



# Academic Restructuring

# An Only Slightly Less Pessimistic Projection

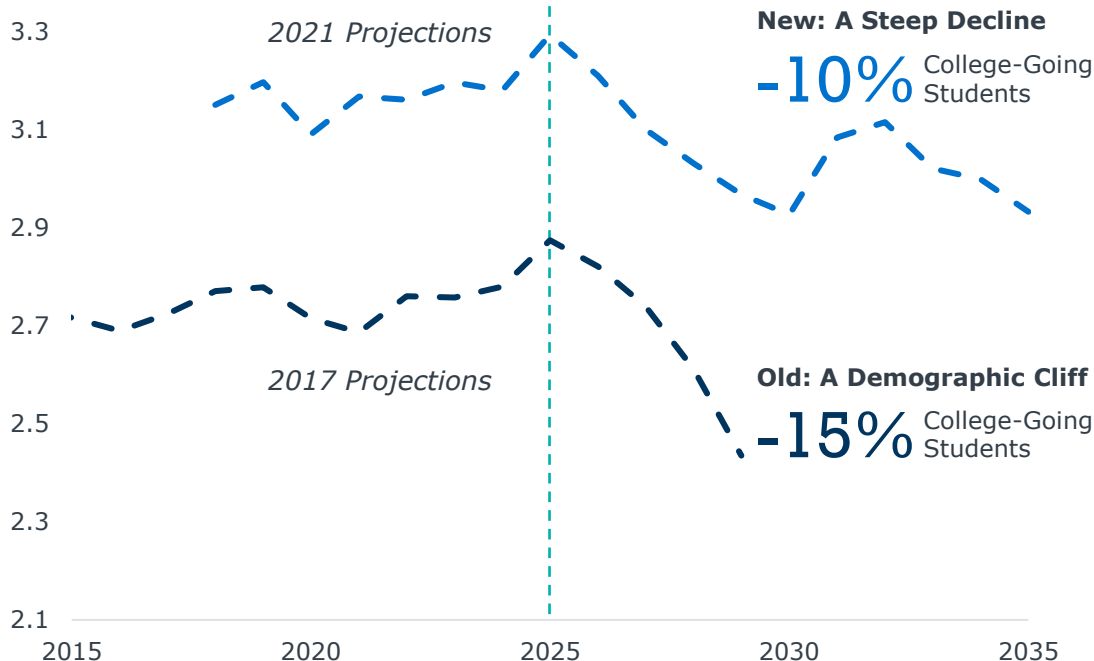


## Years of Enrollment Stagnation...

Millions of College-Going Students

## Followed by Dramatic Decline

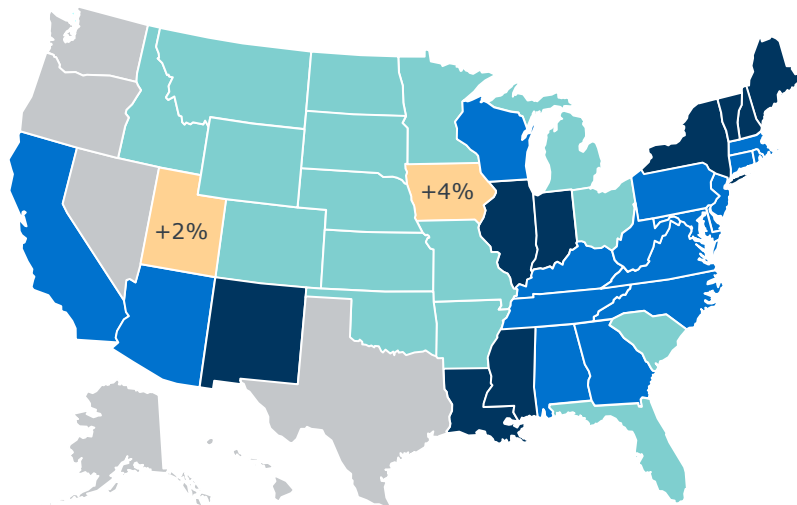
2025 Onwards



# A Nearly-Universal Population Cliff

## Falling Birthrates Will Hit Institutions Across the US

Percent Change in the Population of 18-Year-Olds, 2025-2035



-5% to -10%

+10% and Up

-10% to -20%

+0% to +10%

-20% and lower

-0% to -5%

## Demographics Hit Regional Institutions Much Harder

Change in demand, 2025-2035

-6% Private Institutions

-1% 'Elite'  
Top 50<sup>1</sup> research universities & liberal arts colleges

-5% National  
Top 50-100<sup>1</sup> research universities & liberal arts colleges

