UA Merger Guide
The University of Arizona
February 25, 2009

The President's Office invited the UA Merger Taskforce to develop a process to provide guidance to colleges, departments or units within The University of Arizona planning to merge. This guide is designed to facilitate a smooth, successful and productive merger.

UA Merger Taskforce

Lehman Benson, Interim Director, African American Studies

Gail Burd, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Laura Donnelly, Business Manager, School of Dance

Gary Esham, Associate Dean, Finance and Administration, College of Optical Sciences

Caroline Garcia, Assistant Vice President, Research, Graduate Studies and Economic Development

Linda Heffernan, Director, Human Resources Consulting Services

Susan Moody, Assistant Dean, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

Larry Dyer, Rushing Water Consulting, Organizational Process Improvement

Introduction

This UA Merger Guide provides a framework for implementing a successful merger of two or more academic units.

With utility at its core, this guide is designed to save units time. The steps are based on data collected from interviews with faculty, staff, department heads, and deans who completed successful mergers within universities. While most organizations will want to follow the steps as outlined, merging units may move through the process at different rates and will focus on areas that are most important for the success of the merger.

Groups involved in the merger process may seek assistance from members of this merger taskforce by contacting the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Merger Guidelines
Phase 1 - Preliminary Discussions

Form Leadership Team
Strong leadership is needed to provide guidance and direction though the development phase.

- Develop plan for working together and sharing information
- Identify central contact person for merger

Assess Value of Merger
Completing the recommended analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis) will help identify the value of the merger.

- Components of a successful merger include:
    - Directors, department heads, and deans who are willing to lead change and provide administrative support.
    - Benefits of merging can be clearly defined for all units involved.
    - Faculty who are willing to collaborate and explore new directions.
    - Strong leaders who are effective communicators and good listeners.

- Complete a SWOT Analysis to discover new opportunities and manage and eliminate threats related to the merger.

- Outline the Strengths and Weaknesses for each merging unit.
  Strengths:
    - What are the strengths of your current unit? (rankings, grant support, teaching excellence, student success, recruiting- student and faculty, staff quality, campus and national/international reputation)
  Weaknesses:
    - Are there weaknesses in faculty and student recruiting and retention, departmental rankings and reputation, etc.

- Outline the Opportunities and Threats for the new merged unit.
  Opportunities:
    - Analyze your strengths and determine if these can be used to create new opportunities.
    - Analyze your weaknesses and look for ways that eliminating them can create opportunities.
    - What new opportunities are available to the merged unit?
    - What will you be able to do in the merged unit that you are not able to do in your separate units?
  Threats:
    - What obstacles do you face?
    - Are your unit functions changing?
    - Are there financial considerations that will be a threat to the merger?

- Can any of the identified weaknesses threaten the merger?

- Develop and clearly define merger goals (i.e. cost savings, new revenue streams, improved rankings, increased grant funding potential, teaching efficiencies, etc.)

Form Committees to Analyze Current Unit Functions
It is recognized that units have different ways of operating which create unique cultures. The leadership team must be aware of these cultural differences and develop mechanisms for addressing issues that arise when integrating these different cultures.

It is strongly recommended that protocols be established for making decisions and resolving problems. Clear communication and use of these protocols will continue the process of building trust and transparency.

- Form committees with members from all merging units
  - List processes and functions that are important to each of the merging units and form appropriate committees to work on these functions. (Potential new committees may include: undergrad and grad programs, faculty (promotion and tenure, teaching, workloads, etc.), inventory and facilities, technology, student support (advising, recruitment, etc.), and finance)
  - Identify committee leaders

Since financial issues can be complex, a few additional guidelines are provided here.

- Collect a snapshot of financial data for all units involved at an agreed upon date and an agreed upon format.
  - Request unit budget data from central administration for all units involved. Identify all financial resources and liabilities by funding source (accounts, budget lines, funding for general education, special funding, funding for all employees, including employee types).
  - Include foundation and donor assets as well as other financial data unique to units.

Develop and Implement Communication Plan
Communication needs to happen throughout proposal development and merger implementation. Information will need to be distributed to various people involved in the process at different times.

A clearly defined communication plan is helpful for creating a culture of trust and openness about the merger.

