

FAQs Academic Restructuring—General

What is meant by academic restructuring?

Academic restructuring involves the realignment of colleges, programs, departments, and schools. The goal of academic restructuring is to find the configuration of academic programs that positions the university to meet the academic needs of its students, to provide opportunities for its faculty, and create ways of enhancing the academic quality of the institution and its financial health.

How will students be affected by the academic restructuring? What steps have been taken to ensure that students will not be delayed in their academic progress?

A set of FAQs has been drafted for students and can be accessed at <http://www.ohio.edu/provost/Academic-Restructuring-NEW.cfm> but to summarize:

- No academic programs are being eliminated.
- Faculty will continue to work with the same degree programs and the students who are enrolled in those programs.
- Students currently enrolled in programs that are part of the restructuring will not experience changes in their degree requirements as a result of the restructuring.
- Students will not experience delays in their time to degree completion because of restructuring.
- Students will not have their scholarship and/or financial aid awards changed as a result of restructuring.
- Students in affected Health and Human Services programs who are eligible to participate in the Spring 2010 commencement will march with the College of Health and Human Services.

How will faculty be affected by the academic restructuring?

No academic programs or faculty jobs are being eliminated although some programs and faculty will be housed in a different college as a result of the restructuring. Faculty will continue to work with the same degree programs and the students enrolled in those programs regardless of where the programs are placed.

Issues affecting faculty from teaching assignments to promotion and tenure were discussed in the template process but additional conversations need to take place. Particular attention will be paid to protecting the interests of untenured faculty.

Transition teams with significant faculty representation will be created for each of the program realignments and the internal restructuring that is to take place in the College of Health Sciences and Professions. The teams will be given the responsibility of making recommendations to the Executive Vice President and Provost on the disposition of faculty issues involved in the restructuring.

Why is Ohio University restructuring its academic units?

It has been over 30 years since Ohio University reviewed its academic structure. During that time major shifts have taken place in the landscape of higher education. How we learn, what we learn, and why we learn have been transformed through computers, the degree to which boundaries between disciplines have changed or blurred, and a host of challenges (most of them global in nature) that dominate our scholarship and teaching.

The new structure will allow us to take full advantage of some of our academic strengths, provide the type of cohesion that fuels valuable synergies, and permit us to develop new academic possibilities that are responsive to the ways in which students will need to be equipped for their careers and their responsibilities as citizens.

If the current structure has been in place for over 30 years, why now?

There are a number of developments that have taken place or will take place that suggest that now is a good time to undertake academic restructuring at Ohio University.

- The College of Osteopathic Medicine and the health and well-being programs in the College of Health and Human Services have matured to the point where they can support an academic health center and a heightened level of responsibility for revenue generation and grant and contract production.
- We are transitioning to semesters. Realigned programs and departments would benefit from being part of the Q2S conversations in their new academic homes.
- There are a number of degree programs in high demand that could be developed under the new structure that would provide greater choices to our students and help the state meet the need for qualified workers in health-related fields.

What is an academic health center and why would Ohio University want to form one?

The national organization for academic health centers requires that its members “be accredited, degree-granting institutions of higher education that educate a wide variety of health care professionals, offer comprehensive basic and advanced patient care, and conduct a broad spectrum of biomedical and health services research. They must include: an allopathic or osteopathic school of medicine; at least one other health professions school or program (such as allied health, dentistry, graduate studies, nursing, pharmacy, public health, and veterinary medicine); and, as a major component of the nation's health care delivery system, one or more owned or affiliated teaching hospitals, health systems or other organized health care services.”

Currently there are more than 126 academic health centers in the United States. There are four Ohio academic health centers (Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Ohio State University, University of Toledo, and the University of Cincinnati). Southeastern Ohio is the only region of the state without an academic health center.

An academic health center would create connections between a set of clinical programs—medicine, physical therapy, hearing, speech, and language sciences—and a full spectrum of teaching and research expertise focused on human health. It would allow Ohio University students to become equipped to practice a team approach to health care; it would assist faculty in developing their skills as clinicians and their discoveries as researchers; and it would provide members of the community access to innovative ways of protecting and enhancing their health.

What are the cost savings associated with the restructuring? Will there be revenue enhancement possibilities?

