Rethinking the Way We Gather
Academic Reorganization of the Faculty in the College of Arts & Sciences
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Arts & Sciences Administrative Reorganization Committee (ASARC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arts & Sciences Academic Reorganization Committee, or ASARC, proposes a suite of organizational and operational changes to enhance the quality of our academic programs, improve our capacity to respond to rapid changes in the landscape of higher education, and realize substantial cost savings. These changes work in concert to facilitate cross-departmental and inter-office collaboration while prioritizing our educational mission and maintaining departmental identity.

ASARC proposes that departmental representatives convene in five Divisional Advisory Committees, or DACs, in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences, the Practicing Arts, Languages and Cultures, and the Humanities and Humanistic Social Sciences, groupings based on curricular affinity and shared reliance on facilities or event and performance programming. DACs will be led by conveners and will meet monthly for strategic consultation, collaboration, and coordination of curricular and broader institutional initiatives. They will serve as a communications hub between departments and administrative offices including Admissions, Advancement, Communications, Facilities, the AARC, the Career Development Center, and the A&S Dean’s office. DACs will consult and where appropriate collaborate on position requests, event planning, and mentoring of junior faculty. DACs will share best practices across departments to improve quality, increase efficiency, and expand interdisciplinary collaboration for teaching and scholarship. The main purpose of the DACs will be to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making and information-sharing among and between departments and central offices, so that Arts & Sciences, and Oberlin College as a whole, are in a better position to weather the difficult times ahead.

In support of the DAC model, ASARC proposes the following additional changes:

- **Continuous improvement in technology** to streamline time-consuming mundane work for faculty related to the processes of personnel review, position requests, and reimbursement.
- A model for **equity in faculty committee service** that introduces a point system to bring transparency to formal committee service.
- A **new chair compensation model** to achieve equity and transparency and reduce the number of chair course releases to accommodate an increase in the number of Arts & Sciences students. The reduction in course releases is paired with a **reduction of chair workload**.
- The **centralization of tasks** through the creation of offices for travel and event planning, billing, and reimbursement.
- **Reduction in operational costs** (constituting about $750,000 in savings) through a decline, over the next four years, in the number of Administrative and Professional Staff and Administrative Assistant positions, achieved as much as possible through attrition.

I. BACKGROUND

The Arts & Sciences Administrative Reorganization Committee (ASARC) has been charged with exploring and developing an implementation plan in response to the recommendation in the One Oberlin final report for an academic reorganization of the College of the Arts & Sciences. The One Oberlin Report, which was endorsed by the General Faculty and the Board of Trustees, proposed a model for the “creation of new academic divisions that would organize and undertake much of the outward-facing work now taking place at the departmental level with varying degrees of effectiveness.” That model envisioned six to eight divisions overseeing much of the work that now typically takes place at the department level: equipment maintenance, budget management, catalog copy, and space use among others. The proposed model reduced the role of department chairs, creating instead department heads who would assist divisional chairs but who would not receive stipends or course releases for their work. With this model, the AAPR sought to achieve four important broad goals:

1. Increase inter- and multidisciplinary collaboration for both teaching and scholarship while respecting the strengths of intensive disciplinary education;
2. Increase the College of Arts & Science’s ability to adapt rapidly and comprehensively to the ever-changing academic environment and capitalize on new opportunities;
3. Improve the overall quality and consistency of academic administration, including the collaboration with the conservatory and non-academic units across the institution, and enhance communications across campus as well as develop better messaging about our high quality to the world;
4. Enhance administrative efficiencies so as to realize substantial reductions to baseline operating costs and increase access to classes through the reduction of faculty course releases for administration.

The model also sought to achieve the following concrete outcomes:

- Saving roughly $750,000 per year (preliminary estimate) achieved through consolidation of administrative staffing made possible by greater administrative efficiency and greater utilization of technologies that can support such needs;
- Recovering four full-time equivalents (FTE) amounting to 18 courses in department chair course releases, which: a) reduces the need for visiting professors; b) adds potential support for
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the First Year Seminar Program; c) adds teaching capacity for the 100-student addition to the College (shift from the Conservatory) d) helps alleviate problems with access to classes, especially for first and second years;

- Enhancing the breadth of consultation on future strategic additions and reductions of faculty lines;
- Reducing administrative redundancies and inefficiencies across the Arts & Sciences that needlessly consume faculty and staff time and effort and reduce job satisfaction;
- Enhancing engagement with alumni across the Arts & Sciences as well as better communication strategies to convey our high quality to the world.

The AAPR recommendation for academic restructuring reflects a challenging truth about the state of higher education: given the current landscape, only institutions that can adapt quickly and thoughtfully to changes in the environment are likely to survive. The AAPR recognized that the mounting challenges facing small private liberal arts colleges like Oberlin make it urgent that we take action to make our processes and structures more nimble. A looming enrollment crisis—the number of college-age young people is predicted to fall by 15 percent nationwide in 2025, with an even greater decrease in states from which Oberlin has traditionally drawn students—will affect schools across the country. Some experts predict that as many as half of American colleges and universities may be forced to close in the next fifteen years.

Small liberal arts colleges, moreover, face increasing pressure to demonstrate the value of their education and to prove to skeptical parents and students that their high tuition costs are justified. They also face increased competition from larger state universities that have moved to create honors colleges that seek to offer the same kind of education that a small private college does at a significantly lower cost. For Oberlin to thrive in this environment, we will need to communicate the value of the education we offer more clearly, showcase the positive outcomes of a liberal arts education more convincingly, operate more efficiently, and adopt structures that enable us to respond quickly and effectively to changes in higher education.