- Identify the modalities to be used to communicate information about the proposed merger. Modalities may include: websites, town hall discussions, e-mail, listservs, informal and formal gatherings, retreats, etc.
- Communicate the identified benefits of the proposed merger to groups critical to the success of the units (advisory boards, professional associations, donors, faculty, students, staff, alumni, etc.) and discuss merger plans with next-level administration.
- Develop an action plan to handle communication around unexpected events.

Draft Proposal
- Leadership team should meet with committee chairs to analyze all committee reports.
- Discussion and resolution of important issues with staff, students, faculty, and upper administration.
- Draft the proposal for the merger.

Secure Final Approval in all Merging Units
- Receive support from the next level of administration.
- Informal support from faculty, staff, students and other groups (outside professional groups, alumni, donors, etc.).
- Formal faculty vote.

Phase 2 - Implementation

Choose Leadership for the Implementation Phase and/or the New Merged Unit
The Proposal Phase leadership may continue to lead the Implementation or new leaders may be needed to guide this phase. These leaders may or may not be the final leaders of the new unit.

- Determine the method to identify the leader in consultation with your next level administrator.
- Determine situations that may require merger assistance from central administration.

Create a Timeline for Completion of Implementation
Leadership, in consultation with the merging units, will need to decide which elements can be merged immediately and which areas need to be modified gradually over time-with an agreed upon end date (i.e. new fiscal year, midyear, end of semester, etc.).

Leaders need to be sensitive to the issues of continuing day-to-day business while completing merging functions. Flexibility when dealing with changing workloads, retraining, centralizing functions, moving personnel, etc. will be helpful.

- The timeline for this phase includes due dates for all the functional areas listed here – (definition of mapping for this process and details are listed below).

  - mapping current functions and activities,
  - developing new staffing plan,
  - evaluating staffing skills,
  - defining final organizational structure,
  - creating plan for use and maintenance of facilities and equipment, and
  - developing a plan for resource allocation.

Map Current Functions and Activities
The objective of this step is to understand how functions work in each organization, identify the differences, and then to use this data to create unified processes for all of the functions of the new unit.

This is a detailed analysis of each area identified in the proposal phase (undergraduate and graduate programs, faculty (promotion and tenure, teaching, workloads, etc.), inventory and facilities, technology, student support (advising, recruitment, etc.), and finance) – add any areas that may have been overlooked previously.

- Identify a coordinator and teams to collect data about faculty, staff, and student functions and processes.
- Identify: inefficiencies in workflow, duplication of effort, differences in required functions for each merging unit, where there are no staff available to perform required functions of the unit, and activities done by staff and faculty that provide little or no value, etc.

Determine the Functions that are Essential for Smooth Operation of the New Unit

This is an opportunity to think broadly and develop new and better ways to do the work that needs to be done in the new unit. Consider the pros and cons of centralizing various services. Consider all options and look for benefits that will make the new unit stronger.

- Survey members from all units to determine strengths and weaknesses of the current functions. Interview current employees responsible for the process in your unit. Consider future changes in processing within the University.
    - Collect benchmarking data; talk to key central administrative areas; research best practices in the field.
- Document the new workflow processes, roles & responsibilities, written policies & procedures as required.

Determine the Skill-Sets of Classified Staff and Appointed Personnel that are Needed to Perform the Essential Functions of the New Unit

It is anticipated that work will be done differently and more efficiently in the new unit. Identify broad-based skill-sets which will support cross-training and allow fewer people to complete the required unit functions.

- Determine the required skills and the number of people needed for the essential functions of the new merged unit.
    - Consult with human resources for assistance in redefining job descriptions.
    - Ensure equity in workload and compensation such as number of people supervised, number of people supported, level of support provided to students, faculty, staff; number of grants supported, degree of multi-tasking, etc.
    - Talk to colleagues in other units performing similar tasks and Human Resources to get an idea of staffing solutions across campus.

Develop Classified Staff and Appointed Personnel Staffing Plan for the New Unit

At this time, it is important to redefine how work is done in the new unit. As much as possible, focus on determining the ideal type of person and skill-sets needed to perform the work identified as essential for the new unit, independent of existing staff in the current units.

