



# Budget Reduction Task Force (BRTF) Feedback Submissions and Responses

COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS

**TO:**

**Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments**

“What was the process around the Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustment decision for functional teams?”

**RESPONSE:**

College of Arts & Letters (CAL) staff held weekly Critical Connections sessions on Tuesdays between July 14 through September 1 to allow staff to provide their expertise and input into a potential staff restructuring. Nine Critical Connections sessions were held to discuss the following topics related to staff restructuring, including finance; human resources; undergraduate and graduate studies; dean, director, and chair support; balanced and equitable workloads; facilities; unique support needs; and culture of engagement.

CAL staff had the opportunity to provide comments in an anonymous Qualtrics survey following the topic-specific presentations. Once the recommendations were completed (typically within a week's timeframe), they were presented to the staff who were then invited to anonymously submit a vote of yes or no to ratify the recommendation and again provide additional feedback via Qualtrics. Survey results were collected and sent to the recommendation committee to update the presentation if necessary. Once finalized, the staff recommendations were presented to the [Staff Structures and Personnel Subcommittee](#).

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**TO:**

**Steering Committee, Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments, Financial Advisory**

“The pod model of moving staff out of departments sounds like it would cause our already struggling departmental infrastructure to suffer even more. It is unlikely to even save us that much money, and if we end up creating bigger issues and more confusion on how/when things work, it will end up being more expensive. I also think that it would be demoralizing to an already demoralized faculty and staff. It would be another reason for me to consider leaving MSU.”

**RESPONSE:**

First, let me emphasize that we don't want you to leave the College or MSU. We are undertaking this restructuring to address budget reductions and to respond to an increasingly urgent situation in which we are unable to hire into positions that have already been vacated due to the hiring chill. Recognizing that these budget constraints are already very difficult, we are doing everything we can to engage the faculty and staff in this process to mitigate the levels of demoralization you mention. Our College of Arts & Letters staff was well represented and have offered substantive input to the recommendations made by the [Staff Structure and Personnel Subcommittee](#). Additionally, the proposed recommendations were informed by feedback surveys that were available to all CAL staff and faculty throughout the process.

As we move forward, this new structure will continue to evolve and be informed by feedback from staff and faculty. In the coming weeks, we will be working through the details, which include doing self-review and being flexible with timelines given the needs of each unit.

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**TO:**

**Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments**

“Having just learned about the suggested (approved?) move to a functional team model for staff, I would like to offer feedback. I previously worked at an institution that used a similar model. The reality of it was that it was not good for several reasons and on multiple fronts. First, it was terrible for staff; they were overworked and felt frazzled and disconnected. It was difficult for faculty because of the inefficiency of the model--more red tape and bureaucracy. Please reconsider.”

**RESPONSE:**

From the start of this process, we have been concerned about the very issues you raise in this comment—balance of workload, the connections and

relationships among staff and with the faculty and reducing bureaucracy and red tape. The success of the evolving model will depend in large part on our ability to cultivate leadership within and across functional teams, and we are developing a professional development plan that will support this effort. Maintaining existing relationships within units has been a central focus of the discussions within the subcommittee and staff met this summer. Our approach in engaging the staff directly on these issues is to draw on their local expertise, alleviate anxiety, and provide insight into specific challenges and opportunities in each unit. As mentioned above, the move to a functional model allows staff members to share knowledge in areas of expertise and provide back-up with each other, an advantage the current model does not effectively afford.

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**TO:**

**Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments**

“There is no evidence, even among universities who have attempted similar adjustments in moments of budget crisis, that centralizing the staff into "functional teams" will make operations more efficient. If the university is going to fire staff, that is a union issue. If the university is looking to streamline personnel, start with the deans, vice-deans, vice presidents, etc.”

**RESPONSE:**

The College is taking a multi-faceted approach to address the current and projected budget shortfalls guided by our [2020 Contingency Plan](#). Consistent with that strategy, our first principle is to “protect and put people first.” This has been our approach with the staff restructuring process as well as with potential adjustments to academic personnel, curriculum, and programs within the College. Since several of the [Big Ten Academic Alliance \(BTAA\)](#) institutions have transitioned to different types of staffing structures, we engaged in conversations with their administrators over this past summer to learn from their experiences. Due to the many unique variables of each institution’s infrastructures and values, it is difficult to make specific comparisons. The institutions who restructured their finance and/or human resource activities all indicated they experienced savings, with improvements to the functional teams’ efficiencies. Our approach is designed to elevate the quality of our work while attempting to navigate a situation in which we are unable to replace positions we have lost over the last year.

