GUIDELINES FOR REORGANIZATIONS AND MERGERS OF ACADEMIC UNITS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA (approved by Faculty Senate 2-3-2014)

Principles

The environment in which the University of Arizona functions is highly dynamic. Shifts in economics, politics, technology, and demographics create opportunities we must take advantage of and challenges that we must meet. In order to survive and thrive in a highly dynamic environment, we must collaborate, bringing our collective intelligence to bear on the best courses of action in changing circumstances.

Senior academic administrators have a responsibility to monitor these changes and, when appropriate, to propose changes in the structure of academic units that will allow them to prosper under new circumstances. Shared governance leadership has a corresponding responsibility to participate constructively in managing these transitions in ways that bring faculty perspectives and expertise into the decision making process while also protecting faculty rights and privileges.

These guidelines focus on the role of faculty in influencing decisions about reorganizations and mergers, but every benefits-eligible university employee who would be affected by the proposal has the right to be informed as early as possible when strategic planners are giving serious consideration to merging, reorganizing, or making significant changes to the mission of their college, department, school, or center; to be able to provide feedback on those ideas; and to know that their feedback will be taken seriously.

For those – administrators or faculty – who believe a reorganization or merger of one or more academic units has sufficient merit to warrant broader discussion:

- Be transparent: Provide a clear case for change, based on the strategic vision of the University and the affected units. Avoid even the appearance of "solutions in search of a problem." What demonstrable benefits would the proposed change bring the University? What problems would the proposed change solve? If the proposed benefits are financial, be specific about the savings or efficiencies you anticipate would result from the change.

- Share information: What are the drivers (financial, academic, political, etc.) for the proposed change? What are the advantages (economic, synergistic, etc.) of the proposed change? What are the disadvantages of retaining the status quo? What is your timetable for making a final decision? What external deadlines, if any, affect the timing of the decision? What other options have been considered thus far?

- Engage in consultation: With whom have you consulted with so far? How do you plan to involve shared governance groups at the university, college, and/or departmental level? What are the plans for soliciting and assessing feedback from affected groups and individuals?

- Insure tenure/continuing status protections: As a matter of principle, promotion and tenure/continuing status criteria should not be changed as a byproduct of a merger or reorganization. Have you considered the impact of your proposal on the promotion and tenure (or continuing status) criteria or process for faculty in affected units? How would the proposed changes affect Service Professionals and Academic Professionals on year-to-year appointments? How would reporting relationships change? Be frank about the impact of the proposed change on job security for every category of employee.

- Avoid summer decisions: Avoid initiating major academic mergers or reorganizations over the summer or winter break. Do not proceed past the idea stage without shared governance representation in the process.

For faculty and other personnel in the affected units:

- Participate. Engage early and often. Be civil. Understand that, whether you ultimately agree with the proposal or not, its makers have acted in good faith.

- Make an effort to understand both the pros and cons of the proposed action.

- Make an effort to understand both the pros and cons of NOT undertaking the proposed action.

- Are there additional options or approaches that merit consideration? What are they? What problems with the original proposal for change would they solve?

- Be willing to serve as a shared governance representative on a committee to explore issues and plan changes.

Definitions: These guidelines apply to proposals that would transfer groups of faculty members from one academic unit to another as a part of a reorganization or merger of units.

- Reorganization means changing the administrative structure of the university such that:

  o A new college is created from all or parts of existing departments; or

  o An existing department is transferred from one college to another.

- Merger means combining existing departments or colleges into a new unit.

- Affected units mean the academic departments that would be merged or transferred from one college to another.

- Affected faculty means tenure/tenure-eligible or continuing/continuing-eligible members of the general faculty who have appointments in one of the affected units, as defined above.

Disclaimer: These guidelines do *NOT* apply to:

- The voluntary movement of individual faculty members from one department or college to another;

- Reorganizations or mergers within a department, or within a single department college;

- Reorganization proposals that would involve the release of general faculty prior to the end of an appointment period. The procedure for reorganizations that involve the release of general faculty prior to the end of an appointment period is governed by ABOR policy 6-201K, "Release of Faculty for Reorganization Caused by Budgetary Reasons or Programmatic Changes," and ABOR Policy 6-301J, "Release of Professional Employees and Continuing Eligible Professionals."

