CAMPUS FORUM: ORGANIZING TO SUPPORT CLUSTERS | March 15, 2017 | 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Over 70 of your colleagues joined cluster guides and the academic affairs team to explore how to address concerns about reorganizing to support clusters. We also spent time considering where in a new model of organizing those concerns might be addressed. We received 160+ concerns from 63 respondents to the survey sent to the campus in advance of the forum asking “When you think of transforming to support integrated clusters, what keeps you up at night?” We were able to discuss 10 of the concerns that were of most interest to forum participants.

CONVERSATION NOTES

#1. Shifting to clusters and simply forming seven new colleges or larger departments.

- Why not call clusters “7 Interdisciplinary Colleges”?
- Reflects our concern that were doing all this work and nothing will REALLY change and yet it MUST
- Require every program to include a course from the cluster (other disciplines in the same cluster) in the major
- Every cluster has to design at least one interdisciplinary course (this is step one)
- Where are the solid and loose parts of the cluster?
- Require every course to teach in the context of interdisciplinary (requires co-teaching and getting credit for it to free up time, impossible currently)
- Resources, time and money to allow for real collaboration in teaching
- Concern that interdisciplinary should also cross clusters
- Why is a cluster not interdisciplinary enough?
- Whoever is directing the cluster should be charged with ensuring that collaboration is happening across disciplines, including curriculum, projects, and events.

#2. Faculty and staff are overworked, and stressed about the unknown. I am concerned about burnout.

- Better communication with the different groups of people involved (ambiguity is contributing to our stress)
- Representatives from all functional units need to be at the table acting as the liaison (AKA expert)
- Need detailed timeline for anticipated changes (weekly comm. Update via FYI to all?)
- Added responsibilities for some positions without having other duties removes. Realign duties so that priority lists can be realized.
- More staff to support the initiative
- Increase faculty/staff engagement
- Burnout is a reality!

#3. How can PSU manage the magnitude of changes being suggested? How can we develop a coherent plan to manage it?
- Identify clear goals / outcomes (smart objectives)
- Identify clear steps for each goal / outcome (now everyone is responsible for everything and its overwhelming, who gets to decide/participate in this planning, town hall makes us feel like everyone has a say in everything, a new guidance committee? Holistic or task-based vs cluster-based)
- Identify who will be responsible for each step
- Academics aren’t trained to jump into action (projects, etc.) without thinking critically (what is the theory?)
- Project elected manager or team?
- Like any campaign, this change needs a leader to manage the changes and push out communication (a full-time commitment)
- Even an incoherent plan is still a plan
- Need a project manager who understands academia and how PSU works (has support of faculty)
- We haven’t had the philosophical conversations that will allow us to determine what the clear steps are to meet out philosophical/theoretical goals
- Need to determine how to sustain cluster projects when cluster funding goes away!
- Next year only fund projects that a sustainability plan
- Should not fund projects that are discrete events

#4. There is a lack of clear governance structure, what is the new role of faculty in the administration of the university?

- Some degrees are assigning degree coordinators as cluster personnel to “protect” their degree oversight. Should this be a full-campus strategy?
- Retain principal policy making committees to ensure faculty oversight (curriculum committee and P&T committee), (distribution across clusters? Or cluster/discipline?)
- Cluster combined with discipline oversight (i.e. Matrix structure like in business, accrediting needs with different disciplines)
- Clusters as pseudo department unit / sub-college unit (needs a cross-university free time for this kind of meeting need)
- How do faculty attain cluster leadership opportunity for advancement?
- How to prevent cluster outcome “convergence” with multiple clusters working on similar outcomes (best diversify outcomes within PSU)

#5. The impact that forward-thinking staffing can and will have on this transformation.

- Implement/ try forward thinking ideas – treat cluster like an administrative unit, invite staff, AA’s, have an agenda and action items, don’t wait for structure to be imposed, “offer/compel permission” to participate as we will be making a new leadership model, improve communication.
- With block scheduling: reserve universal time for cluster meetings (Wednesdays?)
- Discuss ways to bridge the cluster projects across two or more clusters
- Planning team comprised of representatives from all functional units to act as liaisons (experts)
- Staffing with support
#6. How can we transform our culture to develop a greater sense of trust, connection and community as we create a new leadership model at PSU?

