

Proposal for the Establishment of a
College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences (CHASS)
January 20, 2011

We propose to establish a new College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, effective July 1, 2011, or as soon thereafter as practical, consisting of the following Departments:

- Afro-American Studies
- Anthropology
- Art, Architecture, and Art History
- Classics
- Communication
- Economics
- English
- History
- Judaic and Near Eastern Studies
- Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning
- Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
- Linguistics
- Music & Dance
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Sociology
- Theater
- Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

as well as the Programs, Institutes, and Centers currently incorporated into the College of Humanities & Fine Arts (CHFA) and the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences (CSBS). Concomitant with the formation of CHASS would be the dissolution of CHFA and CSBS.

Process.

The current discussion of school/college reorganization has its origins in the fall of 2008, as the campus was reacting to early consequences of the global financial collapse. In these initial discussions, many themes were explored simultaneously, e.g., how best to address the financial challenges of the moment, how best to organize academic activities, how to prepare for an uncertain future.

Ideas that came out of these early discussions contemplated a number of different College and School realignments and some possibilities to be explored. A campus-wide Reorganization Task Force worked during early 2009 to explore options and recommend organizational alternatives, one of which was creation of a College of Arts and Sciences from the existing colleges of Humanities and Fine Arts, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Natural Science and Mathematics,

and Natural Resources and the Environment. After considerable campus study and debate, only one specific College reorganization—the creation of the College of Natural Sciences (CNS)—went forward. The campus committed itself to continue discussion of other possibilities.

When I arrived on campus in August 2009, I found the new College of Natural Sciences in an early stage of coalescence, and also some disappointment about that outcome among some supporters of the Arts & Sciences model. Having spent some years leading a College of Arts and Sciences, I could easily understand the arguments in favor of such an organizational approach. But since the campus had decided to go in a different direction, the task I saw was to explore ways in which all faculty — those in the new College of Natural Sciences and those for whom organizational discussions were continuing — could organize productively.

As one step in that process, the Deans of CHFA and CSBS had appointed a Joint Task Force made up of faculty from the two colleges to study issues surrounding a possible merger of those two colleges. Over the course of 2009-2010, the Task Force identified many important issues in its report, and the Deans forwarded the Task Force report with their comments to me.

At the beginning of the Fall 2010 semester, I formed a Working Group of ten Heads and Chairs from CHFA and CSBS, five from each college, to explore this matter further. This group, assisted by an outside facilitator, explored issues already identified and accepted the task of developing a provisional vision and mission statement for a new College, which is appended to this proposal.

Taking all of these inquiries and discussions into account, I decided to go forward with this proposal to create a new College and to present it to the Faculty Senate for advice. This decision was taken with the recognition that many concerns and questions had been raised over the past two years, and also that many things had changed since the organizational discussion had begun:

a. As noted above, the creation of a new College of Natural Sciences took off the table the Arts & Sciences option, and required a different analysis of possible organizational structures.

b. The financial situation, while still daunting, has become clearer, and the campus has an orderly process in place to move forward. The prospect of base budget cuts, which had been so central to the first round of discussions, was resolved: cuts were taken (from all schools and colleges), but this cleared the way for a discussion that could focus on other issues.

c. As part of its financial strategy the campus put into place a number of revenue-sharing initiatives. The campus responded rapidly and energetically, and we gained considerable insight into how best to support innovation and interdisciplinary cooperation.

d. A number of issues raised in earlier rounds of discussion—including research support for liberal arts disciplines—received broader attention and stimulated actions independent of the

organizational discussion. Some ideas that came up in earlier rounds—like a Center for the Liberal Arts—have not yet been implemented, but have continued to draw interest.

Thus, the context for considering creation of a new College is quite different today than it was two years ago. The question is whether, in today's context, moving forward makes sense. In my opinion, which is based both on my analysis of the current circumstances at UMass and on my experience leading a large, complex college, it does.