- Develop appropriate job descriptions, classifications, and compensation plans for all positions in the new merged unit.
  - Balance the workload between staff members in the new merged unit.
- Determine reporting lines for each position in the new unit.
- Determine worksite locations for all staff.
- Develop training plan for each position in the new unit, if necessary.
- Develop a process for filling the positions (search committee, appointments, etc.).
- Develop agreements between faculty and staff on the level of support for different functions.
  - Address issues of customer service between the merging organizations. *(this may be an area of cultural differences).*
- Evaluate salary requirements to meet the needs of the new staffing plan.

Evaluate Existing Staff and Skills
This step will allow the leaders to identify existing staff who have the potential to be assets to the new unit.

- Establish a team to evaluate objectively the existing staff in relation to the new staffing plan.
  - Review current job descriptions and performance evaluations.
  - Conduct interviews with current staff to discuss career goals.
  - Talk to current supervisors, co-workers, subordinates.
  - Consult with Human Resources if questions arise.

Implement New Staffing Plan
This is a difficult task. Having the right person for the job will be critical to the success of the new unit. Support is available for leadership and unit personnel across campus and from the UA Merger Taskforce to help deal with this aspect of the merger process. (Human Resources, Life Work Connections, "Resiliency Skills Website", etc.)

- Decide which current staff personnel:
  - will continue,
  - need additional training, and
  - will leave the new unit.
- Decide what types of new personnel will need to be hired to run the new unit.
- Process terminations.
- Complete hiring process.

Determine Faculty Responsibilities and Evaluation Processes in the New Unit
This may require considerable discussion and negotiation. The Provost's Office is available to provide facilitation, if needed.

- Refer to data collected earlier concerning promotion and tenure, teaching, workloads, student support, advising, recruitment, graduate student mentoring, research/scholarly/creative work, etc.

- The above issues will need to be discussed and resolved; compensation, teaching load, research/scholarly/creative work, advising, etc.
- Develop appropriate job descriptions, classifications, and compensation for current faculty and new faculty positions in the new unit.

Define Final Organizational Structure and Leadership Roles for New Unit
- Finalize and document the structure of the new unit:
    - Committees, undergrad and grad programs, leadership roles, reporting lines, faculty and staff roles.
- Evaluate any remaining isolated programs, committees, functions (anything that doesn't fit into the new unit) and integrate or eliminate.

Create Physical Facility and Equipment Plan
- Establish a committee or person to gather data on space, facilities and equipment.
- Conduct an inventory of space and equipment for all elements of the merged unit. Include offices, classrooms, laboratories, storage space, etc. Document the results.
- Develop a mechanism for space allocation and, if appropriate, identify a funding source for relocation and renovations. Discuss the space needs in relation to the new vision.
- Establish policies and procedures related to space and equipment utilization, shared space and equipment (core facilities). Document these policies and procedures.

Develop Resource Plan
- Examine existing resources (money, equipment, space, people).
- Align resources to meet the new staffing requirements, processes and space plans.
- Determine who makes resource decisions. For example, the department head, faculty committee, executive committee, Dean, etc.
- Determine source of funding for administration, faculty, and staff.   Review and revise funding policies, such as indirect cost allocation.

Identify Issues that Require Negotiation
In some mergers, individual faculty or whole units may want to move from one college or department into the newly forming unit in another college or department. Some of the merging units will want to relocate near the core of the new unit and will need space in a different location. This will often require negotiations at different levels in the institution.

- Indentify individuals or units that might be appropriate to join your unit and who want to join your new unit. OR Determine whether new space is desirable for the success of the new unit. OR other issues as yet undefined.
- Determine resources that might be available to use in the negotiation (Indirect Cost Recovery funds for some period of time, teaching courses for the previous unit for a few years, exchange of FTEs between units, old space that could be traded, etc). Most issues will require discussion with the next level of administration and usually will require final approval from the Provost.

Develop a Strategic Plan for the New Merged Unit

- Review existing UA and any existing college strategic plan(s), Academic Program Reviews, or accreditation reports from merging units.
- Create a strategic plan for the new unit.

Develop Plan to Measure the Success of the Merger

Evaluate the metrics used previously to assess the value of the merger. Determine if these metrics are sufficient or if new metrics are required to measure success of the merger. Revise and publish the metrics to ensure all staff and faculty understand how success of the new unit will be measured.

Celebrate

Celebrate small successes throughout. Use social events to gather information in a comfortable atmosphere and to make informal announcements about the progress of the merger. Depending on unit and situation, determine if a final celebration is appropriate at the conclusion of the Implementation Phase.