

## On behalf of the Provost: Organization of Sciences and Engineering at SLU and Science and Engineering Task Force Report 2

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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to announce the formation of a working group to design a process for conducting a campus-wide conversation about college organization relating to the sciences and engineering at Saint Louis University. This working group is being created in response to a charge issued to me by President Pestello with the support of incoming Interim Provost, Chet Gillis.

### Background

The question of the appropriate organizational structure to best support certain scientific and engineering disciplines has been a longstanding, though informal, one at Saint Louis University. On October 4<sup>th</sup> of this year, it was directly raised to President Pestello when he attended the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Council meeting. The specific topic broached at that meeting was the future of the sciences as part of the College, but it follows on two formal campus discussions that have occurred over the past year.

The first was a Transforming SLU working group formed during the summer of 2017 that investigated university organizational structures and culminated in a speaker series and follow-up conversations during the Fall. In November of 2017, Provost Brickhouse also charged the Science and Engineering Task Force to identify opportunities for the sciences and engineering at SLU to expand their impact. The group conducted their work over the balance of the 2017-18 academic year. Attached to this email you will find a copy of the [Science and Engineering Task Force's final report](#). I am deeply appreciative of the Science and Engineering Task Force's work. They will be scheduling open forums to discuss their report and recommendations as a way of initiating questions and ideas that will inform the coming conversation.

To help lay the groundwork for an inclusive, campus-wide conversation on the organization of the sciences and engineering, I have asked the following individuals to serve as a new working group, to assist me in determining how best to proceed:

- Chris Duncan (Dean, College of Arts & Sciences)
- Michelle Sabick (Dean, Parks College of Engineering, Aviation, and Technology)
- Toby Benis (Chair, Department of English)
- Brian Downes (Associate Professor of Biology)

It is **not** this group's charge to attempt to answer the ultimate questions around organizational and administrative structures. Rather, it will research how and why other institutions have undertaken this conversation, and propose a structure for a productive conversation on our campus.

## **Charge and Plan of Work**

The central goal of the working group is to delineate a process by which the larger conversation about the sciences and engineering can proceed in an orderly, rigorous, and inclusive manner. To these ends, the working group will reach out to other institutions who have had similar conversations. Our goals will be to learn how peer and aspirational institutions are organized; why they are organized as they are; and to explore the cultural and financial implications of various organizational models. We will also seek their assessment of how structures, past and present, have both supported or hindered excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship.

The information gathered will then be used to propose a charge for a university-level Task Force on these matters. This proposal will be presented to the university community for feedback and revision prior to any further action by the administration.

Dr. Gillis and I will have this preparatory work completed and the Task Force created before the end of the current academic year.

## **Conclusion**

This action is being undertaken with an open mind and a commitment to creating a process that is consistent with shared governance as well as one that will lead to an end that will best serve our students and faculty. I can assure you that neither President Pestello nor I hold any predisposition for an ultimate structure. I can also assure you that, having spoken with incoming Interim Provost Gillis about the situation, he does not, either. We anticipate – and welcome – being held to a high standard of faculty inclusion in the deliberations. All voices are welcome and necessary.

I have discussed this issue with Faculty Senate President Doug Rush and President-Elect Ruth Evans and assured them that I will work with them to ensure the *Faculty Manual* is followed throughout the process, and in any potential future decision-making for academic reorganization.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this important and complicated conversation.

Sincerely,  
Mike Lewis

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