-10% Regional  
Ranked<sup>1</sup> outside of Top 100

1) Based on US News and World Report

# What's Missing from Demographic Decline

Enrollments over 10 Years, 7000+ Institutions, and 50 States

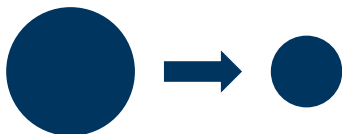
## Market Share has Almost Twice the Impact<sup>1</sup> on Enrollments vs. Demographics

*Estimated Effect on Average<sup>2</sup> Institution's Enrollment Changes 2008 to 2018*

*4-Yr Public and Private, Non-Profit Institutions*

### Demographics

The total number of students

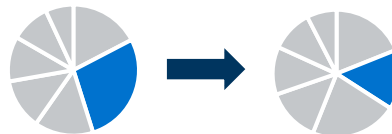


**37%**

Of enrollment change (up or down) across all public and private 4-years driven by demographics.

### Market Share

Your institution's share of total students



**63%**

Of enrollment change (up or down) across all public and private 4-years driven by market share.

1) Impact calculated as a share of the absolute year-on-year change  
 2) Weighted average of four-year public and private, non-profit institutions.

## Discussion

### Thoughts on this statement?

Market share in the future will depend on the ability to attract more students from a variety of segments with INNOVATIVE and DIFFERENTIATED academic offerings.

This will likely mean interdisciplinary programs focused on real-world problems.



# Barriers to Innovation

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# The Four Reasons That Universities Must Adapt



## Changing Demands from Students, Funders, and Society



### Rapidly Shifting Program Demand

- Declines in many traditional disciplines
- Rapid growth in pre-professional programs
- Strong interest in cross-disciplinary programs
- Growth in programs for working adults



### Changing Student Needs and Priorities

- More first gen, low-income, and under-represented students
- Students balancing work and family obligations with study
- Incoming students bringing more transfer credits
- Increasing emphasis on career outcomes and relevance



### Growing Focus on High Impact Research

- Increasing competition for traditional disciplinary grants
- Growth in large-scale multidisciplinary awards
- Desire to contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship
- Demands from funders to demonstrate impact of research



### Increasing Pressure on Financial Subsidies

- Flat or declining enrollments in most regions
- Public funding failing to keep up with rising costs
- Growing institutional investment in research
- Wide variations in faculty workloads and output

# The Archimedean Point



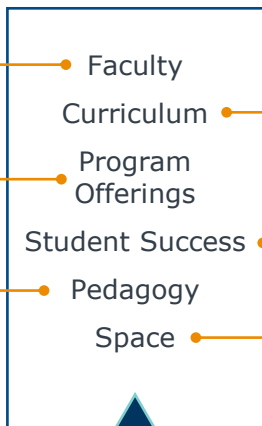
## Departments Are the Fulcrum for Every Major Change Initiative

### Key Decisions Effectively Controlled by Departments:

- Hiring
- Tenure and Promotion
- Workload and releases

- Majors
- New program launches

- Course redesign
- Online courses



- Major requirements
- Course offerings
- Gen ed component

- Major advising
- Credit transfer into major

- Course scheduling
- Faculty offices

### Provosts and Deans

“I can’t do anything if the faculty won’t go along with it.”

### Department Chairs

“I don’t get to make any decisions.”

