Proposed Reorganization involving the Eller College of Management’s School of Public Administration and Policy and Other Departments

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Affected Units include School of Public Administration and Policy and, potentially, Department of Management and Organizations, the University of Arizona South and a possible new college at the U of A
Rationale for Proposed Reorganization

The School of Public Administration and Policy (hereafter SPAP) is a well-regarded and independently accredited academic unit within the Eller College of Management. It offers undergraduate majors in Criminal Justice, Health and Human Services and also Public Management and Policy, all of which lead to a Bachelors in Public Administration, as well as both Master (MPA) and Doctorate degrees in Public Administration. Its undergraduates and masters students typically pursue careers in law enforcement, work in policy or budget positions for federal, state and local governments, enter the non-profit sector and, occasionally, enter the private sector. SPAP’s faculty members are engaged in a variety of very productive collaborative research, teaching and outreach activities with other faculty both across the U of A (sometimes holding joint appointments in other departments) and with other leading research universities. SPAP faculty members also act as consultants to government, business and non-profit organizations.

SPAP is, however, a very small part of the Eller College of Management, accounting for about 350 (or about 6 percent) of the Eller College’s 5,300 undergraduate students. Of these 350 students, about 220 major in criminal justice, 75 in public management and 55 in health and human services. While the latter two majors align somewhat well with (and occasionally complement) the training received by Eller’s nearly 5,000 business students, the criminal justice major is a poor fit with the overwhelming share of teaching, research and outreach done at the college. At the graduate level, SPAP has about 50 MPA students and a handful of PhD students, or roughly 9 percent of Eller’s total graduate student population.

In difficult financial times like these, when the university is striving to streamline its organizational structure, it is essential to ask whether there are other ways to accomplish the important things that happen in SPAP while recognizing some administrative efficiencies. In fact, as part of the university-wide transformation process, the U of A South has expressed some interest in a program in criminal justice that could include the criminal justice offerings currently offered by SPAP. In addition, a white paper may be submitted as part of the transformation process that would call for the creation of a new School of Public Policy that would be one component of a proposed new college. If such a school included departments now nested in other colleges whose research and teaching activities were close in spirit to those of SPAP, such a realignment might be attractive. Faculty in SPAP themselves are exploring such a possibility.

If the faculty of SPAP is to remain in the Eller College, one particular reorganization is worthy of serious consideration. First, the difficult decision would have to be made to phase out all undergraduate and graduate degrees in public administration. This would be done over a sufficient period of time to graduate all upper division undergraduate students, as well as masters and PhD students. This would take at least two years, perhaps more for some PhD students.

However, it is important to produce students who are interested in careers in the public and non-profit sectors, just as it is to produce the next generation of business leaders. For that reason, a new Public Management track would be created for Eller College business students who would be interested in spending part or all of their careers outside the private sector. A very strong case can be made, in fact, that the most effective public servants will be those who are inspired by government or non-profit service, but who have solid training
and skills in accounting, finance, marketing, management information systems, entrepreneurship and the other advanced courses that business students take.

The most logical place for a Public Management track would be in the Eller College’s Management and Organizations department, in which courses like organizational behavior, bargaining and negotiation, human resource management and quantitative methods in decision-making are already taught. In addition, and to cite just a few examples, SPAP faculty have considerable expertise in: collaborative governance, which would lead naturally to a course on business/government interaction; legal systems, which would lend itself to new courses on the regulation of business; natural resource and environmental policy, which would lend itself to a course on business sustainability; health care policy, which has implications for hospital management and other parts of the quickly growing health care sector; and public and private ethics, which is already a course required of all Eller students. In other words, the potential synergies between the two departments are strong. These courses would all enhance the curriculum available to business students. Other faculty members in SPAP might better fit into one of Eller’s other departments or departments elsewhere on campus.

To repeat, a reorganization along the above lines could result in two very good things: first, graduates entering the private sector with a much better appreciation of the role of government in modern business; and second, graduates entering the public or non-profit sectors with an enhanced set of skills that will increase their likelihood of success there. This could further enhance the reputation of Eller’s undergraduate college as one of the country’s top-ten public business schools.

The Process

On September 12, shortly after a memo went out from the president and provost spelling out the U of A Transformation Plan, the Eller College Advisory Committee (CAC) met with the dean and vice dean to discuss a process by which ideas for reorganization could be generated and discussed. An ad hoc sub-committee was convened that included tenured, tenure-track and lecture faculty, as well as staff and students. CAC recommended the names of the faculty members, while the vice dean asked the Eller Staff Council Chairperson to identify a staff representative. The Eller College student council president represented students. CAC recommended that the dean send an e-mail requesting that ideas for possible reorganization be sent to the chair of the ad hoc committee and to the vice dean (such an e-mail had been sent to all faculty and staff on September 10th pointing out that everyone—faculty, staff and students---was encouraged to submit white papers if they wished). The vice dean compiled the ideas that were received and sent a list to the ad hoc committee chair.