Experts surveying the current environment point to traditional academic structures and a general resistance to change as key barriers to the kind of flexibility and nimbleness that institutions will need to survive in the competitive landscape of higher education. Peter Stokes and Chris Slatter, managers in the higher education practice at Huron Consulting Group, argue that “departmental structures can be inflexible and inhibit creative responses to changing market expectations.” The faculty response to anticipated structural change is often to “hunker down,” they suggest, with many faculty members and department chairs seeking “to preserve the structures that they know rather than risk reorganizing in ways that merge departments or explicitly require collaboration with the professional disciplines—even if such changes might deliver more value to the students.”

Daniel Rich, provost of the University of Delaware and professor of urban affairs, public policy, and political science, describes universities as “places at which large numbers of faculty and students study change, debate change, and sometimes advocate change, but they are also places where faculty are renowned for avoiding and resisting change, particularly change in their own organization and operations.” Restructuring, Rich notes, must balance maintaining academic core priorities with increasing market competitiveness, but restructuring in some fashion may no longer be a choice. As Rich notes, “the much more competitive higher education marketplace...assigns benefits and penalties to institutions that do and do not respond effectively.”

In this report, we describe our process and findings to date and offer an alternative model to that proposed by the AAPR, one that we believe will help improve efficiency, achieve the necessary savings, and make Oberlin more nimble, while offering more of a bottom-up approach than the top-down divisional reorganization outlined in the One Oberlin report.

II. CHARGE AND PROCESS OF ASARC

The One Oberlin Final Report charged CFC and EPFC with creating a committee to assess the model proposed by the AAPR, to decide whether the divisional model offered the best way to achieve the goals outlined in the report, and to offer alternative methods of achieving the goals if necessary. The ASARC Committee includes two members each of EPFC and CFC, each elected by the larger

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1. https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/04/28/clay-christensen-sticks-predictions-massive-college-closures https://hechingerreport.org/college-students-predicted-to-fall-by-more-than-15-after-the-year-2025/ Scott Carlson, in his article “Sustaining the College Business Model: How to shore up institutions now and reinvent them for the future,” presents in stark terms the financial challenges that provide the urgency and imperative to restructure. Citing Nathan D. Graue of Carleton College, Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education, he warns that the population of high school graduates will starkly decline and around 2025 will “fall off a cliff.” The steepest population declines will be in the Northeast and Midwest. Only small pockets will reliably see growth: Rocky Mountain states and Texas (8). Other important factors for the financial sustainability of colleges and universities: Tuition has increased at two to three times the rate of inflation (8). Family incomes have stagnated or declined particularly after the 2008 recession (8). The average student tuition discount rate has reached 50% among liberal arts colleges (9).


committees; three representatives from the dean’s office (including the dean himself); four members voted on by the college faculty; a student; and two additional faculty members chosen by committee members to ensure ASARC’s diversity and representational breadth. 4

Our principal task for the fall semester was information gathering. ASARC constructed and administered a survey of faculty and teaching staff that sought feedback on the AAPR model and solicited ideas about alternative means for realizing the goals of the AAPR divisional model. We also formed subcommittees to explore: existing divisional models at other institutions; the better use of technology to achieve greater efficiencies and reduce work for chairs; and campus offices and their interactions with departments.

The data we gathered and the research we conducted demonstrate both the importance of some kind of restructuring and several serious drawbacks to the model proposed in the One Oberlin Report. The same data and research—outlined below—inform the alternative model that ASARC proposes for consideration by the faculty.

### III. DATA INTERPRETATION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

There are three key reasons why ASARC has moved away from the top-down divisional model proposed by the AAPR. First, the faculty survey reveals that while faculty endorse the overarching goals and expected outcomes of the reorganization, many have deep and valid concerns about a “one-size-fits-all model” and about creating additional layers of bureaucracy. Second, an analysis of reorganizations that have taken place at similar institutions suggests that large-scale academic reorganizations undertaken primarily for financial reasons tend to fail or create as many problems as they seek to solve. Finally, conversations with administrative offices across the institution suggest a range of inefficiencies that this campus must address which academic reorganization alone cannot solve. As a result, ASARC is proposing what we see as a hybrid model that leaves most of the departmental organization intact while combining the strength of divisional groupings with a series of other initiatives to increase the flexibility and nimbleness of our academic structures.

#### The Faculty Survey

The faculty survey, which ASARC administered in the fall semester, offered rich and varied data for ASARC to consider. With a 72 percent participation rate, faculty took the survey seriously, providing the committee with both aggregated quantitative results and over 200 pages of anonymous individual qualitative responses. While survey results reflected a wide variety of opinions among faculty about the proposed AAPR models and potential alternatives to it, several key patterns emerged. 5

- Faculty generally seem content with the administrative functioning of their departments, and while most see value in the goals of academic reorganization, there are concerns about how these goals might be achieved.
- There is widespread agreement that more could be done to address administrative inefficiencies, improve college-wide communication, and create more equitable faculty service loads.
- With regard to reorganizing A&S, many faculty are concerned with implementing a “one-size-fits-all” model while some also believe that smaller scale reform could achieve the four goals of academic reorganization.
- Faculty are significantly divided on the AAPR’s proposed divisional model. While there is opposition to replacing department chairs with division chairs, there is also a sense that the divisional model may be superior to the current department model when it comes to certain administrative tasks (e.g., reimbursements, infrastructure management) and achieving the four goals of academic reorganization.
- Overall, there is a sense that some form of reorganization is necessary to address serious issues but many are concerned about the scale and potential disruptiveness of that reorganization.

The survey findings contributed to ASARC’s conclusion that while our current structures need to change, the divisional model proposed by the AAPR may not be the best fit for Oberlin. These concerns were reinforced in ASARC’s research on divisional models at other institutions.

#### Divisional Models at other Institutions

ASARC researched divisional models at Berea College, Bard College, and Sarah Lawrence College. We selected these three institutions because they are most similar in mission and profile.

