern and called upon the University to excel in the creation, investigation, and dissemination of creative work and in teaching the creative “tools of contemporary life”—literacy across all creative media, not just in the traditional written word—to all Northeastern students.

Potential advantages to restructuring: A distinct college of arts and architecture, humanities, and social sciences may provide a closer, more productive environment for developing, investigating, and disseminating creative work. A separate arts and architecture college may increase the visibility of these programs and their allied creative activities. Joining CCJ in a unit with the social sciences of CAS may increase communication between these closely allied disciplines.

Potential disadvantages to restructuring: Dividing CAS may diminish communication between the physical and life sciences and the social sciences and humanities, especially for students. A separate college of the arts and architecture is viewed with concern by some faculty producing historical and interpretive scholarship—along lines expected in the humanities—in the arts disciplines. CCJ's distinctive ethical relationship to the surrounding community may be diminished in a merger.

Experiential Education: CAS and CCJ have evolved different cultures and structures of experiential education. CAS emphasizes variety, including research and service learning along with traditional co-op, and assigns unit-based academic faculty as experiential education

advisors. CCJ emphasizes co-op and has invested resources in credit-bearing integration seminars and higher co-op coordinator/student ratios than in CAS.

Potential advantages in restructuring: Criminal Justice students might see expanded opportunities for service learning and research; Arts and Sciences units might see new models of integrating co-op into academic curricula.

Potential disadvantages: Co-op advisor/ student ratios in CCJ and CAS bear out CCJ students' concerns about losing access to co-op advisors in a merger. Some CCJ stakeholders fear their close network of co-op employers loyal to the College might erode in a merger.

Interdisciplinary and Translational Research: The Academic Plan calls upon Northeastern to enhance existing and emerging centers of excellence in fundamental, interdisciplinary, and translational research within a culture that rewards innovation and entrepreneurship as well as the building of partnerships with external institutions. The Plan recognizes that Northeastern's research support infrastructure must be strengthened.

Potential advantages in restructuring: More homogeneous colleges might more readily recognize strengths and take action to develop clusters and centers of excellence. More homogeneous colleges might also be more proactive in graduate recruitment and in creating effective, accountable, and suitably specialized research infrastructures.

Potential disadvantages in restructuring: New barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration might arise; resources might go to adding administrative overhead rather than to improving the research infrastructure in a division of CAS.

Internal Data Bearing on CCJ and CAS

Enrollments: CCJ's applicant pool (down 30% this year) and its academic profile vis-à-vis the rest of the University point to the likelihood of undergraduate headcounts in CCJ continuing to contract. CCJ nevertheless appeals strongly to a core of well-qualified applicants, with yields overall higher than University averages.

Potential advantages in restructuring: CCJ might struggle in the future to sustain a college infrastructure at significantly smaller enrollments; the overall quality of CCJ students might improve if pressure to keep enrollments at their historical levels were removed.

Potential disadvantages in restructuring: CCJ's current high appeal to strong students might weaken.

The physical and life sciences and mathematics departments of CAS have growing majors and a healthy and increasing share of CAS enrollments, at 39% of CAS's undergraduate and 43% of graduate enrollments (2007 data). Majors enrolled in the humanities and social sciences have also increased over the past decade; although total credit hours have declined somewhat in these areas, they still account for 45% of undergraduate and 39% of graduate CAS enrollments. Headcounts in the arts and architecture have risen over the past decade, with architecture showing especially strong emergence at the graduate level, where it now accounts for 13% of CAS graduate enrollments. The arts and architecture still, however, account for just 12% of all CAS enrollments.

Potential advantages to restructuring: There is a strong and diversified enrollment base in CAS on which more focused colleges might be launched.

Potential disadvantages to restructuring: On a three-college model, the arts and architecture might struggle to sustain a college infrastructure if present growth trends level off.

External funding: CCJ has focused on securing external research funding and has been increasingly successful, both absolutely and in comparison with the social science departments in CAS.

Potential advantages to restructuring: Closer collaboration with externally funded research centers in related areas of the social sciences.

Potential disadvantages to restructuring: Loss of visibility and standing with external agencies, loss of local control over research overhead return, and dilution of CCJ's disciplined focus on external funding expectations in a larger, more diverse college.

CAS comprises disciplines with very disparate records and expectations of external research funding. External funding, especially high-return federal funding, in CAS resides primarily in the physical and life sciences, with funding levels rising but still modest in some social science research centers and departments.

Potential advantages to restructuring: A college of physical and life sciences and mathematics might find it easier to agree to invest in shared support systems for funded research and would have clear control over its higher levels of overhead return. Distinct colleges of social sciences, humanities, and/or arts and architecture might develop stronger cultures of seeking the kinds of funding available in those disciplines.