The Proposal.

On balance, I see the benefits of the new college outweighing the benefits of continuing with the current organizational structure, with recognition, however, that reasonable arguments can be made for either approach. In the year and one half that I have spent listening to the views of faculty members and department heads in the two existing colleges, I have come to understand better how the current structure works and why faculty members might be concerned that they risk losing relationships and investments that they value. Both colleges have achieved a great deal in their long histories, and each has created a distinctive role and a strong culture of accomplishment. I see this as an opportunity to build on those successes, and to come together in new ways that can redound to the benefit of all parties.

There are strong arguments that support this case, but first it is important to enumerate some factors that were prominent in earlier discussions but which do not drive this conclusion:

a. First, as events have evolved, the creation of a new College is not a means of implementing budget cuts. The campus has certainly experienced cuts in state support, and we may experience them again in the future. Every unit, whatever its configuration, must be considered when revenues fall short. And, in fact, when we did reduce budgets for FY 2009 and FY2010, all the schools and colleges contributed: those that were in the process of reorganization, those that were still under discussion, and those for which no reorganization was proposed. Having made those cuts and moved on, however, removes budget savings as an argument for merger. Organizational changes may have indirect implications for financial strength (some of which are discussed below), but that is far different from considering organization in the context of a specific budgetary goal.

b. Likewise, the creation of a new College does not imply reductions in staffing. The presumption in this proposal is that the new College will bring together the existing staff in CHFA and CSBS, and this is the guidance Vice Chancellor Hatch has followed as she and her staff develop plans for a CHASS Dean's Office. This does not mean, of course, that every job will remain the same. Just as we've seen in CNS, roles may shift and opportunities may arise as two organizations come together. In fact, a strong and dedicated staff is essential to the success of any organization, especially during periods of change. The comments that I have heard from faculty and department heads and chairs in the two Colleges make it clear that the staff have been and

will remain a key asset; it needs to be equally clear that the creation of a new College does not presume a reduction in staffing.

c. Finally, the creation of a new College is not a mechanism to obscure or subsume the disciplinary identities of departments or their faculty members. One of the most striking outcomes of the planning process in which the Working Group has been engaged this past semester is the extent to which the different traditions and emphases of social scientists, humanists, and artists have remained strong and distinct even as their interplay has been explored. The key phrase in the vision statement developed by the department heads (attached) is “to promote the study, understanding, and expression of what it is to be human.” That is, to say the least, a big topic, and one that has always required and will always require different disciplinary perspectives and modes of inquiry. That is something we should not and need not lose in the creation of a new College.

So if these are things that the creation of a new College is not intended to accomplish, what are the considerations that lead to this proposal at this time?

a. First and most important, the proposal is intellectually sound and timely. The disciplined study of “what it is to be human” could have no greater relevance or urgency. Much is often made of the rapid technological advancement and explosive growth of scientific knowledge that have characterized the past half-century. The impact of these developments cannot be overstated. But their origins and the ends to which they are directed are not free of human influence and impact. Human society increasingly struggles with the consequences and implications of technological changes, and the economic and social transformations they have engendered, sometimes in unintended ways. If ever there were a time to step back and think about how a great university can marshal its resources to contribute to the question of “what it is to be human,” this is it. That is not to say that we could not make important contributions through our existing organization. However, the creation of a new College organized with this question at its core opens up new possibilities and expands our reach.