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4 Once fully constituted, the committee chose two of its members to serve as co-chairs. The co-chairs set the meeting agendas and provided periodic updates at CF and Chair’s meetings. After weekly meetings throughout the fall, the ASARC committee met for two full-day retreats in January. The first meeting focused on summarizing the information from the survey as well as from the reports of subcommittees. The committee began at that meeting to sketch an alternative divisional model to that proposed by AAPR. New subcommittees were formed to conduct additional research in support of this alternative restructuring model. At our second full-day retreat, we worked out the details of our proposal.

5 It is important to remember that the qualitative responses were extensive and varied, and did not always line up perfectly with the quantitative results. As such, some readers may sense a slight disconnect between the strictly quantitative results reported in the appendix and the conclusions drawn in the white paper and discussed below (which are based on both qualitative and quantitative feedback).
to Oberlin. We also reviewed the literature on academic and organizational restructuring in order to understand how efforts of this nature have arisen within a context of severe current and anticipated financial challenges facing many institutions within higher education.

In 2011, Berea undertook an academic restructuring very similar to that proposed by the AAPR. Their example is instructive in terms of the successes of the restructure; at the same time, it serves as a cautionary tale for an academic reorganization that too radically overhauls existing structures. While Berea has not returned to its original pre-divisional model, and is currently working to refine its divisional structure, a significant amount of energy and labor has been expended on the assessment and refinement of the divisional model. Furthermore, successes of the divisional model continue to be viewed with skepticism by faculty members because of the general perception of reorganization as a top-down imposition from the board of trustees out of purely financial motivations.

Faculty satisfaction with Bard’s and Sarah Lawrence’s divisional models are markedly different from Berea’s, but these institutions have long been organized by division, which is fundamental to the approach to undergraduate education at both institutions. Bard’s divisional model was designed to encourage liberal arts breadth, rather than replicating the model of the university and graduate programs’ approach of specialized knowledge in distinct fields. Faculty are hired into divisions and the divisional model is fundamental to what it means to be a faculty member or student at Bard. The divisional model at Bard is particularly effective for disciplinary collaboration, event planning, and for maintaining a fluidity between faculty and administration. As is the case for Bard, Sarah Lawrence College has operated in a non-departmental structure since its founding. All students at Sarah Lawrence graduate with a B.A. in Liberal Arts, although they also choose a disciplinary pathway to guide their studies. Faculty are hired as members of “Faculty Groups,” rather than departments. These faculty groups are interdisciplinary in nature, and different faculty groups can include faculty whose scholarship relates directly to faculty in other groups, depending on their specific field of study.

Addressing Campus Inefficiencies
A good number of faculty in the survey raised the question of whether divisional reorganization would solve problems around inefficient structures and processes on campus and worried that creating divisions on top of departments would serve to add layers of bureaucracy to an already overly bureaucratic institution rather than streamlining our operations. Two subgroups of the ASARC explored this broader question of how our campus currently works, where processes are effective, and where they break down. Their reviews—of the use of technology at the college and of the interactions between departments and administrative offices—make clear that there is a need for innovation, clearer lines of communication, and better systems of accountability. The divisional model proposed by the AAPR would make it easier to address many of these issues, although it would not in itself necessarily solve them.

We learned three main things from our conversations:

1. Many offices reported that the inefficiencies and frustrations that they face are caused by a relatively small fraction of academic departments. In many cases, the offices felt that they had good procedures in place that the well-trained and attentive chairs and AAs were using effectively. However, when these procedures were not followed, it created a large amount of work for them to remediate the situation. In some cases, the problems seemed to arise from a lack of knowledge and/or training, while in other cases, the problems arose from a (perceived) more intentional lack of respect for procedures and/or deadlines.

2. Some offices felt that working through the A&S Dean’s Office was the optimal way for them to interact with the academic unit and offered recommendations for how that support could be improved and increased. Both Admissions and the Advancement Offices felt that having a point person in and communication through the Dean’s Office could help streamline inefficiencies. Many offices also welcomed the opportunity for clearer lines of communication that they believed the divisional model would offer and were excited about the kinds of conversations about process, fundraising, and promotion that could take place within divisions. The hybrid model that the ASARC is proposing seeks to maintain these potential benefits of a divisional model without falling into some of the pitfalls that took place at an institution like Berea.

3. A range of issues we face need to be—and are currently being addressed through technological solutions. These ongoing efforts [detailed later in the report] are vital to achieving greater efficiencies at Oberlin. Technology cannot and will not solve our problems, but the better use of existing technologies can make many currently time-consuming tasks (for example, the reimbursement process) much less onerous. For ASARC, the many current initiatives underway to improve operations through technology at Oberlin open up space to reconsider existing levels of compensation for administrative tasks like chairing and offer potential pathways to streamlining operations beyond any academic restructuring.

IV. PROPOSED MODEL: DIVISIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Based on ASARC discussions of the data and research, we propose to group together existing departments into a set of new administrative bodies called Divisional Advisory Committees (DACs). The DACs will streamline communication between
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departments/programs and central offices and will facilitate and encourage coordination, consultation, and collaboration around topics and challenges of central importance to Oberlin’s future. Most importantly, however, the DAC model will allow us to rethink the way in which the College of Arts & Sciences operates. Currently, most decision processes occur within and between the 39 departments and programs, on the one hand, and, on the other, elected committees (EPPC, CFC, GFC) or central administrative offices (Dean’s Office, CIT, Admissions, Communications, Registrar, Career Development Center, Advancement). The same is true for processes aimed at gathering or distributing information, for example through chairs’ meetings. Our data indicates that in our current, highly decentralized structure, these processes are often inefficient and ineffective. Worse, in some cases business that is of central importance to the institution falls by the wayside, or happens in parallel, redundant undertakings across departments. We need better lines of communication.