- Develop mechanisms for celebration, recognition and honor
- Transparency at all levels
- Clear and consistent communications, and structure w/ reps. from all constituencies who can be a liaison
- Honesty, authenticity and courage
- Being present
- “Thank you’s” for doing more
- Cultural and organizational shifts
- Emotional intelligence/ social intelligence
- Reassurance that all ideas are valued
- Create mechanism for inclusion for ALL (OS, PAT, FAC)
- Organizational and personal transformation
- Grass roots ←---→ Upper top down
- Build foundations together
- Disrupt siloes
- Start building cluster communities that are inclusive
- Follow through
- Restructure work days to open opportunities for PAT, OS staff to participate (restructure workflow, cross-training, flex time)
- Be honest about interim more hard work
- Ask for input more often (not feedback)
- Solicit voices via votes (buy-ins)
- Present agendas with lead time to think (put questions out, stick to agenda to build confidence in change process)

#7. We will spend so much time talking about why we are doing this that we never actually get to implementation.

- Determining next steps for each forum (Clusters feel like a parallel universe; these next steps are critical)
- Communicating next steps with all of the organization
- Being willing to move forward without full consensus
- Trusting other groups/departments/functions to consider relevant elements/make change
- How/when will we know that it’s ok to move forward ★ ★
- First decisions (priorities) that we can use as jumping off points – FYS and Gen Ed?
- Small victories to make things seem more realistic (like cluster projects)
- Meetings focusing on small aspects of clusters rather than big, ambiguous picture (ex. showcasing examples of inter-disciplinary teaching, brainstorming how we might implement them into our practice)

#8. Will there be enough administrative support for all the things that need doing and are now being done by all of the Chairs?
- Inventory tasks and responsibilities (similar to a PDQ). Figure out what position should handle certain tasks
- Determine what administrative support there will be
- Recognize that this will require more work at the start
- Where (admin. working groups, Clusters align with admins in different roles, create a one-stop admin unit for Clusters)

#9. What are we doing to get ideas from our students about how THEY want to see clusters and labs shaped?
- Top 20, check in with more students
- Continuation into student life
- Internal partners/ social spaces in dorms
- Cluster involvement in ResLife
- Cluster ambassadors
- Students don’t know other models
- Creating the opportunity to share ideas, educating them on what clusters mean
- FY are more tuned into clusters
- Feedback from labs
- Internship feedback/ desires
- Open forums
- Target alumni – each cluster forms and alumni committee
- T-shirts, orientation activity, design logo
- Help students understand how clusters will help them
- Intro into cluster sessions
- Current vs. incoming students
- Created the culture about integrated clusters
- Connecting clusters with other areas of student life
- Layers of organizing clusters to reach students
- Each cluster has a commissioner or group that communicates with Student Senate, ResLife, and Athletics to exchange open forums/listening sessions (informal and formal feedback tools)
- Intro/discussion sessions like we are having for faculty and staff (let’s get them engaged in the process)
- Ask students (in forums, senate, etc.) to give input into design of FYS and other Gen Ed pieces
- Use social spaces in dorms, unions, etc. to showcase cluster work. Engage the immigration and culture of students. Possibly theme social spaces or athletic activities to create cross-currents of ideas across clusters. Establish a formal position or task group (funded) in each cluster slated to maintain this sort of activity and to maintain a two-way communication.

#10. Lack of progress, concerned that we will discuss this topic forever and not act on the needed steps towards implementation per our timeline.
- Determine the timeline (realistic)
- Agree we are moving onto “how”
- Start by fixing the small things and stop doing the unnecessary things
- Start building pieces (more open labs, projects)
- Use small-scale efforts to pilot new ideas
- Scaffold, what are the next steps to success? *most important*
- Tolerate imperfection, okay with ambiguity
- Find a way to reward faculty participation in clusters (P&T recognition)
- Just do it
- Make easy decisions first
- “It IS my job”, give up anxieties over roles
- Empowerment to people move forward
- Identify 1 to 2 things to stop doing and 1 to 2 things to do to progress clusters
- Make “paperwork” truly digital, consistent, easy to use
- Process, not feedback (MOVING FORWARD)
- Reconsider the current cluster structure. Put Exploration and Disc. & Innovation and Entrepreneurship in all clusters – limit to five – logical thematic clusters for disciplines

**Where should organization happen?**
- Fears about impact on existing governance structure
- Elected cluster guides?
- The President?
- The Provost?
- Academics with theory and practice to make leadership decisions
- Academic leaders – how do we choose them?