b. Second, given that interdisciplinary work or transdisciplinary perspectives can emerge from a number of organizational schemes, what kind of organizational structure makes these connections most likely? One answer to that question has to do with how faculty interact. In my experience, serving within the same college will foster the development of new connections among faculty members and disciplines. This may occur intentionally as likely collaborators seek each other out, but it is highly likely that a considerable increase in connectivity will occur as faculty members engage in everyday activities related to college business. Faculty members from various departments will encounter each other on the College Curriculum Committee and will make connections that they would not otherwise make. Faculty members serving on the College Personnel Committee will discover interesting work being done in a different department and this will lead to unanticipated connections and collaborations or referrals. Special task forces convened by the college to promote student success, I.T. enhancement, or other initiatives ordinary and

extraordinary will also bring people together and foster new connections that would likely not otherwise occur. It is in our collective interest to increase connectivity, to foster its serendipitous occurrence and unanticipated collaborations. Broadening faculty interaction was one of the arguments in favor of the Arts and Sciences model, and a similar logic applies here.

c. In addition to its intellectual merit, a combined College can help us be more effective. Much of the campus's financial strategy to respond to losses of state funding relies on revenue-sharing programs of various kinds (CPE programs, out-of-state enrollment increases, increases in full-paying Master's students, etc.). A coordinated strategy across the humanities, arts, and social sciences is likely to be more effective in realizing the full potential of these efforts than two narrower strategies. Similarly, over the past year many comments have been heard from faculty and department heads in CHFA and CSBS about the need for better support for faculty research and for development efforts. While the campus will step up its capacities in these areas, a unified College administration can better identify needs and organize resources appropriately.

d. Creation of a College organized on the principles proposed here would send an important message across the campus and to the broader community. It would signify that we are actively engaged in thinking about our role in tackling the important questions relating to the human condition, just as a year and a half ago we sent a powerful signal about our role with respect to the natural sciences. It articulates a vision and a set of aspirations that will be important in recruiting a permanent Dean, and in setting the stage generally for recruitment of faculty and department heads. It creates a context in which new academic programs and research and scholarly efforts can be viewed, and expands the ranks of potential collaborators at other institutions and among funding agencies.

e. Finally, this proposal recognizes that the discussion that led to the creation of the College of Natural Sciences was incomplete. It forged some important organizational links, especially among the science departments, but it did not address equally important needs in other areas. In particular, the campus did not address how the new College of Natural Sciences would relate to other parts of the campus, however they might be organized. As the Joint Task Force forcefully argued in its report, this left many programs in the social sciences — and some in the humanities — with the legitimate concern that the first round of organization may actually have left them more distant from existing and potential collaborators in the sciences. While this was certainly not intended as a consequence of formation of a College of Natural Sciences, it is not acceptable to leave that concern unaddressed. This proposal is made in the firm belief that the connections and opportunities spanning the liberal arts and the sciences will be more clearly articulated, more readily supported, and more effectively pursued if the existing, unified science college is joined by a strong college that brings together the arts, humanities and social sciences.

This is a key point that must be emphasized. The creation of two combined colleges is not intended, and must not be seen as, an organizational manifestation of division between the two. This was not true when we had four colleges, and it will not be true with two. But any

organizational change requires that we revisit first principles, and ensure that the organization serves the mission, not the other way around. This proposal therefore identifies several important implementation steps that, it is hoped, will leave the campus as a whole better integrated than it was prior to this discussion, and better integrated than it was simply with the creation of a College of Natural Sciences.

Of course, whenever one speaks about the advantages of different approaches, one must also consider comparative disadvantages. What might be lost in a transition from CHFA and CSBS to CHASS?

a. In many public conversations over the past year on this subject, the most frequently cited concerns have tended to revolve around potential loss of resources (including support staff) and potential loss of identity or focus. The former has been touched upon already: While the campus's financial future in general remains uncertain, this proposal does not anticipate disproportionate budget impacts as a purpose or consequence of the organizational change. No budget cuts are associated with this reorganization. If there is a campus-wide cut in the future, the new college would take the same cut as would the two separate colleges combined. No staff member will lose his/her job as a result of this reorganization. Some job descriptions may be modified, and some resources may be redirected internally within CHASS as positions undergo natural turnover, but no cuts in staff positions are envisioned as part of the reorganization itself.