Therefore, the main purpose of the DACs will be to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making and information-sharing among and between departments and central offices, so that Arts & Sciences, and Oberlin College as a whole, are in a better position to weather the difficult times ahead. DACs will play a key role in setting and achieving the institution’s goals, whether they are related to admissions, curriculum, budget, event programming, or communication. Looking forward, the DAC structure can potentially create a generative structure that will allow nimble responses to future shifts in pedagogy and curriculum. We note that the DAC model draws inspiration from existing interdepartmental committee practices among the Natural Science and Mathematics and Language and Cultures departments at Oberlin: namely, the Science Advisory Committee, SAC, and the steering committee overseeing the Oberlin Center for Languages and Cultures, OCLC. We believe that the DAC model achieves the four goals established in the One Oberlin report, while avoiding those features of the AAPR and ASARC itself have operated—will lead to efficiencies and exciting innovations at the level of:

- First, because the main goal of the new model is to improve coordination, consultation, and collaboration across departments in a rapidly changing and challenging environment, the newly created divisions and accompanying DACs are purposely flexible and adaptable. The model does not seek to create either a new level of bureaucracy or a new set of silos. Nor does it seek to undermine departmental autonomy. We envision the possibility of any department, program, or committee participating in more than one DAC, for example, depending on the business at hand and their own compositional make-up (for instance Classics may want to be part of the Humanities as well as the Languages and Cultures DACs for certain monthly meetings; see below).

- Second, this model seeks to be bottom-up rather than top-down. Although in what follows we suggest topics and challenges on which departments united in a DAC may choose to consult and collaborate, the model leaves a lot of agency to the DACs—in part because we acknowledge that different programs and departments operate in very different ways, so that one size does not fit all.

The model is also bottom-up in that it leaves the composition of the DACs up to the departments: ultimately, it is up to each department to decide which division it decides to join for what purpose. The main rationale informing the composition of a division may be:

- curricular (similar pedagogies),
- disciplinary (neighboring or overlapping fields), or
- infrastructural (similar challenges in facilities management, for example).

The ASARC committee hopes and expects that conversations within DACs—which in practice will operate like agenda-driven working groups, similar to the way the AAPR and ASARC itself have operated—will lead to efficiencies and exciting innovations at the level of:

- course offerings (e.g., shared introduction or capstone courses),
- curricular pathways (e.g., new majors, minors, or integrative concentrations),
- personnel appointments (e.g. tenure lines that structurally serve more than one area),
- personnel processes (e.g. mentoring of junior faculty),
- best administrative practices (chairing, assessment, diversity and inclusion practices, etc.),
- support staff (e.g. shared facilities management, purchasing, etc.),
- administration (e.g., departments or programs deciding to merge or share a department chair on a rotating basis),
- event programming (e.g., invited speakers that serve multiple areas, less fragmentation of potential audiences),
We also believe that the DACs will allow departments and programs to better identify their shared needs and challenges, and to better articulate those needs and challenges to the central offices and elected committees. In contrast, in our current departmental model, different department chairs and individual faculty raise ideas or voice complaints independently, often leading to haphazard decisions. By speaking for multiple departments, a decision or recommendation from the DACs will hold more weight. The Dean’s Office, on its part, is committed to responding formally to requests and concerns coming from the DACs.

Features of the DAC Model
While the DACs are designed to be flexible and to evolve over time as necessary, they will share a basic common structure:

- The model creates the figure of the divisional convener, a faculty person who chairs the DAC meetings and functions as the primary spokesperson for the division in its communication with central offices.
- There will be regular—in principle, monthly—meetings of the DACs, with a handful of calendar-bound agenda items to discuss. (In practice, these meetings will replace the bulk of what are now chairs’ meetings.) DACs can certainly discuss other pertinent topics at their monthly meetings, but by creating a basic list of topics that will be discussed across all DACs each month, as a faculty, we can streamline tasks related to non-academic offices.
- For a specific DAC, agendas and minutes of each meeting will be emailed to all faculty whose departments and/or programs belong to that DAC. These documents for all DACs will be stored in an online archive such as Blackboard to ensure widespread knowledge of the work of all DACs.
- DACs may be asked by the elected committees (EPPC, CFC, GFC), the Dean’s Office, or any of the other central offices, to address specific agenda items or even to respond to specific, conjunctural challenges as they present themselves. In that context, the DACs would be less a working group than something resembling a crisis response team.
- Every department will have to join a DAC (and may choose to join multiple DACs) of their choice. Departments cannot choose not to participate in this new structure.

DAC Membership and Leadership

- We are proposing that the process start with the creation of 5 divisional advisory committees: Natural Sciences and Mathematics; Social Science; Practicing Arts; Languages and Cultures; Humanities and Humanistic Social Sciences. (Note that we have divided the humanities departments into three DACs because of the proportionally greater number of departments within the Humanities division.) The main rationale for the divisional groupings is curricular affinity, as well as shared reliance on facilities and/or event and performance programming. Reflecting the flexibility of the model, however, this organizational structure may change as departments begin to work together and discover that they prefer other groupings.
- Each department/program will choose one tenure-line representative—preferably, but not necessarily, the department/program chair—to serve on the DAC. Departments, especially those that represent multiple disciplines, may want to send representatives to more than one DAC, especially for meetings that may relate to multiple facets of the work of a department or program, such as curricular planning. Serving on a DAC as the regular representative for a department will count for 2 service points under the new service point system.
- Each DAC will be led by one convener. The convener will assist in setting meeting agendas and will oversee implementation or support the Dean’s Office in implementation on a timely basis. The selection of conveners will follow the current practice for selection of department chairs. Departments/programs will nominate individuals who will then be vetted by the Dean’s Office. Conveners will serve a 2-year term with the possibility of reappointment to additional terms. Convening a DAC will count for 3 service points under our new service point system.
- The Dean’s Office will be responsible for administering a training program for conveners.
- DAC conveners will hold regular meetings with the staff of the Dean’s Office.
- The Dean’s Office will provide administrative support for the DAC and its convener. The Dean’s office will also support funding requests for shared initiatives at the DAC level as funds are available.