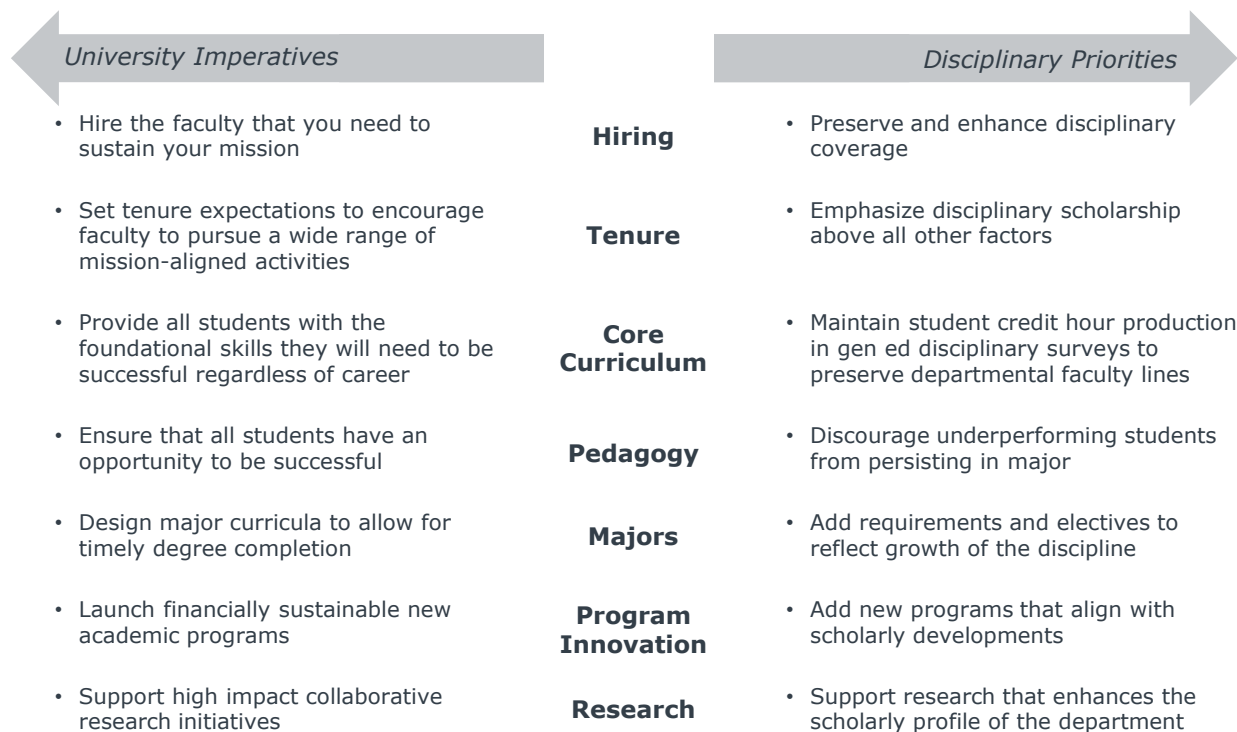
**Academic  
Departments**



# Framing the Fundamental Structural Problem



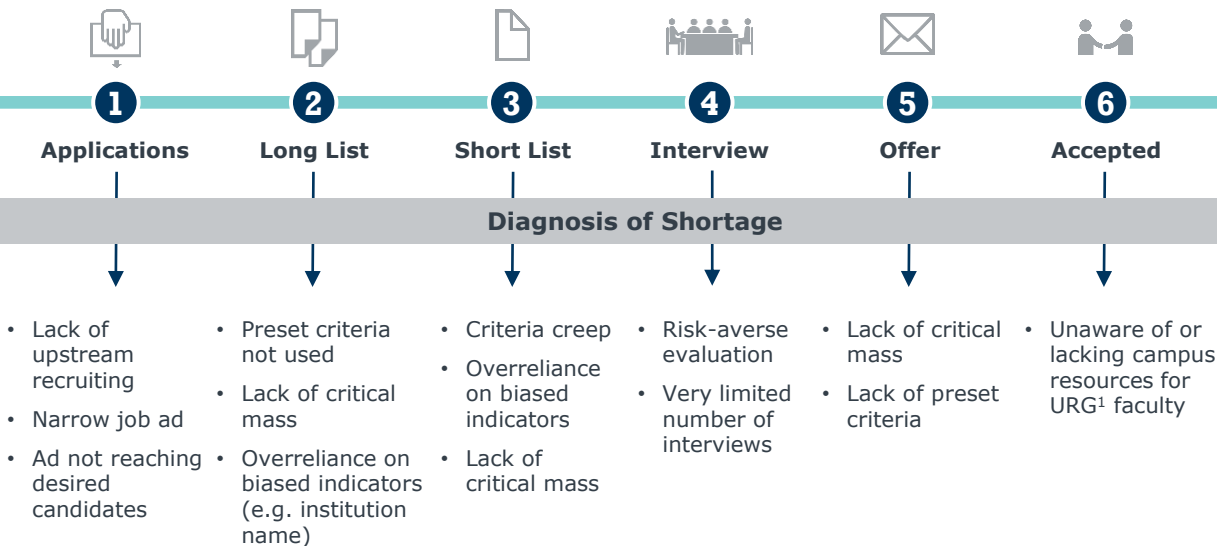
## Increasing Tensions Between University and Departmental Priorities





# Identify Leaks in the Hiring Pipeline

Tracking Each Stage of the Search to Ensure Equity



1) Underrepresented groups.