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**TO:**

**Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments**

“I implore you to rethink the Functional Teams model for staff reorganization. Our staff keep the college and departments running. The functional teams approach undermines and devalues the staff’s connection to the people they work with. This is an obtuse move with the singular goal of attrition. We see that. This will ultimately see staff doing more work for the same amount (or less) money. You can rationalize this move all you want, but this is not fair and not in line with CAL's culture of care or our values as humanists.”

**RESPONSE:**

Navigating these challenging MSU budget constraints is difficult. Our [Culture of Care](#) initiatives have guided us in the decisions we make here in the College and will continue to do so throughout this process as well. Staff attrition is not our goal with moving to functional teams. The insights and recommendations of the staff have already shaped and altered the model through this ongoing process. Drawing on the expertise of our staff will allow us to establish a model that maintains a high level of service for our students and faculty. As we develop the functional team model more in the coming months, we will be seeking input and feedback from staff. Their feedback will inform us of those relationship building functions we will need to maintain and nurture if we are to provide a high level of service to our students and faculty.

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**KRISTIN AROLA TO:**

**Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments**

“I was faculty at Washington State University for 11 years, during which time the University (due to budget constraints) shuffled all the staff into what we called "pods." I hear the same thing is being discussed, and maybe already a done deal, at MSU. From my experience at WSU, I can say that this model did NOT end up saving much money, created a lot of headaches for staff and the workers who relied on them, and perhaps most importantly, ended up negatively impacting the lives of some of our least paid, and most crucial, employees.”

**RESPONSE:**

Thank you, Kristin, for engaging in this process. I hope we can learn from the inadequacies of the WSU system so that we do not negatively impact the lives of our staff. The College of Arts and Sciences at WSU is quite a bit bigger than the MSU College of Arts & Letters. In their recommendations, the staff and faculty on the subcommittee for [Staff Structure and Personnel Subcommittee](#) indicated that CAL is more nimble than other Colleges at R1 Universities given our smaller

size. This should allow a functional teams approach to generate efficiencies and identify gaps of under-resourced areas.

We have had feedback from others in WRAC concerned about losing our capacity to respond effectively to student voices. This is of critical concern to us, so we are asking the functional team to identify strategies to ensure the model enables us to reach out proactively to students and to respond to their needs as they arise.

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**TO:**

**Steering Committee, Academic Structures, Curriculum and Integrity  
Programmatic Shifts, Staff Structure and Personnel Adjustments, Financial  
Advisory Board**

“Very pleased by the amount of engagement and meaningful empowerment for faculty and staff to be engaged in the Budget Reduction recommendations. Concerned that the only plan that really demonstrates a path to cost savings is the Staff Restructure. The current and impending budget cuts require more than overthinking potential retirement incentive packages, which aren't part of the authority of CAL and are not on the table for MSU. A lot of work went into these plans. Where is the road map to get us through the austerity budgeting we're facing?”

**RESPONSE:**

Thank you for calling attention to the engagement and meaningful empowerment of faculty and staff in this process. I have been impressed by and am very grateful for conscientious thought and effort that has gone into these reports and recommendations. Articulating responsive pathways to retirement for our faculty colleagues is an important part of our overall plan, with or without a University-level retirement incentive package.

Our roadmap for curriculum and programmatic savings will be addressed through our Program Indicators Dashboard that was mentioned at the College Meeting on October 29. See our timeline below. With the aim of supporting student and faculty success and of identifying cost saving strategies as our top priorities, we are working with Directors, Chairs, and Associate Deans to determine indicators of program health, so we can make data-informed decisions about course scheduling, curriculum development, and faculty workload. This information infrastructure will both enable us to respond proactively to emerging adjustments to the University's budget model and position us well for our strategic planning conversations over the next calendar year.

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**TO:**

**Steering Committee, Academic Structures Subcommittee, Curriculum Integrity and Programmatic Shifts Subcommittee**

"During the time of a serious global health pandemic, the use of the word "healthy" may be seen as playing with and thus downplaying the seriousness of the current health context. In addition, in the spirit of transparency given the serious nature of the undertaking, it would also be advisable not to obscure the evaluative purpose of the process. Terminology like Program Assessment Metrics might be preferable.

In addition, we are seeking the following information:

- What is the timeline?
- By what process will the indicators be shared and/or discussed for feedback?
- How will indicators be customized? To what extent will indicators be customized/customizable?
- Would a term other than "health" provide a clearer indication of the Dashboard's purpose?"