DAC Functions Broken Down by Task
- Curriculum: consultative/deliberative, information sharing, coordinating
- Course planning and scheduling: coordinating where appropriate
- Facilities: consultative/deliberative, information sharing, coordinating
- Admissions: collaborative, coordinating, communication of the distinction of our academic programs
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Benefits of DAC model

- **Increased Curricular Collaboration:**
  The DAC model provides a structure for increased curricular collaboration across departments, which we hope will result in more coordinated efforts between faculty and office personnel and improve the College's ability to adapt to emerging changes in higher education. At a time when resources are limited, the DACs will encourage conversation about how campus resources can be deployed most effectively to maintain—and even expand—our curriculum.

- **More Streamlined and Effective Cross-Campus Communication**
  DAC model allows for more intentional communication between department representatives and key offices, along with accountability through the Dean's Office. It also provides a structure for communication among departments to gain broader visibility and support within DACs, across the college, and to the broader public.

- **Spaces for Innovation and Generative Ideas**
  Creating a regular space for cross-departmental conversation and consultation will open up new avenues for innovation to occur on campus. These innovations could be curricular; they might relate to different technologies or communication strategies; they could offer new forms of efficiencies and cost savings. The DAC model seeks to institutionalize the kinds of cross-campus conversations that have been taking place in the last two years that have served to facilitate positive and innovative change.

- **More Streamlined and Efficient Work Structures**
  The DAC model works in tandem with efforts to reduce the workload of chairs to streamline and make more efficient the ways in which we do our work at Oberlin. DAC meetings will replace most chair meetings and will be sites for a meaningful exchange of ideas. These meetings will also offer more efficient ways for departments to connect with Admissions, Communications, the Alumni Office, the Career Development Center, and Advancement.

In order for Oberlin College to achieve the goals outlined in the One Oberlin report, we are proposing a series of complementary changes related to technology, committee service, department chair duties and compensation, and the organization of administrative support for departments and programs—that are designed to enhance the work of the DACs. These changes are outlined as follows:

V. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY

We currently spend great amounts of time on work processes that are manual, siloed, redundant, unreliable, and inefficient. Much essential data currently resides in data islands, systems,
or repositories that are not widely accessible to those who need information. Chairs, faculty members, governance committees, and deans all need more accurate and reliable data in order to engage in the reflection and interpretation that inform effective decision-making.

Restructuring in the Arts & Sciences division should make strategic use of technologies by bringing stakeholders and users together to develop informed, purposeful processes toward the adopted AAPR goals. Goals #3, improving the overall quality of academic administration, and #4, enhancing administrative efficiencies, are especially addressed by offices who are trying to streamline administration and enhance administrative efficiencies. Technological upgrades and clearer processes would reduce the amount of time and effort that faculty and administrative assistants spend on administrative tasks, freeing up time for faculty members to focus more on Goals #1, increasing our inter- and multidisciplinary collaboration, and #2, increasing our ability to adapt to the changing environment and capitalize on opportunities.

Process analysis, undertaken collaboratively, provides necessary, comprehensive understanding of our work and opportunities for improving both quality and efficiency. It is essential that users of technology have adequate and ongoing training. It is desirable that digital technologies be integrated and accessible to multiple units on campus; technology systems need to speak to one another. It is equally desirable that a regular point person from departments or divisions should serve as liaisons to Communications and CIT. In summary, technological initiatives must improve an existing process (capability, security, stability, efficiency) or facilitate a new function and save time and/or money. The cost of implementation (financial and time related to training and expertise-building) must also be considered. And perhaps most importantly, all stakeholders (faculty, administrative assistants, and relevant offices) must be included in the process to choose the technology to be implemented - a function that DACs could readily facilitate.

Key areas in which technology does already or can improve our work (with ongoing, recent, planned, or proposed initiatives specified):

- Single sign-on system for all college software (recent: OKTA)
- Communications with students using their preferred methods from admissions to onboarding to advising to progress through graduation (planned: new customer relationship management (CRM) system with module for advising)
- Maintaining and accessing student records (planned: new CRM)
- Hiring and supervision of student employees; student payroll (recent: TimeClockPlus)
- Communications with faculty and staff as employees: from the interview and appointment process, to onboarding (recent: PeopleAdmin)
- Professional development of faculty: digital dossiers for personnel reviews (planned: faculty portfolio system)
- Position requests: auto-filling certain elements such as staffing histories and enrollment trends (planned: Banner module)
- Reimbursements: scanning receipts for electronic processing, eliminating budget spreadsheet (proposed: Chrome River)
- Designing the curriculum: catalog copy, course scheduling (recent: Curriculog)
- Enrollment management, registration and waitlists (ongoing: Banner module)
- Teaching: course design, instructional technology (ongoing: Blackboard)
- Learning: student portfolios for integrative concentrations; media, equipment, and tech support for creative arts courses
- Feedback: electronic SETs (recent: Blackboard module)
- Assessment: tagging and tracking of coursework that meets institutional learning goals
- Facilities management: work order system (planned: TopDesk)
- Governance: searchable repository of minutes and motions
- Committee work: Blackboard has served as a repository for records (recent: Box)
- External communications: departmental newsletters; connections with alumni, social media
- Event planning

VI. EQUITY IN FACULTY COMMITTEE SERVICE

In the ASARC survey, faculty expressed concern about the equity of faculty service on committees (i.e., College Faculty elected committees, program committees, curricular committees, and appointed General Faculty committees). The current expectation is that after the first year of employment, faculty will serve on two to three elected/appointed committees, with a lighter load for faculty on the tenure track.