# Expanding the Hiring Horizon

## Three Ways Units Can Broaden Pools to Diversify Candidates

### Broadening the Entry Point



*Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity*

- Postdoc lines offered to units with future hiring needs, retirements
- Department-led search committees increase investment in hires
- Postdocs are given UNC-specific tenure guidance
- **50%** of program participants have been hired as full-time faculty since 2006

### Broadening the Timeline



*College of Engineering Three Year Hiring*

- Lines are allocated over three year period
- Standing hiring committee can network and recruit year-round
- ✓ Longer window with multiple lines reduces impact of in-group bias
- ✓ Able to hire off-cycle
- ✓ Hiring faculty develop expertise in recruiting

### Broadening the Discipline



*Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering*



Analysis revealed women were less likely to be hired when ads targeted narrow discipline

- Dean designates a few lines as cross-departmental hires
- Cross-departmental search committee identifies and prioritizes interdisciplinary candidates



# Alternative Structures

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# Emerging Cross-Disciplinary Org Models

## Shifting the Center of Gravity Away from Traditional Departments



### **Status Quo**

Semi-permanent centers, institutes, studies programs or generic interdisciplinary studies units



### **Grand Challenge Initiatives**

High-profile institution-wide collaborations organized around a major social problem



### **Cross-Disciplinary College**

College or school that brings together faculty from multiple disciplines



### **Cross-Departmental Units**

Large academic units that report to two or more departments or colleges/ faculties



### **University Institutes**

Cross-disciplinary units with significant, permanent infrastructure that reports to provost



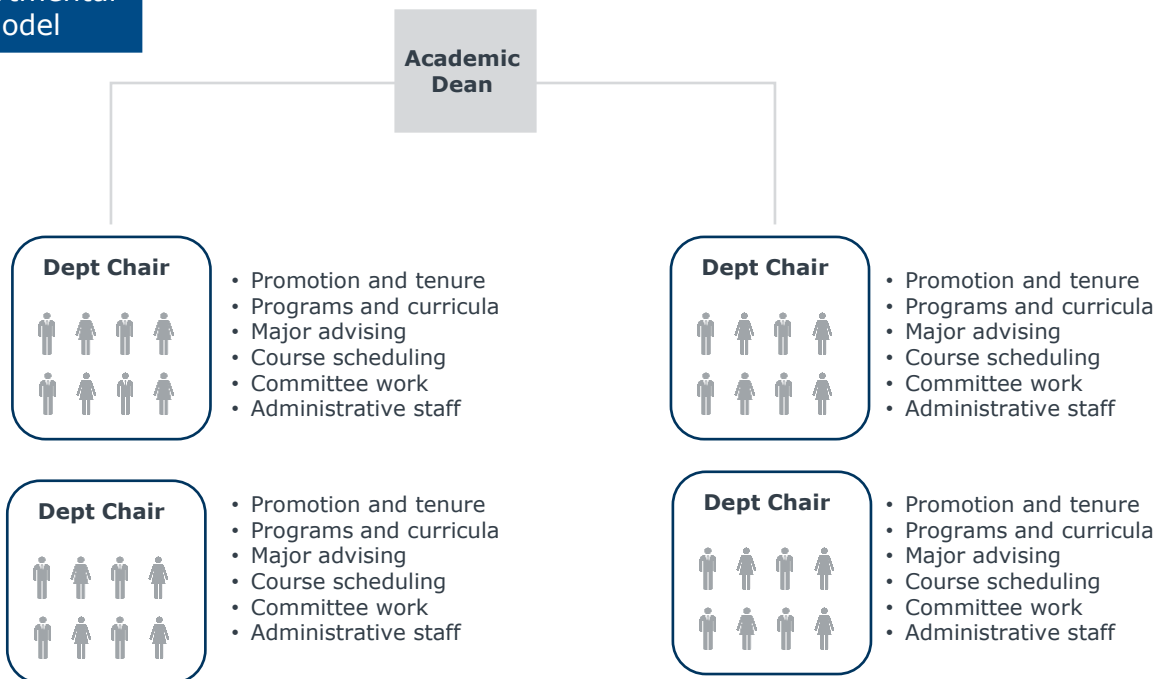
### **Division/ Cluster Model**

Multidisciplinary clusters that replace disciplinary departments (and sometimes colleges)