b. The question of identity is more difficult to assess. There is no doubt that having a college “of” social science or a college “of” humanities provides a certain amount of distinctive identity. There is also no doubt that personnel and curriculum committees tend to be more homogeneous in terms of intellectual traditions and perspectives in more specialized units than they are in broader units; however, if we are seeking to promote transdisciplinary connections and interdisciplinary approaches to scholarship, that homogeneity can also be an impediment. One way to frame the question is to ask whether the essential benefits of sharply defined disciplinary identity and focus can be achieved in a broader organization intended to promote benefits related to interdisciplinarity and collaboration. The answer may depend to a large extent on expectation and intent. As the new College evolves, it will have to make a number of important decisions about how it will do business. How will the personnel and curriculum committees be structured? How will research support be organized? What will be its curricular requirements? The answers to these and other questions will determine the balance among disciplinary views, transdisciplinary connections, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Colleagues who have served as faculty members at institutions that have a well organized College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; a College of Liberal Arts; or a College of Arts and Sciences know that a successful balance can be achieved. Based on the many examples of productive cooperation evidenced during the first year of the new College of Natural Sciences, there is robust evidence that we can strike a very effective balance in the formation of CHASS. But we must not believe that this balance will emerge by itself, or that it will emerge easily. I therefore propose several transitional strategies intended to start this process on sound footing.

To me, the fundamental question is this: does the structure remaining after the creation of the College of Natural Sciences represent our best organizational response to the challenges ahead? I believe it does not. While without question faculty in CHFA and the remaining departments of CSBS would do all in their power to make the existing organization work, their effort would yield greater dividends once the power of a new structure has been harnessed. This reality was recognized in the proposal for a College of Arts & Sciences. And while the synergies in a College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences may not be as comprehensive, they will nonetheless be highly valuable. Moreover, by calling upon both CHASS and CNS to build the mechanisms necessary to promote collaboration across the sciences and the liberal arts, I believe the campus can realize the essential benefits many hoped for in the proposal for a College of Arts and Sciences.

All of these considerations lead me to the conclusion that with the creation of a new College we can gain a number of benefits and at the same time have confidence that possible losses can be avoided. Individually, some benefits may be modest, and some will take time to fully realize. This proposal is not made with the premise that it will lead to quick or dramatic transformation (which is not its purpose), but rather with the prospect for incremental but important improvement over time and with a deep sense that we will lose important opportunities if we do not move forward. We have much to gain by moving forward, with some challenges to be sure, but we also stand to lose much by not moving forward.

Various issues related to this proposal have been debated for more than a year. Many members of our community have tackled tough questions, and those efforts have powerfully shaped this proposal. We have interim Deans who have served ably, but we need to focus on what comes next. In general, the campus has been in a state of waiting-to-see for an extended period. We are in a position to make the decision to move forward, and that this is the right time to do it.

Implementation and Transition.

The proposal to create CHASS, while important, begins a process the success of which will depend on many factors. Therefore, as part of the proposal, I identify a number of actions that will be necessary as we move forward.

Leadership. Over the past year, as I have listened to the campus discussion and read the reports of earlier groups, I note how often it has been remarked that a successful transition will require the early identification of a Dean and other College leadership. I am prepared to begin the process for selecting an interim Dean as quickly as is deemed advisable following consultation with the Rules Committee and others. This selection will follow established Senate procedures, with the

necessary exception that there is no current personnel committee for the new College. I therefore propose, again subject to consultation with the Rules Committee, that the existing CHFA and CSBS Personnel Committees convene jointly for this purpose.