ASARC analyzed committee service and found significant disparity in actual faculty committee service loads: roughly 30% of faculty have minimal committee service responsibilities, and roughly 10% of faculty have extremely heavy committee service responsibilities. ASARC proposes to remedy this situation by implementing the AAPR recommendation for a more transparent and quantifiable system for measuring faculty service on committees over time.
ASARC proposes a **point system** for committee service based on the level of work involved in service on a given committee (see appendix) that also sets expectations for faculty committee service loads over time. After their first year, tenure-track faculty will be expected to average 3 committee service points per year over a three-year period while tenured faculty will be expected to average 4 committee service points per year, also over a three-year period. This point system will help individual faculty and personnel committees set expectations for committee service and will ensure more equitable distribution of committee service responsibilities among our faculty. The point system will also generate quantitative data that can assist the committee assignment process, enable the analysis of committee service patterns, including committee size and composition, and help faculty plan and balance their committee service load relative to other obligations such as teaching and scholarship.

While this proposal does not address concerns about other forms of service (e.g., department service, “invisible” service, other college service), ASARC supports the consideration of other systems that would take this service into account. ASARC also recommends that consideration be given to the reduction or consolidation of committees, as well as the number of faculty serving on some committees. DAC meetings during 2020-21 would be an effective forum for addressing how to more equitably distribute or to minimize service not counted as formal service.

**VII. COMPENSATION AND WORKLOAD REDUCTION FOR CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS**

**New Chair Compensation Model**
The AAPR Divisional Model proposed the elimination of all course releases and stipends for department and program chairs, saving 18 course releases for faculty administration. ASARC believes that compensation for chairing remains important, although at a slightly reduced level overall if the workload of chairs can be reduced at the same time. ASARC offers a new model to achieve this balance.

Chair compensation is currently based on faculty FTE with adjustments for certain departments, which has to date produced a somewhat opaque and unequal pattern of compensation. ASARC proposes the use of an objective formula for determining chair compensation that more accurately captures the work done by chairs. This model would be based on the number of *individuals* with whom the chair works, rather than FTE, and would count the number of tenure-track, tenured, and visiting faculty along with other staff and a three-year average of graduating majors. Chairs would have the opportunity to verify these numbers with the College’s Business Manager each year. Once verified, each of these groups would be weighted based on the relative amount of work they typically generate for chairs, offering a more precise and objective calculation than is currently used. This is the type of formula that would be used for each department or program:

\[
\text{Number of Tenure Track Faculty} \times 325 + \text{Number of Tenured Faculty} \times 200 + \text{Number of VAPs} \times 200 + \text{Number of Other Staff} \times 100 + \text{Three-Year Average Number of Graduating Majors} \times 10 = \text{total compensation points}
\]

After calculating the total compensation points for each department or program, stipends and course releases would be based on the following categories:

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
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<th>Course Releases</th>
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</table>

All chairs would also receive 2 service points. Please see the appendix for a draft version of the spreadsheet.

The compensation points for each department and program will be calculated in the preceding fall semester (based on projected faculty and staff levels and on the three-year rolling average of the number of graduating majors) in order to determine the stipend and course release for the upcoming academic year. This early action should allow departments and programs to respond to any year-to-year fluctuations in the course release assignment.

Current estimates suggest that this model will increase the total amount of stipends paid to chairs by about $17,000 while reducing the number of annual course releases by about 12, for a total estimated annual savings of $148,250. The courses to be saved are critical to ensuring student access to classes and academic course coverage, including First-Year Seminars and other general education courses.
Rethinking the Way We Gather

Workload Reduction
To balance the reduction of course releases for chairs, ASARC has specific proposals to reduce the workload of chairs. First, many of the new technology initiatives listed above will reduce the work of chairs. These include digital dossiers, auto-filling data on required forms such as position requests and performance reviews, the use of Curriculog to update the course catalog, and the migration to electronic SETS. In addition to these, we plan to automate the declaration of a major and minor and move the approval for transfer of credit online. Chairs could then meet with majors as a cohort rather than through individual drop-in office hours. Second, the Dean's Office has agreed to combine the departmental year-end report with the assessment report and to reduce the frequency of the report to every other year. CFC has approved the elimination of the fourth-year progress towards tenure review. We foresee DAC meetings replacing most chairs meetings, so the DACs should not significantly increase the number of hours spent in meetings. Chairs who serve on DACs will receive service points (see below). In addition, we propose the creation of a shared services administrative support model to streamline some administrative functions related to event planning (e.g., speaker contracts, hotel reservations, advertisement), business activities and travel (e.g., purchasing, travel reservations, reimbursements), and some personnel functions (e.g., compiling data relevant to personnel reviews).

Beyond these recommendations, we foresee the DACs providing a venue for ongoing improvements in our work processes. For example, we would like the DACs to work with EPPC to develop better guidelines for VAP and TT position requests so that time is not wasted asking for a position that has no chance of being granted in a given year. The faculty survey indicated that the quality of chairing is uneven across departments and that we do not offer adequate training in how to be an effective chair. The DACs will provide a venue where new chairs can learn best practices from more experienced chairs, including, for example, how to delegate work within a department, how to handle complex personnel issues, how to understand and best work within OCOPE AA contracts, and how to understand and manage departmental budgets most effectively.

VIII. CENTRALIZATION OF TASKS
ASARC has identified certain tasks (e.g., travel, reimbursements, events planning) that are currently inefficient and oftentimes problematic for departments to oversee. We envision the creation of centralized offices that specialize in these tasks, which would allow faculty to focus on the most important facets of their job: teaching, research, advising, and service. Simple electronic forms will allow faculty to submit the required information to these centralized offices and troubleshoot common problems (e.g., similar talks scheduled at the same time). In addition, a centralized “Switchboard” will offer a one-stop solution for all the questions faculty have about offices, operations, and policies.