# A More Radical Approach to the Structure Problem

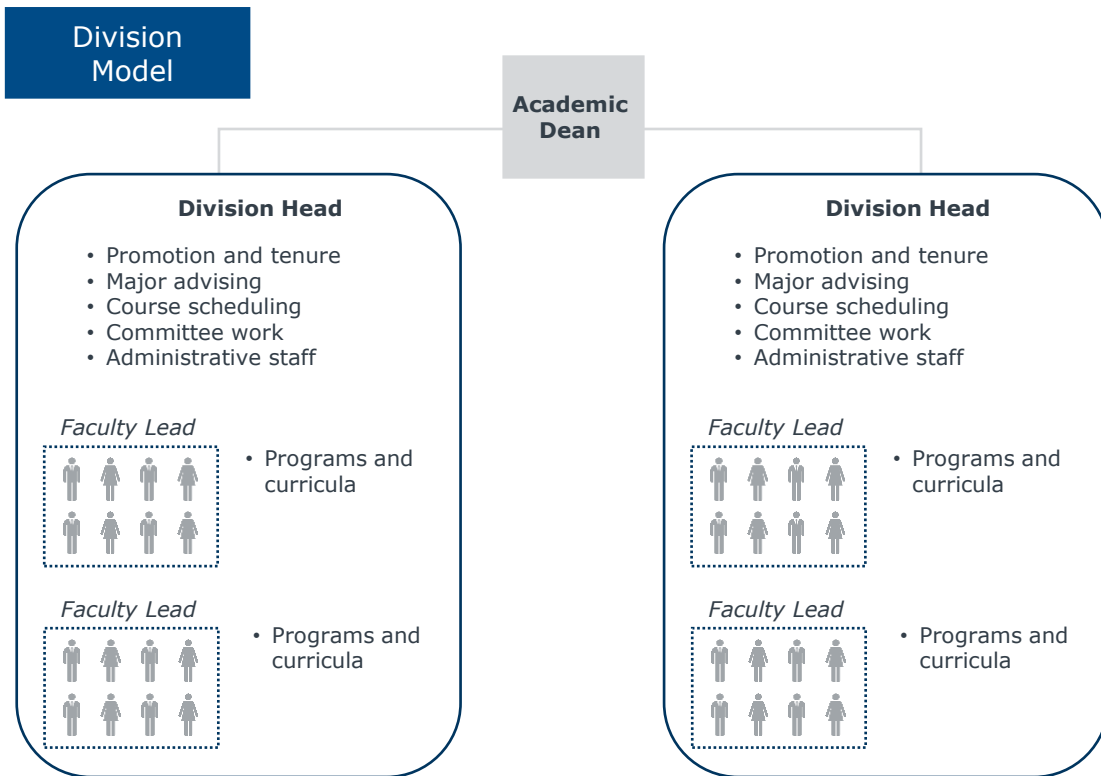
## Cross-Disciplinary 'Division' Model Abandons Traditional Departments

### Departmental Model



# A More Radical Approach to the Structure Problem

## Cross-Disciplinary 'Division' Model Abandons Traditional Departments



# “I Don’t Like This Model”



## Common First Reactions



### “This Won’t Solve the Problem”

- Doesn’t this just create another level of administration?
- Won’t these just become new silos?



### “I Could Never Do This”

- This would destroy our disciplinary strengths and rankings
- Our accreditors would never allow this
- My faculty would never allow this
- My collective bargaining agreement would never allow this



### “I Don’t Need to Do This”

- Our departments actually work pretty well
- We already have lots of cross-disciplinary collaboration
- The only reason to do this is financial exigency



# Growing Interest in Academic Restructuring

Similar Goals, Different Stages, Distinctive Approaches



Source: institutional websites, planning documents, and organizational charts from Berea College, Southern Oregon University, Plymouth State University, University of Southern Mississippi, and Arizona State University; EAB interviews and analysis.

# What Divisions Look Like in Practice

## Division Organization Varies with Institutional Mission, Strengths, and Size



- Business, Communication, and the Environment
- Education, Health, and Leadership
- Humanities and Culture
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Social Sciences
- Center for the Arts



- Arts and Technologies
- Health & Human Enrichment
- Education, Democracy, and Social Change
- Exploration & Discovery
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Justice & Security
- Tourism, Environment & Sustainable Development



- Biological, Environmental, and Earth Sciences
- Communication
- Computing Sciences and Computer Engineering
- Criminal Justice, Forensic Science, and Security
- Humanities  
*and many more...*