Process

1. Shared governance representation in planning: As soon as consideration of an academic reorganization or a merger moves beyond mere speculation, proposers will work with the

senior academic administrator (e.g., Provost, Dean) of the affected unit(s) to put together a planning committee consisting of both administrators (e.g., deans, department heads) and non-administrative faculty from the affected units. Where there are local faculty shared governance groups in place, those groups will be asked to choose at least two members of the planning committee. Where no local shared governance groups are in place, the senior academic administrator will work jointly with members of the Faculty Senate from the affected college(s) to appoint at least two faculty members to the planning committee. Faculty from affected units will make up no less than 50% of the planning committee.

2. Publicizing the Planning Process: Once the initial planning committee has been appointed, the senior administrator of the affected units (the Dean, when the proposal affects only one college, or the Provost, when the proposal affects more than one college) will provide an overview of the proposal to Deans' Council, asking Deans to share the information with the faculty in their colleges. If additional departments wish to be considered as partners in the proposed merger/reorganization, representatives from those units will be added to the planning committee.

3. Opportunities for meaningful feedback: The planning committee will share its progress with members of the affected units no less frequently than monthly. Progress reports will be distributed via email to members of these units and to any other groups of faculty identified through the planning process as potentially being impacted by the proposal (closely related departments, faculty in research centers or institutes with members from the affected units, etc.) The planning committee will seek feedback, both in writing and in person, and should include one or more straw polls in order to assess the level of support or resistance to the plan, or to substantive elements within the plan. Face to face feedback meetings will be scheduled within a week of the release of each written report. The planning committee will compile the feedback they receive, along with the committee's response (if appropriate) within two weeks.

4. Impact analysis: The planning committee's work will include an analysis of where individual faculty members in affected units will fit in the new structure.

   a. If units (e.g., departments or colleges) are to be broken up, the plan will detail which parts of the units will go where.

   b. If units are to be merged, the plan will detail how the leadership of the new unit will be chosen.

   c. The plan should include provisions to protect current promotion and tenure/continuing status criteria and processes in the new environment.

   d. If faculty teaching workloads will be affected by the proposed change, the plan will explain how and why. Teaching loads vary from department to department and from discipline to discipline, but the proposed merger/reorganization should avoid creating greater disparities than currently exist.

   e. Similarly, while market-driven differences in faculty salaries are to be expected, the proposed merger/reorganization should avoid creating greater disparities than currently exist.

5. Final plan:

   a. The committee's "final" plan will be released in draft form to allow members of the affected units and other interested parties to offer feedback during a thirty (30) day window.

   b. The committee will hold at least one extensive Q&A session to explain their plan, answer questions about it, and listen to feedback sometime within thirty (30) days during the fall or spring semesters of releasing their draft final plan.

   c. At the end of this period, the committee will meet to review feedback and may modify their plan if they have received new information that suggests changes are appropriate.

6. <u>Plan Approval</u>: Once the planning committee has revised its plan based on feedback from all quarters, faculty in the affected units will be formally polled on their approval or disapproval of the proposal. If a majority (50% plus one) of the eligible faculty voters (as defined by the units) in each of the affected units vote to support the proposal, and if the President believes it is of value, then implementation can proceed in accordance with University processes and ABOR policies, as appropriate. If the proposal does not receive the support of a majority of eligible affected faculty voters as defined by their unit , the planning committee can:

   a. Opt to amend the proposal and seek a second vote, or

   b. Request that the President approve the proposal as is, providing a written rationale and holding an open session to justify proceeding with a proposal that fails to have majority support from faculty in the affected units.

7. <u>Faculty Senate Review</u>: The final report of this committee will be widely distributed to the University community and presented to the Faculty Senate for approval within thirty (30) days of receipt of the report. The report may support, oppose, or suggest modification of the proposal.

8. <u>ABOR Approval</u>: Following appropriate consultation, the President (or designee) will reach a decision on the proposal and, if appropriate, forward to the Arizona Board of Regents for approval.

9. <u>Implementation</u>:

   a. Absent a compelling reason to move more quickly, the best time to implement a merger or reorganization is the beginning of the next fall semester.

   b. Those implementing the reorganization or merger should work with the UA Division of Human Resources to initiate a change management process, offering assistance as needed for faculty and other employees during the period of transition.

10. <u>Procedural review</u>: The Shared Governance Review Committee will investigate allegations of failure to comply with the process and/or principles enumerated above upon receipt of a written complaint by a faculty member or other benefits-eligible employee.