The committee deliberated on the ideas and sent forward a list to the dean of their preferred options with comments. This list was then presented to CAC and the college’s department heads. CAC met and summarized their comments and concerns about the ad hoc Committee recommendations. These concerns were then presented during a two-hour heads meeting on September 22nd at which heads had further input on the recommendations. A college-wide meeting was held on October 3rd during which the reorganization process was again explained. At that meeting, the acting associate dean of SPAP made clear his opposition to a reorganization that would transform his department and expressed his (and his department’s) commitment to the status quo. Another member of SPAP pointed to other programs she felt should receive scrutiny (including a program the ad hoc committee had in
fact discussed). CAC later requested and received a complete list of the ideas received by the ad hoc Committee. Throughout the process, faculty and department heads provided further informal feedback to the dean and vice dean.

Parallel to this college-wide process, the dean met for an hour with the entire faculty and staff of SPAP at its annual retreat on September 12th to explain why he felt that a proposed reorganization involving SPAP had to be one of the things that should be considered during the transformation process. On September 30th, the acting associate dean for SPAP sent a 19-page memo to the dean and vice dean outlining the respects in which he felt his department aligned well with the 7 guidelines for the evaluation of university programs that had been established by the university’s Strategic Planning and Budgeting Advisory Committee (SPBAC). On October 7th the acting associate dean sent a 4-page memo to the dean, the vice-dean and several faculty and staff members explaining why, in his view, SPAP fit well with the mission of the Eller College. On October 12th the associate dean of SPAP and the acting associate dean of SPAP sent another memo to the Eller College’s dean and vice dean reaffirming their interest in remaining an independent unit within the college. There is no lack of clarity about the views of the faculty of SPAP.

Additionally, on October 1st the dean met with the president and vice president of the Eller (undergraduate) Student Council to discuss their concerns about the reorganization process and its possible implications for the programs of greatest importance to undergraduates. Two days later, on October 3rd, the dean and vice dean met with six masters students from the Eller College to describe the college’s budget and transformation process and to hear their views on the most valuable components of the college’s graduate programs.

Despite the process the college used to develop, review and discuss possible reorganization proposals, this proposal should not be seen as having the endorsement of the college’s advisory committee, ad hoc review committee or faculty and staff as a whole. Though the ad hoc committee discussed a reorganization involving SPAP, among many other proposals, it said, “…any such consolidations or mergers should only be proposed if there is substantial buy-in from all of the affected faculty departments.”

There is frustration on all parts about the very limited time available for the compilation, preliminary evaluation and reporting on the proposals, as well about the difficulty of developing data on the possible financial impact(s) associated with any of the proposals. Finally, several good ideas have arisen in the last several days that might have attracted considerable support, but came into the process too late to receive even cursory evaluation. One of these ideas in particular appealed to the faculty of SPAP.

However, the process outlined by the president and provost provides considerable opportunity now to raise concerns about this proposal, as well as the other white papers submitted by the Eller College and other colleges, departments and individuals across the U of A campus. That process also provides opportunity also to inject new ideas that might modify, supplant or lead to the rejection of certain proposals. We welcome both sorts of feedback.
Financial Impacts

Projected Savings

The projected annual savings for this reorganization is $563,000 plus ERE on the personnel funds after the proposed merger of the departments occurs. This will take two years for advanced standing undergraduate students, and two years for master’s students.

- **Personnel:** Two lecturers, two classified staff positions, several adjunct positions, several graduate assistants / associates, and a student position would be eliminated. Also, the department head stipend would be eliminated. Total: $543,000.
- **Student support, operations & travel:** These expenses could be reduced by another $20,000.

Potential Revenue Loss

There is risk of revenue loss in the following areas:

- **Tuition & fees:** Enrollment in public administration programs would be eliminated, resulting in loss of tuition and fee revenue. However, these losses would likely be offset by increasing enrollment in the public management track and other Eller programs.
- **Grant Funding:** We expect that research faculty will remain with Eller, and that grant revenue would be retained.
- **Philanthropy:** Philanthropy is at the highest risk. Currently, endowments generate approximately $48,000 annually and annual giving generates another $142,500 annually. In addition, potential future gifts are at risk. However, donors may choose to redirect these gifts to the new public management program within Eller.