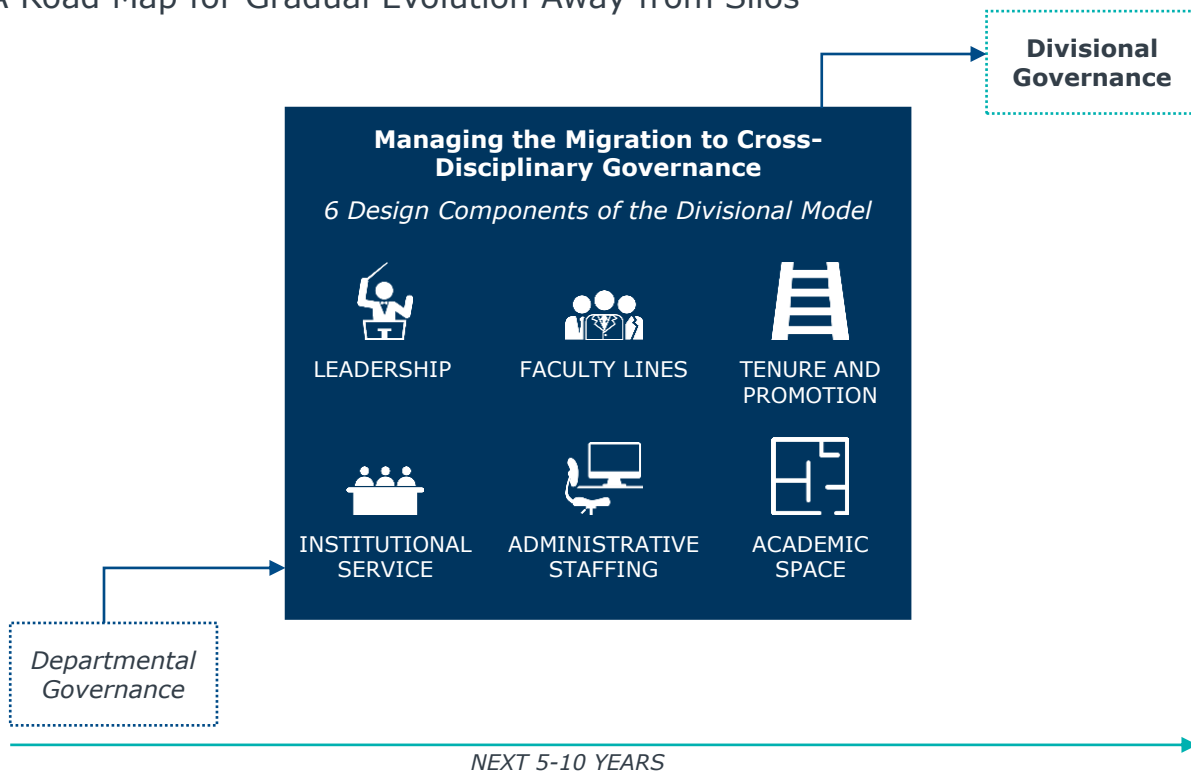
- Life Sciences
- History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies
- Sustainability
- Future of Innovation in Society
- Design Innovation
- Government, Politics, and Global Studies  
*and many more...*



- **Division I:** Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Nursing, Physics
- **Division II:** Agriculture and Natural Resources, Computer Science, Economics and Business, Sustainability & Environmental Studies, Technology and Applied Design
- **Division III:** Child and Family Studies, Health & Human Performance, Psychology, Sociology
- **Division IV:** Communication, English, Foreign Languages, Music, Theatre
- **Division V:** Art and Art History, Asian Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion
- **Division VI:** African and African American Studies, Appalachian Studies, Education Studies, Peace and Social Justice Studies, Women's and Gender Studies

# The Path to Divisional Governance

A Road Map for Gradual Evolution Away from Silos





**David Vuletich, Ph.D. MBA**

*Academic Strategy Lead*

*Research Advisory Services*

[DVuletich@eab.com](mailto:DVuletich@eab.com)

[www.linkedin.com/in/davidvuletich/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/davidvuletich/)



Washington DC | Richmond | Birmingham | Minneapolis | New York

202-747-1000 | [eab.com](http://eab.com)



# A New Leader for a New Structure

## Division Heads Are a Hybrid of Traditional Chair and Dean Roles

### High-Level Resource Strategy

- Budget and administration
- Financial and enrollment planning
- Metrics and goal-setting
- Cross-program resource allocation



*Devolved from central leadership*

**Division Heads** lead multidisciplinary academic units

*Evolved from department chairs*

### Faculty Leadership

- Staffing and personnel management
- Schedule and teaching assignments
- Faculty hiring and evaluation
- Assessment and accreditation needs



### 1 A Faculty Leader for Faculty

Tenure-line faculty are selected via competitive application process to serve as division head

### 2 Rightsizing Compensation

At most institutions, division heads should receive a stipend and a lower teaching load

