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## December 2016 Minutes

USM Council of Chairs

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Council of Chairs  
12/9/16

Guest speaker: Amy Miller

Topic of discussion: University reorganization and RFPs

Dr. Miller was invited to the meeting to provide a history of the reorganization process and to explain planning document and process.

For over a year, the Provost's Office has been asking the following questions: How to operate mid-transition? What models nationwide are working? How can this be done in the spirit of shared governance? How can we be proactive? How can we be prepared for future cuts? How can we identify ourselves, what makes us different from other institutions? What can we do differently to communicate who we are and how can a new organizational structure support that? How can we position ourselves to recruit and retain students? How can we start to build a stockpile in revenue? Are we in the optimal structure?

Any short term initiative does not necessarily generate revenue. We have laid the groundwork for student retention and recruitment; we are underway in that respect.

Chairs are concerned with the short timeline. They are hearing that from their faculty. Dr. Miller says that we can change the timeline; however, we are experiencing a sense of urgency. The bottom line: the sooner we get things planned, the sooner we can act.

It seems that we are being asked to consider two things that are not necessarily coherent (programmatic and curricular expansion vs. unit consolidation). Dr. Miller thinks the RFPs will be the beginning of more conversations. At a certain point, expansion arguments need to be logical and coherent and yield increased teaching/research/grant opportunities/etc..

Department faculty are feeling some angst. Student Success Initiatives and expected resource reallocation from those initiatives is an example of an activity that we thought would lead to resources, but it has not. There is concern about ongoing Dean searches. Dr. Miller reports that at the present we are not able to internally reallocate at all. KPIs: We are working to generate better internal data. KPIs data are informational and contextual. Returning revenue to units that generate revenue.

Short term crises vs. long term reorganization—in example, centralizing positions could happen without a full scale reorganization. Can we not just reorganize some central/core administrative process issues without a complete reorganization? We don't want to negatively impact units that are doing well. Dr. Miller: the scale and pace of change will determine the length of implementation. Other examples: KPI data, SCHs follow faculty.

Strategy follows structure. Where should our discussions with faculty lie? It seems like the “strategy” level is more like a level 3 proposal, which is about intellectual synergies, etc.. These may or may not involve reorganizing departments, etc. A chair said that this is not clear in the RFP. She said that this also creates a sense of fear of losing disciplinary identity.

Dr. Miller: We are not talking about cutting programs or people. Fewer Deans, fewer Chairs. Also, there is a lot of variability in the role of the Chair across campus at the present.

Will a reorganization lead to an exodus of faculty and/or administrative departures? Do we have any data to help us know what to expect? Also, we need resources to follow productivity.

This plan seems more like a centralization, not a decentralization. It seems like the ability of chairs to solve problems and be flexible at the unit level are lessened in the new plan. Dr. Miller: transparency is a concern in this entire process.

Should we just work to improve our KPIs? Dr. Miller: No, we need to keep the KPIs contextualized, especially if this is done for student success, etc..

Teaching vs. research. Chairs need to know how to achieve success in their programs; clear and EXPLICIT directions/guidelines will be needed for this. We want to know how to make the clearest case we can for our departments.

Dr. Miller: We need a nuanced way to look at data. A chair: KPIs data are rather blunt. Can we break out major and GEC SCHs?

The cost of reorganization. People’s time and effort so far, and through the transition? Is it worth it? Perhaps a more thoughtful and longer process is more called for.

Dr. Miller: There are many possibilities for change. How much? How fast? And with what potential gain? Should the Chairs make an alternative recommendation for a timeline?

What would the KPIs look like if we all taught at CUPA averages? Dr. Miller: We are \$7. Million behind CUPA. Yes, she agrees that faculty attrition for this reason is a real concern.

Much of this reorganization work will happen at the Chair level. We all need to be involved in this process. At the same time, most everything we do daily has gotten more complicated/tedious. Is there less confidence in the chairs? Some processes seem to run counter to each other. Dr. Miller: Yes, the workload of the chair is magnified as compared to the past. We need more revenue to have more flexibility to solve some of these issues.

There is concern that we have not seen the President throughout all this reorganization. What message are we sending to new faculty?

Dr. Miller: Shared governance and transparency are important. We have turned the corner in recruitment and retention. We are in dire financial times. The question now is what is the next logical step.

Dr. Miller departed the meeting. The meeting continued with Chairs only.

Are we destabilizing ourselves now? Is this a Provost's level initiative? The timeline is short. The KPI process is unidimensional.

Any reorganization effort should be data driven, value driven, and mission driven. The timeline for an reorganization process should be extended so that the process can be well-discussed, inclusive and comprehensive. There is fear about what will be lost in a process of change. There is a fear of attrition of faculty. A change process will be destabilizing and distracting from other efforts and initiatives that are currently underway, including recruitment and retention. Costs associated with change at the unit level are not known to the Provost. Chairs think this will affect students in addition to faculty. Chairs are concerned that this will demand our time and energy be demanded internally, which will impact our ability to work externally. Any reorganization needs to be more strategic.