IX. REDUCTION IN OPERATIONAL COSTS THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING
One expected outcome of the One Oberlin final report is that roughly $750,000 in operational savings should be achieved through administrative efficiency and reorganization in the Arts & Sciences. This operational savings has only increased in importance with the financial disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This operational savings should be pursued in ways that best enhance the quality of educational administration. For example, experiential learning offices (e.g., Career Development, Fellowships, Study Away, Undergraduate Research, Winter Term) are currently scattered across campus. Housing them together in a central location would enhance the visibility of the offices to students and would facilitate collaboration on programming and administration across the offices. That configuration would also allow savings in personnel costs while enhancing the quality and breadth of service provided to students and faculty.

As noted above, some academic administrative functions could also be centralized in a “shared services” model to address a wide range of essential tasks such as event planning, reimbursements, purchasing, travel, personnel data compilation, etc. Employees with specialized skills would provide efficient and effective administrative support in these areas. Still other tasks could be automated through the use of available technologies (e.g., SETs and course enrollment waitlist). The responsibilities of academic administrative and educational support staff members would be substantially reduced because several of their current duties would be performed by shared services administrative assistants, creating opportunities for increased support for faculty and students in academic departments. The shared services model, however, has limits because of the importance of direct service in support of students, faculty, and visitors within academic buildings.

Together, the enhanced use of technology and the centralization of several time-consuming administrative tasks would allow a reduction, over time, in the number of A&PS and AA positions, helping to achieve the necessary operational savings by 2024-25. To the extent possible, Human Resources and the A&S Dean’s Office will work together to consolidate positions through attrition, minimizing disruption and displacement of employees.
X. IMPLEMENTATION: FOSTERING BOTTOM-UP COLLABORATION

ASARC hopes to encourage a bottom-up, organic process that permits departments and programs to collaborate in ways that are most helpful and appropriate to them, and which recognizes that there is a spectrum of closeness of collaboration, range of scope of collaboration, and intensity of resulting organizational restructuring. What these forms of collaboration have in common is that they emerge out of the needs and desires of departments themselves. Starting in the fall semester, DAC meetings will substitute for most chair’s meetings. We imagine DAC meetings next academic year as a means for departments/programs to shape how their DAC will operate moving forward. The DACs would not be imposing a strict model of collaboration, so much as facilitating a conversation that asks departments and programs to convene, figure out what works best for them, and come back with a plan. One benefit could be that collaborating departments get to “keep” or “use” some part of the efficiencies (e.g., chair compensation) they generate to their own advantage. One can imagine an array of collaborations in which departments and programs might engage. For example, departments might:

- create something like a new academic unit that involves a full range of coordination
- formal merger of departments
- share/rotate chairs between two or more departments
- collaborate on one or more substantial administrative tasks (curriculum planning, event management, personnel reviews)
- share or specially designate the use of equipment, facilities, or administrative resources (including AAs’ expertise)

XI. NEXT STEPS

1. May 2020: ASARC brings its final report to the College Faculty with a motion to vote to adopt the report.

2. Late May 2020 Departmental Meetings: Choose a DAC:
   - Each department or program should call a meeting in May to discuss and decide which DAC your department will consider as its primary DAC. For most departments, representation on one DAC will be enough, and the choice of which DAC will be obvious. Some departments may have curricular affinity with several of the DACs, and these departments should choose one DAC as their primary administrative home. This decision does not have to be permanent or binding. Departments may decide after a year or more to switch to a different DAC. Multidisciplinary departments and programs will not need to have full-time representation on several DACs. Please read through the monthly agenda items for DAC meetings under section IV. It is our sense that multidisciplinary departments and programs will only need to send representatives to multiple DACs for the October meeting (for faculty position advanced planning) and the February meeting (for Advancement priorities). All other agenda items can be addressed fully through representation on one DAC.
   - Choose your Departmental or Program Representative to the DAC: At the same meeting discuss and decide on who will be the department or program’s representative to the DAC. This could be the chair or possibly the person next in line to chair.
   - An interactive process (such as filling out a shared Google Doc) will be used for departments and programs to indicate their chosen DAC assignment and representative. This process will allow all departments and programs to see the grouping process in real time, which may assist some units in making their DAC selection.

3. 2020-2021 Academic Year: DAC meetings will begin in September 2020 and will be held monthly for the 2020-2021 academic year.

4. September 2021: One-year preliminary review: DAC conveners will meet with the dean to provide feedback on the successes and shortcomings of the model and make recommendations for specific improvements. They will also report to CF at its first meeting in September 2021.

5. A more comprehensive formal review will occur after three years (Fall 2023), which will include an assessment of the DAC model, the success of the service model in narrowing the distribution of committee work among the faculty, as well as surveys of chairs and offices to determine if workflow has improved in quality and reduced in quantity.

XII. FAQS

Who determines who belongs in which DAC? What about programs/ departments/ curricular committees that don’t fit neatly into any one DAC?

Each department/program gets to choose for itself which DAC it would like to join. Department DAC representatives are free to attend any DAC meeting that they feel has agenda items relevant to their departments. For most departments, even multi-disciplinary departments and programs, one DAC will be sufficient to address the monthly agenda items.

Could certain program committees and integrative concentrations join DACs?

Yes, particularly if they have faculty lines.
What power do DACs or DAC conveners have?
DACs are consultative but intentionally structured bodies whose direct channels to campus offices will help departments advocate for shared goals. The Dean’s Office is committed to responding to requests and concerns coming from the DACs.