### 3 Scaling with Institution Size

Division heads report to deans at larger institutions and to provosts at smaller institutions

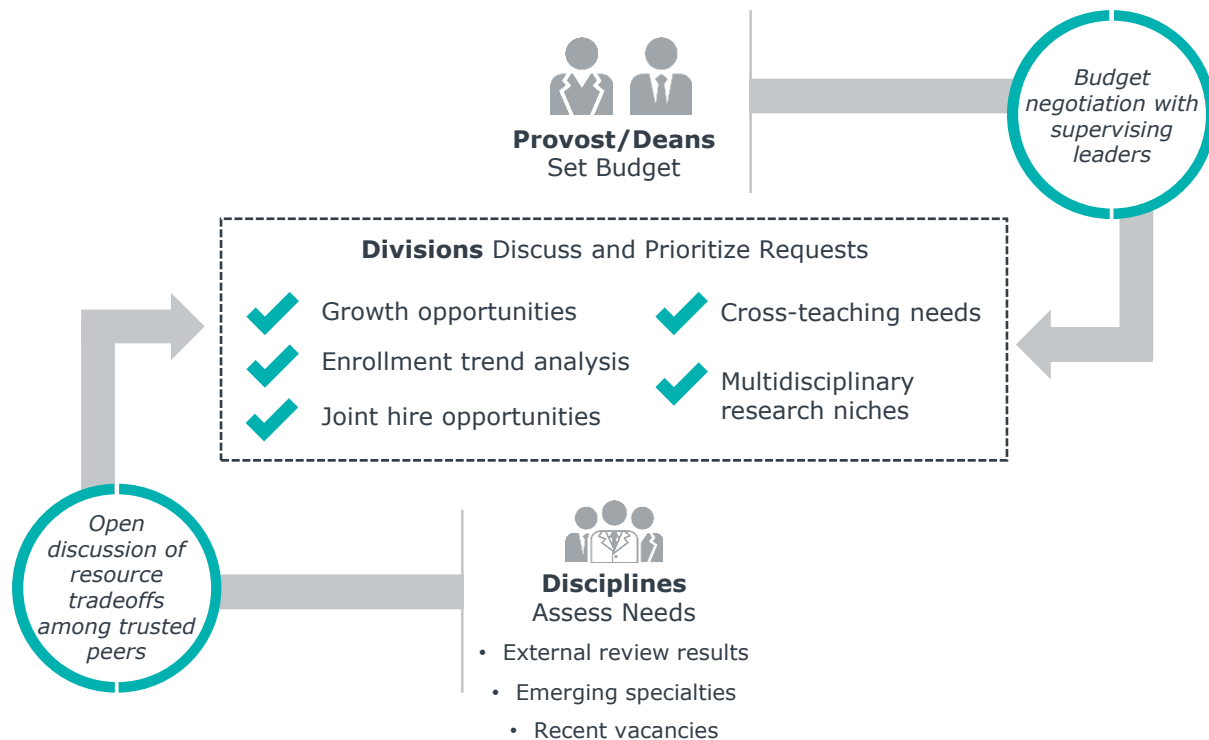
A dean or provost should oversee approximately **3-7** reporting units

Some **small colleges** may convert into divisions, reducing the number of deans



# A Two-Way Street

Divisional Faculty Line Strategy Is Flexible, Efficient, and Fair





# Broadening the Review Committee

## Division-Level Tenure Allows for Holistic and Strategic Evaluation



*Some Considerations Still Depend on Institutional Policy, Mission, and Size*

- **What size** is each committee?
- How many reviewers are **cross-disciplinary**? How many are **cross-divisional**?
- What **criteria** are used for evaluation?



# One Avoidable Reason Faculty Are Overworked

## Siloed Committees Consume Faculty Time Without Meaningful Output

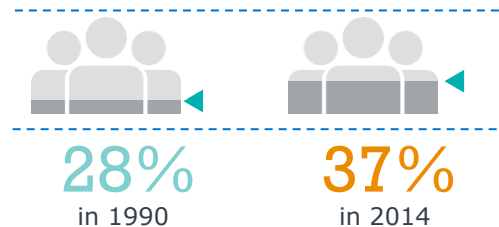
### One Department...How Many Committees?