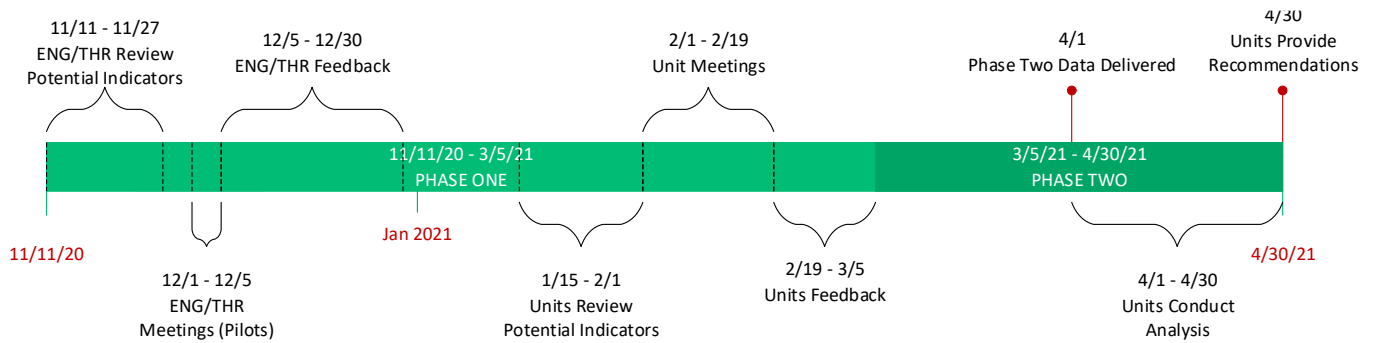
**RESPONSE:**

Building the Dashboard of Program Indicators and the practices associated with it will be an iterative and collaborative process that should continue to evolve over time. The goal is to start by providing data in February 2021 and to build out the dashboard over time with the input of chairs, directors, and faculty feedback throughout the evaluation process.

The vocabulary of program "health" was adopted to signal the holistic approach we hope to take with this process. We do not intend to reduce programs to a limited set of quantitative indicators that obscure the variety of contributions a program makes across the mission of the College. The dashboard is designed to provide formative and evaluative feedback. *The need to identify cost savings is an important part of this effort that should not be obscured.* The language we are developing for the Cultivating Pathways to Intellectual Leadership (CPIL) approach to annual evaluation and promotion process can be adapted for programs across the College. The CPIL framework would enable us to have candid conversations about how to improve the work we do by holding ourselves accountable to the indicators we agree are important. We are working to establish the information architecture to make data informed decisions about the areas of excellence the College hopes to advance and establish even as we address the budget reductions we face.

The focus of PHASE ONE will be to meet with units individually to share baseline indicators and to discuss any additional potential dashboard indicators for PHASE TWO. In PHASE TWO, each unit will be provided an opportunity to review their dashboard with those identified indicators and provide program recommendations. A timeline for the unit feedback sessions, indicator discussions, and the Dashboard of Program Indicators implementation is below.

### DASHBOARD OF PROGRAM INDICATORS TIMELINE



### ROCÍO QUISPE-AGNOLI TO:

#### Financial Advisory Board

K. Deslover said "they are also concerned with salary and benefit adjustments because they are treating them as a loan and at some point, we have to get this back into the budget" (minute 11:47)

If the salary reduction is treated as a loan by MSU Central Administration, when things return to normalcy (post-2023?) how would the numbers work? (Specifically, lost annual merit raises, lost pay, and the decreased retirement contribution).

Scenario: a \$100K salary in 2019-20 + instead of receiving a merit raise in October 2020 (let's say \$3K annually), the 100K salary was cut to \$97K. When things return to normalcy and based on the college budget reduction of 4%/6%/6% (2020-2022) will the 100K base salary (pre salary reduction 2020) be used to balance merit raises (and when if so)? Will it be adjusted over 3 years? How will the recovering of lost wages be implemented?

The following visualization may help (sample salary):

This year salary was: 2020: \$100K

+ merit raise (or what should have been in October 2020): \$103K

Instead, no merit raise + 2020 % cut: \$97K

2021(should have been): \$103K (instead of 97K)

+ merit raise (or what should have been in October 2021): \$106K

Instead, no merit raise + 2020 % cut: \$97K?

2022 (should have been): \$106K (instead of 97K)

+ merit raise (or what should have been in October 2022): \$110K

Instead, no merit raise + 2020 % cut: \$97K

Let's think, things go back to normal in FY 2023

2023: will it depart from \$110K (instead of \$97K) to calculate merit raise?

This amount would be (in this sample) \$114K (in October 2023).

**RESPONSE:**

University Administration has not addressed how salaries could be reinstated in the future. This is a significant budgetary item and will need to be approved by the Board of Trustees and mostly likely in the Summer 2021 when they approve the 2021-22 Budget. When the budgetary situation allows the salaries to be reinstated, the process will be controlled centrally through University Administration. While we will continue to advocate for everyone impacted, there will likely be long-term impact on salaries and retirement portfolios due to reduced raises and retirement contributions.