Potential disadvantages to restructuring: Social sciences, humanities, and arts disciplines might not develop infrastructure or expectations for seeking funding appropriate to these areas and might not develop collaborations with the physical and life sciences in areas where high-return interdisciplinary funding opportunities exist. CCJ, if merged with the social sciences of arts and humanities, might lose control over its research overhead and lose standing with external agencies.

External Perspectives

College of Arts & Sciences typologies compared to Northeastern: Northeastern University is almost unique in having just one college to house its collection of twenty-one departments among the peer and aspirant universities that the Committee examined. The types of organizational structures of colleges of arts and sciences nationally range from inclusive “one-college types” that contain a significant proportion of the university’s liberal arts and non-professional academic majors in one college, like Northeastern University, to “multiple-college types” that have a plethora of separate discipline-related colleges. The Committee examined twenty-four peer and aspirant universities that contained at least the same twenty-one disciplinary department units that are presently contained in CAS. Of the twenty-four peer and aspirant universities, only one, Brandeis University, shares Northeastern’s one-college CAS model (Brandeis is one-third Northeastern’s size). The other twenty-three institutions in the Committee’s study housed the disciplines of Northeastern’s present CAS within an average of 4.4 separate colleges, ranging from a low of two separate colleges (Johns Hopkins University) to a high of ten separate colleges (University of Southern California).

Comparison to these other institutions suggests that:

Potential advantages of restructuring Northeastern’s present College of Arts and Sciences might include increased fundraising capacity; improved departmental representation to the upper administration of the University; increased contact between chairs and faculty of more focused colleges; more effective student recruitment; more effective tenure mentoring; and more effective curriculum and research management.

Potential disadvantages of restructuring include increased overhead and increased bureaucracy in multiple colleges, potential duplication of courses within similar sub-disciplines, and increased difficulty in creating interdisciplinary curricula.

The Committee's brief case studies of other institutions that have restructured (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Syracuse University) show that some universities have merged smaller units to form a larger unit and others have chosen to transform their large units to smaller, more discipline-specific ones. The challenges inherent to the restructuring process, however, are similar in both directions. The case studies suggest that it is important to have a strategic university goal behind the suggested reorganization, to set a general plan for realizing that goal through the remodeling of institutional units, and to establish good communication with faculty/staff, students, and alumni and promote discussion about the process among the constituents of the involved units.

Universities with Criminology/Criminal Justice Programs: The top-ranked US doctoral programs are rather limited in number: The 2009 *US News and World Report* review ranked 22 out of the listed 34 programs. Northeastern moved up from the 14th position in 2006 to the 12th most recently, a ranking held jointly with the University of Pennsylvania, University of Florida, and Arizona State University. The configuration of the top-ranked programs varies, with some units having unique structures, such as the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (currently 10th), which is part of the City University of New York and offers courses beyond criminology and criminal justice, or the University of Cincinnati (3rd), where it is a program only. Structures comparable to Northeastern are found at SUNY-Albany (2), Rutgers University-Newark (7), Florida State University (7), Arizona State University (12), and Sam Houston University (22). Some of these institutions house Criminal Justice in units labeled as schools, others in colleges, but their common attribute that unit heads enjoy administrative independence and report without intermediary to the Provost or Chancellor.

Brief case studies of two public universities that have restructured their Criminal Justice programs suggest that autonomous status confers advantages. Florida State University, which over time moved Criminal Justice from departmental to college status, most recently moved from 11th to 7th in the *USNWR* rankings. By contrast, the University of South Carolina established a College of Criminal Justice in 1974, and in 2002 converted it into a department, merged into a College of Liberal Arts with the intention of creating institutional synergies and improving research and scholarship; the department remains unranked and has had no greater success than the former college in achieving national recognition.

These external comparisons suggest that:

Potential advantages of merging CCJ include possible administrative savings and synergies.

Potential disadvantages of merging CCJ include the risk of losing prestige, prominence and identity; diminished decision-making effectiveness under hybrid budgeting; and diminished ability to attract and retain faculty, students, and external funding.

Concluding Remarks

Although there were many conflicting opinions and considerations in most aspects of our study, the Committee observes that there appeared to be almost uniform support amongst the CCJ community for maintaining the status quo. At the same time, the Committee faced a situation in which there was extreme concern about the future of CCJ within that college and its alumni community and markedly less interest in this issue outside of CCJ. The passion and unanimity shown by CCJ appears to indicate a unique culture for this college that should be considered in any Northeastern University college restructuring decision. The degree to which the committee found itself focusing on CCJ concerns also constrained the time and attention it was able to devote to the College of Arts and Sciences—the larger, more diverse, and more complex of the two colleges under review. The Committee looks forward to the fuller exploration of these issues with the Northeastern community as a whole.