*Faculty Committees, One English Department, State Flagship University*

- Mentoring Committee
- Merit Advisory Committee
- Committee on New Appointments
- Interdepartmental Liaison
- Committee on Assessment
- Committee for Undergraduate Writing
- Graduate Executive Committee
- Scholarship Committee
- Job Market Committee
- Conferences Committee
- Committee for Adjunct Affairs
- Inter-Campus Committee
- Web & Digital Committee
- Undergraduate Enrichment Committee
- Committee on Promotion to Professor
- Promotion and Tenure Committee
- Committee on New Appointments
- Creative Writing Committee
- MA Writing Project Committee
- Undergraduate Committee
- Committee on Committees

### No Time Left for Meaningful Work

*Percentage of Faculty Who Report Spending More Than Four Hours per Week on Committee Work*



### A Case of Misplaced Incentives

“As long as faculty are required to do service to the department, you end up creating committees just to fulfill the requirement. We have one committee to dig a ditch and another to fill it in.”

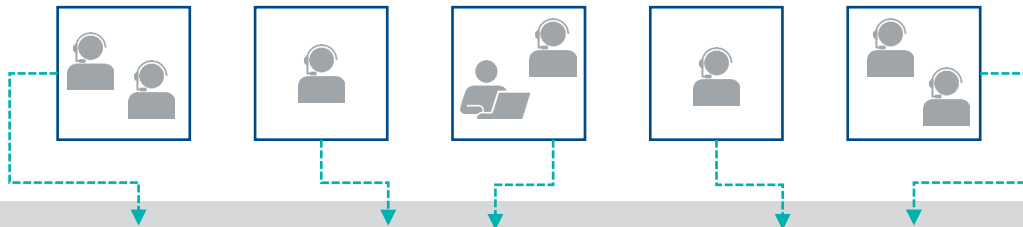
*Provost, Public Research University in the Northwest U.S.*



# Staying Close But Reaching Far

## The Benefits of Division-Level Shared Service “Hubs”

*1-2 administrative generalists per academic department*



### Receptionist

Faculty maintain access to collocated administrative support



### Web Coordinator

Staff in divisions can specialize, providing a career ladder



### Registrar Liaison

Consolidation of offices allows for process streamlining



### Others, as Needed

*Staffing should reflect unique divisional needs*



The **University of Alaska-Anchorage** reorganized administration in one college into four divisional hubs, allowing them to hire three new specialized staff for student success and reinvest **\$300K** toward university priorities

# Reinventing from the Outside In

## Assigning New Spaces by Thematic Areas of Collaboration, Not Departments



### Investing in Cross-Discipline Innovation

- 40 acres of multidisciplinary research space
- 50% growth in extramural research funds in 6-year period after founding



### Bringing Research and Teaching Together

- New Royal Victoria Hospital space organizes offices, labs, classrooms around sustainability, public policy themes
- Faculty must give up departmental offices to gain access to new space



### CORNELL TECH

### No More Department Offices

New Cornell Tech campus organized entirely around **interdisciplinary research areas** rather than traditional academic departments

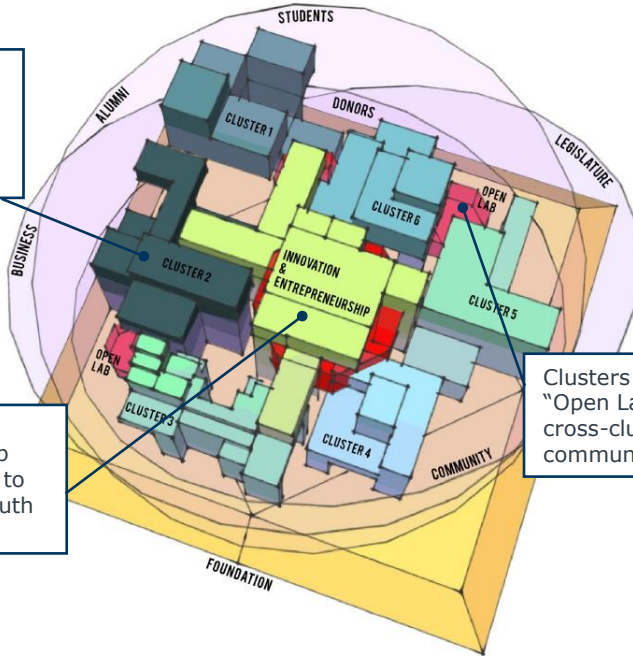
# Rethinking Space to Maximize Collaboration

## Plymouth State Aligns Entire Campus Along Divisional Themes

### Plymouth State University, "Our Future Structure"



Each division ("cluster") will have its own space for teaching, research, and student housing



Innovation & Entrepreneurship cluster centered to represent Plymouth State's mission

Clusters **share** access to "Open Labs" which fund cross-cluster research and community projects