To whom are the DACs accountable?
First and foremost to their own departments and to the faculty as a whole. They are also accountable to the Dean’s Office and other administrative offices in that they support the lines of communication between departments and the offices. For a specific DAC, agendas and minutes of each meeting will be emailed to all faculty whose departments and/or programs belong to that DAC. These documents for all DACs will stored in an online archive such as Blackboard to ensure widespread knowledge of the work of all DACs.

What will be the nature of DAC-EPPC collaboration?
The DAC calendar of agenda items includes “Curriculum and Faculty Positions Advanced Planning.” The hope is that DAC members will discuss their anticipated position requests and find ways to use potential new hires to support each other’s curriculum. This support need not be conceived of as sharing an FTE, but rather as opportunities for cross-listing courses or sharing methods, intro, or capstone classes, if relevant. Furthermore, curricular feedback from DACs could assist EPPC in understanding the significance of faculty positions for the divisional curriculum.

Will this change lead to more meetings?
Proposed DAC meetings are once per month and are envisioned as largely taking the place of chairs’ meetings. DAC representatives will receive service points. The proposed model also reduces the service burden of faculty and the workload of chairs through 1) a more equitable distribution of college service, 2) the introduction of several time-saving technologies, and 3) elimination and simplification of several chair tasks.

Are DACs just more work?
DACs are work, but we think it is time well spent because they are designed to achieve results. The topics to be examined DACs are currently inadequately addressed in a time-consuming ad hoc manner by department chairs and other interested faculty. Individual initiatives rarely gain the visibility necessary for results at the institutional level. DACs will provide a results-oriented and efficient mechanism to address important priorities for Arts & Sciences in a consultative and efficient manner.

How will the effectiveness of DACs and the overall ASARC proposal be assessed?
DACs are meant to be flexible and adaptable over time. We recognize that the College will need several years to assess the effectiveness of the various components of the ASARC proposal (e.g., DAC structure, service points model, chair/office workflow quality and quantity) and make adjustments accordingly. The DAC conveners, in collaboration with the Dean’s Office, will review the new administrative model after three years. The review will be presented to the College Faculty.

How will these proposals help the College save money?
ASARC’s primary focus on academic goals will lead to financial savings through a number of ensuing efficiencies. These include: collaborating through DACs with Communications and other campus offices to help attract and retain top-tier students; software adoptions; some pooled academic administrative labor; and ensuring, through reduced course releases for chairs, seats for 100 students shifted from the Conservatory to Arts & Sciences.

How will this reorganization impact the positions of AAs?
Some academic administrative functions could be centralized in a “shared services” model to address a wide range of essential tasks such as event planning, reimbursement, purchasing, travel, etc. Employees with specialized skills would provide efficient and effective administrative support in these areas. Still other tasks could be automated through the use of available technology. Any elimination in AA positions will ideally take place over some years through attrition.

How does the proposed service points model help people to not do too much service? What about those who seem to be doing too little?
The model is not meant as a tool to micromanage individuals’ service points. Rather, it should help clarify service expectations, make patterns more visible, identify individuals who are clearly doing too much or too little service on formal committees, and engender conversations between those individuals, the Dean’s Office, and the College Faculty Council to work toward solutions.

How can faculty be involved in the purchase of new software that is intended to lead to greater administrative efficiency?
ASARC recognizes that all stakeholders (faculty, administrative assistants, and relevant offices) must be included in the process to choose the technology to be implemented—a function that DACs could readily facilitate.
Rethinking the Way We Gather

What will the DACs do next year?
Depending on what COVID-19 allows, we would begin implementing elements of the DACs and other features of the ASARC recommendations. Starting in the fall semester, DAC meetings will substitute for most chair’s meetings. We imagine DAC meetings next year as a means for departments/programs to shape how their DAC will operate moving forward. It will also be an opportunity to make additions to or adjust the calendar of agenda items proposed in this document.

How will DAC conveners be selected and trained?
The selection of conveners will follow the current practice for selection of department chairs. Departments/programs will nominate individuals who will then be vetted by the Dean’s Office. Conveners will be trained by the Dean’s Office and will serve a 2-year term with the possibility of reappointment to additional terms.

Were other chair compensation models considered?
Models with smoother relationships between total compensation points and stipends (in contrast to the presently proposed $500 increment system) and the use of multiple year compensation point averaging to determine course releases and stipends were considered. However, ASARC felt that the simpler incremental stipend system would be easier to manage from a bookkeeping perspective. ASARC also preferred resetting the chair compensation each year (instead of averaging over some longer time period) because this would ensure that the compensation more accurately reflects the work of each particular year. The compensation points for each department and program will be calculated in the preceding fall semester (based on projected faculty and staff levels and on the 3-year rolling average of the number of graduating majors) in order to determine the stipend and course release for the upcoming academic year. This early action should allow departments and programs to respond to any year-to-year fluctuations in the course release compensation. ASARC also considered the option for departments and programs to voluntarily increase their enrollments and/or assign other faculty to teach extra courses to create larger chair course releases than the current model allows, but decided that this option could lead to inappropriate pressure on individual faculty and potentially lead to unintentional inequities.

Will the new chair compensation model affect current chairs?
Current chairs will continue to receive whatever compensation was outlined in their appointment letter until the end of their current term. Appointments to additional terms would be subject to the new system.
### XII. APPENDIX

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<th><strong>Departments and DACs</strong></th>
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<td>Mediation, PCRC</td>
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* Ex officio chairs do not receive service points

** Program Committee points do not apply to those who are full time in the program
### Draft Chair Compensation Spreadsheet

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<th>Department</th>
<th>Number of Tenure Track Faculty</th>
<th>Number of Tenured Faculty</th>
<th>Number of VAPs (A&amp;PS/OCOPE)</th>
<th>Average Graduating Majors 17-19</th>
<th>Total Compensation Points</th>
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