The Move to Clusters – Some Ideas on Structure and Evolution (Part 1)

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Given all the discussions recently about moving to Integrated Clusters, including the recent sessions involving key function breakouts and placement, I thought I might provide some thoughts to allow campus constituents the opportunity to step back and reflect on what we are building. The next few blogs suggest my larger, world-view of how our campus might evolve, and the steps we might take over the next few years. The goal is to present a few thoughts in response to the questions I have heard. To summarize my conceptual viewpoint, our first iteration of clusters would:

- Be made up of discipline-based communities and a variety of associated programs, majors, and options. I understand that in some cases, discipline-based communities have been broken up due to the placement of programs associated with a discipline-based community being spread across clusters. I think, in some cases, that may be necessary but for the purposes of keeping a “home room” it might be better to keep a base in one cluster with faculty membership from the various communities also being associated with other clusters as needed. Remember, part of the move to Integrated Clusters is about a more efficient administrative structure and part is about a flexible and interacting academic structure.
- Have a leadership team made up of faculty representatives from the various discipline-based communities that constitute it, key support staff from the cluster hub, and representatives from other clusters that have substantial joint activities with the cluster.
- Be coordinated by, and information shared through, a University wide council or steering team that will draw representation from the various clusters. This council/steering team would be empowered to evolve, coordinate, and communicate across clusters.
- Be supported by a hub of service providers who provide support services to one or more clusters. Hub members, as the Deans have indicated could be specialized. And/or as I have indicated be more generalized and cross-trained, with distributed responsibilities so that they could fulfill some elements of the roles that administrative assistants currently fill. Whichever approach, we will need the collective input of administrative assistants, clusters, and faculty to find the best structure, as clusters will likely need a different support structure than departments. Currently, two pilots are in development with a support team to test the overall approach to a hub-like structure.

(To be continued)
As always, please understand these blog posts are mine and I present things as I see it. Others I am sure will see things differently, but I hope some of this provides clarification and resonates with you.

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