As she began her work on academic restructuring at Ohio University, Executive Vice President and Provost Benoit indicated that she would not move forward with elements of the restructuring that would involve significant costs. Through the template process and in discussion with deans, she has gathered enough information to suggest that the restructuring will involve only modest one-time-only costs (for items such as web site updating) while generating the potential for significant new sources of revenue.

In terms of cost savings the university as a whole is engaged in the enterprise of identifying ways to save money on its operations, but Provost Benoit has stressed that units should look for cost savings as they work through the restructuring. While it is unknown to what degree savings will be realized there are possibilities for establishing new efficiencies.

The restructuring offers the potential to create a number of in-demand degree programs that will provide greater choices for students and generate additional revenue. It will also expand research and creative activity possibilities in a number of areas allowing for the generation of additional grants and contracts.

How are other colleges and programs affected by the academic restructuring?

The restructuring aims to create a center of excellence in health and well-being through the refocused College of Health Sciences and Professions and the establishment of an Academic Health Center. Other program alignments and possibilities for new programs involving colleges and departments not currently part of the restructuring will be explored in a second phase of the restructuring.

How was shared governance involved in the process of academic restructuring?

Provost Benoit responded to the concerns of faculty and staff who wanted a direct opportunity to participate in the restructuring process. She developed a two-part template process that involved committees of faculty and staff who reviewed the proposed restructuring as it related to their units and supplied information on a number of key aspects. She used the templates to inform her decisions on restructuring.

What are the next steps?

Next steps are outlined in a document that is available at <http://www.ohio.edu/provost/Academic-Restructuring-NEW.cfm>. Briefly the next stage will involve the appointing of transition teams made up of faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders associated with each affected program. The transition teams will be charged with helping to make recommendations on a list of issues associated with each move.

What plans exist to communicate with additional important groups such as parents and alumni?

Information will go out to parents in the next Parents' Newsletter from the Dean of Students Office. Additional communications will be developed as needed. The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost is working with the Alumni Association on communicating with Ohio University alumni and friends.

What was the process used in the restructuring?

The restructuring process evolved over time and with a change in leadership. It began with a white paper authored by Ohio University deans. It was released in March 2009. A series of forums and conversations with deans, faculty, and staff followed. Programs were invited to submit responses to the white paper to Executive Vice President and Provost Krendl and the deans. Five programs submitted responses. Provost Krendl and the deans met with the faculty in each of the programs and discussed their proposals. Based on the proposals and on the discussions held with faculty, Provost Krendl made recommendations on the placement of programs in May 2009.

Executive Vice President and Provost Benoit reviewed the restructuring process when she joined Ohio University on July 1, 2009. Faculty and staff asked her to give them greater involvement in the restructuring process. She responded by developing a two-part template process that involved committees of faculty and staff connected to the affected programs and colleges. The first stage of the process involved providing specific information about cost savings, potential revenue generation, and the need for additional resources associated with the move of each program. Step two was focused on examining how elements critical to ensuring a successful move should be addressed.

Provost Benoit reviewed the two parts that each committee submitted and made her final restructuring decisions based on the template process.

Did the template process accomplish the goals that were originally set out for it?

The template process provided an opportunity for greater direct involvement of faculty and staff and generated a base of evidence on which decisions could be made. These were the two primary reasons for establishing the template process and they were both met.

Why did it take so long for the academic restructuring process to evolve and for decisions to be made?

Restructuring is a complicated process that involves many people and important issues. While there was a need to make decisions within a particular timeframe so that the restructuring could be aligned with the Quarters to Semesters curriculum transition and the PeopleSoft implementation, it was also necessary to build in time to allow for the involvement of faculty and staff and the development of information that was needed to make evidence-based decisions.

How is this restructuring different from what was proposed earlier?

This restructuring provided a greater role for the participation of faculty and staff. It also was focused on developing a body of evidence that could be used in determining whether an element of the proposed restructuring had the potential to help the unit and the university realize new opportunities and better serve students.

What issues remain to be discussed and negotiated?

A wide range of issues from the internal structure of the College of Health Sciences and Professions to the use of computer labs remains to be discussed and negotiated. Work will begin immediately on developing a list of issues and then prioritizing them. What must be dealt with first are matters that need Board of Trustee approval and/or have ramifications for the PeopleSoft implementation.