

To: University Faculty  
From: Robert J. Zimmer  
Subject: College and Divisions  
Date: May 12, 2016

At the following link <https://sof.uchicago.edu/page/memorandum-college-and-divisions>, you will find a thoughtful letter written to me by Deans John Boyer, Rocky Kolb, David Nirenberg, and Martha Roth, respectively of the College, the Physical Sciences Division, the Social Sciences Division, and the Humanities Division.

In this letter, they describe how our current academic administrative structures hamper efforts to strengthen our research and education, especially in terms of curricular innovation and research collaborations across disciplinary boundaries, and likewise indicate how these structures hinder appropriate budget rationality and transparency. Many of these issues have been raised by faculty members over the years. On the other hand, the deans' letter also reminds us that these structures have strengths and in many ways have served the University well.

Ultimately, the deans' letter calls for an evaluation of our academic administrative structures relating to their divisions and the College, asking what alternatives there may be for maintaining the benefits of the current structure while implementing changes to resolve existing problems and capitalize on emerging opportunities. As appropriate to such an evaluation, they request that I institute a process for systematic faculty input on this question. I am fully supportive of this recommendation. Transitions in the provost's office also make this an opportune moment for such considerations.

To this end, and with the deans' input, I will appoint a faculty committee before this spring's convocation to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of various options along the lines the deans suggest. While the committee can begin its work this summer, particularly in gathering foundational information, the fall will be an important time for the committee to obtain broad input from the faculty of the relevant divisions and the College. I intend that the committee will complete a report by January 31, 2017, at which point there will be further discussion of their report amongst the faculty, deans, and provost.

After the completion of this process and any resulting actions, there will be a second phase of analyzing our academic administrative structure. As recognized by the above deans and by Kenneth Polonsky, Dean of the Biological Sciences Division, the University needs to consider an appropriate structure to reflect and promote the connections of the BSD to the College and the other divisions. This too is an issue raised by some faculty over the years. It is my intent, with the support of the deans and at the appropriate time, to appoint a faculty committee to evaluate options for enhancing these linkages.

I want to express my appreciation to the deans for their initiative and in advance to the divisional and College faculty who will be engaged in this discussion and evaluation over the coming months. I look forward to working with all of you on this important matter.