Transition. My first charge to the interim Dean will be to organize an orderly process of transition, addressing essential issues identified by the Joint Task Force and emerging from our experience with the formation of CNS. These issues will include, but not be limited to:

- Organization of the College personnel committee, establishment of personnel policies, and provision for an option to follow “legacy” processes for members of the faculty with personnel actions coming up in the next few years.
- Organization of the College curriculum committee, and establishment of a timeline and process for considering issues related to College-level requirements. In the interim, existing CHFA and CSBS requirements will apply according to the current location of departments.
- Staffing and internal College organization, including a plan for orderly review of job functions and responsibilities, and for establishment of clear career paths for current staff.
- A plan for transition of development efforts, College “branding,” advisory boards, recruiting and yield enhancement, and other factors related to the establishment of a strong College identity fully representing the faculty and their strengths.
- A strategy for continuing the transition in advising. I note that both CHFA and CSBS have put in place major efforts to improve student advising. Going forward, careful consideration must be given to preserving this impressive momentum, and to continuing planned progress in ways that best serve students. In the interim, the existing CSBS and CHFA advising programs will continue, according to the current location of departments.
- A unified and effective College headquarters. As the Joint Task Force pointed out, the success of this new venture will rely in part on the capacity to bring together the excellent staff who have served CSBS and CHFA so ably. Creation of a unified Dean’s Office will occur in a two-step process. First, Vice Chancellor Hatch and her staff are developing interim plans, at modest cost, to expand the current CHFA Dean’s Office in South College. In the longer term, we will look to including an appropriate Dean’s Office as part of plans for repurposing space in Goodell, the replacement of Bartlett Hall, or related projects.

Support for Research and Scholarship. Throughout the organizational debate a recurrent theme has been the need for more effective support of research and scholarship for faculty in both CSBS and CHFA. These concerns pre-date the organizational discussion, but have come into sharper focus with the establishment of CNS. In one sense, of course, this issue is not a function of the proposed reorganization, but I see this as such an important issue that I think it would be a

mistake to let this moment pass without addressing it. Last fall, Vice Chancellor Malone reported on his plans to greatly improve campus support for research and scholarly activity in CHFA and CSBS (see attached), and he met with the Provost's Working Group to discuss these plans. That was an essential first step. Vice Chancellor Malone has now further agreed to work with the interim Dean to implement these measures, to assess additional concerns and needs, and to support College plans to build support structures that reflect the different models developed in CSBS and CHFA. As the Joint Task Force pointed out, there is no single approach that can serve the needs of faculty in CSBS, CHFA, or a combination of both, but the new College can draw on all appropriate models and organize staffing and other resources accordingly.

Faculty Hiring. The campus's overall goal of increasing the size of the tenure system faculty has been well articulated. The specific strategies for achieving that goal continue to emerge as resources permit and as the identification of high-impact investments evolves. The RFP program intended to grow a faculty associated with Commonwealth Honors College began this year, and as it continues will clearly be relevant to intellectual directions and opportunities in the new College. The creation of the new College also invites us to think more clearly about faculty hiring that can promote interdisciplinary initiatives and transdisciplinary collaborations across the liberal arts and also among the liberal arts and the sciences. I will therefore propose to the Chancellor that, in the upcoming rounds of targeted faculty hiring, special attention be given to proposals that serve either to build interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary initiatives on faculty strengths within the new College or to build collaboration between the liberal arts and the sciences. This latter category represents one of the most exciting possibilities for investment in the years ahead, and one in which this campus has already demonstrated significant leadership. The strength of our two new Colleges — CNS and CHASS — will be measured as much by what they can achieve together as by what they represent individually.

Bridging Mechanisms. Similarly, our plans for the two new Colleges must emphasize ongoing structures that can engage faculty from a wide range of perspectives. Discussions have already occurred about creation of a Center for Liberal Arts or similar entity that can serve as a hub for consideration of "what it means to be human" in all its dimensions. I have agreed to support formation of such a center, and look forward to a proposal from interested faculty. I also strongly support as part of such a proposal the inclusion of bridging mechanisms organized specifically around the interplay of science and society. With two large, comprehensive Colleges well-positioned to engage in this area, I believe this campus can take a leadership position and demonstrate the integrative purposes behind our new collegiate structure.

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