

Academic Leaders Task Group: Terms of Reference

June 10, 2021

As the University of Alberta implements its academic restructuring under the UofA for Tomorrow initiative, the University must consider how it best deploys its professors as academic leaders and their roles as Associate Deans, Associate Chairs, Chairs, Vice Deans, etc. This means striking an appropriate balance between having academics involved in making key academic decisions and the need for efficiency and consistency in how administration and leadership is resourced and delivered to our students and staff. Over deploying professors into administrative roles risks diminishing the institution's capacity for teaching and research and tends to employ a highly talented, specialized and expensive group in work that is quite different from its academic training. On the other hand, academic strategy, policies and standards must be in the hands of those who have a deep and first hand knowledge of the academic mission.

Historically, the assignment of professors into academic leadership positions has been driven by organizational structure rather than drivers of workload such as number of faculty, students or research intensity. Given that our organizational structure is highly non uniform (faculties range in size from 14 to over 600 professors, departments range from a handful to almost 200), this results in a wide range of expectations of notionally equivalent leadership roles and a wide range of supports that they can be expected to provide to our internal and external stakeholders.

The rollout of SET and the creation of colleges presents an opportunity to rethink where and how we deliver academic leadership across the institution with a goal of increasing efficiency and effectiveness as well as improving consistency of the functions that these leaders provide. By grouping some academic leaders at the college level, the colleges provide an opportunity to enhance efficiency and consistency in how academics are deployed in administrative roles. The goal is to streamline and rebalance the administrative work so that the number of academic leadership positions can be reduced by 25%. Academic leadership roles can be onerous and take substantial amounts of time away from teaching and research. Academics in leadership roles typically report that the administrative duties always consume much more time than they had anticipated and lead to a seriously detrimental impact on their research and scholarly output. The goal is to reduce the numbers of academics in leadership roles, right resourcing academic leadership tasks that must be led by an academic, and leaving the rest of the administrative tasks to highly skilled administrative professionals. If we can reduce our academic leadership roles by 25%, this is the equivalent of more than 80 faculty members being relieved of administrative assignments, and facilitating their return to teaching, research and service. Conservatively assuming the academic leadership role involves 33% of their time, this is the equivalent of an additional almost 30 full-time academic positions, advancing the university's core mission of teaching, scholarship and service. In a time of constrained resources, it is imperative that we preserve as much as possible the maximum amount of our resources devoted to the university's core mission.

The purpose of the Academic Leaders Task Group (ALTG) is to undertake a review of the roles of academic leaders in the context of our new academic structure and make recommendations on how to best deploy this most critical resource - our professors. This includes the number, location and responsibilities of these academic leaders at the department, faculty, college and institutional levels. The objective of this exercise is to ensure strong, strategic and effective leadership with minimal number of professors and a harmonization of roles, service levels and functions provided (recognizing that there are unique aspects in every discipline that must be considered). Areas of primary interest are the support of research, graduate and undergraduate education, student advising and coordination across programs. Areas of potentially additional interest include supporting international initiatives, EDI, and Indigenous initiatives.

Objectives and Principles

1. Decisions should be data-driven and support our commitment to excellence and competitiveness in our core areas of academic programming, research and service
2. Establish a consistent approach to academic leadership roles across Colleges, Faculties and Departments
3. Ensure that administrative aspects of the leadership roles are supported by non-academic staff, within the approved operating model
4. Streamline leadership needs so that the total number of academic leaders is reduced by 25%
5. Define responsibilities of each leadership role, ensuring that each responsibility is one that must have a professor to execute
6. Align roles at each level with its primary responsibility based on the authority matrix.
7. Wherever possible, elevate the level of the role to achieve economies of scale and greater coordination across the institution.
8. Allocate number of leaders reflecting relevant drivers for the particular responsibility
9. The location of administrative staff (under SET) must resonate with the location of academic leaders performing a complementary function.

Membership

- Provost (Chair)
- VP (Research & Innovation)
- 1 College Dean
- 2 Faculty Deans
- Dean, FGSR
- 1 Chair
- 1 Associate Dean (Research)
- 1 Associate Chair (Graduate)
- 1-2 administrative leaders (eg. FGM, ADM) familiar with faculty and department operations

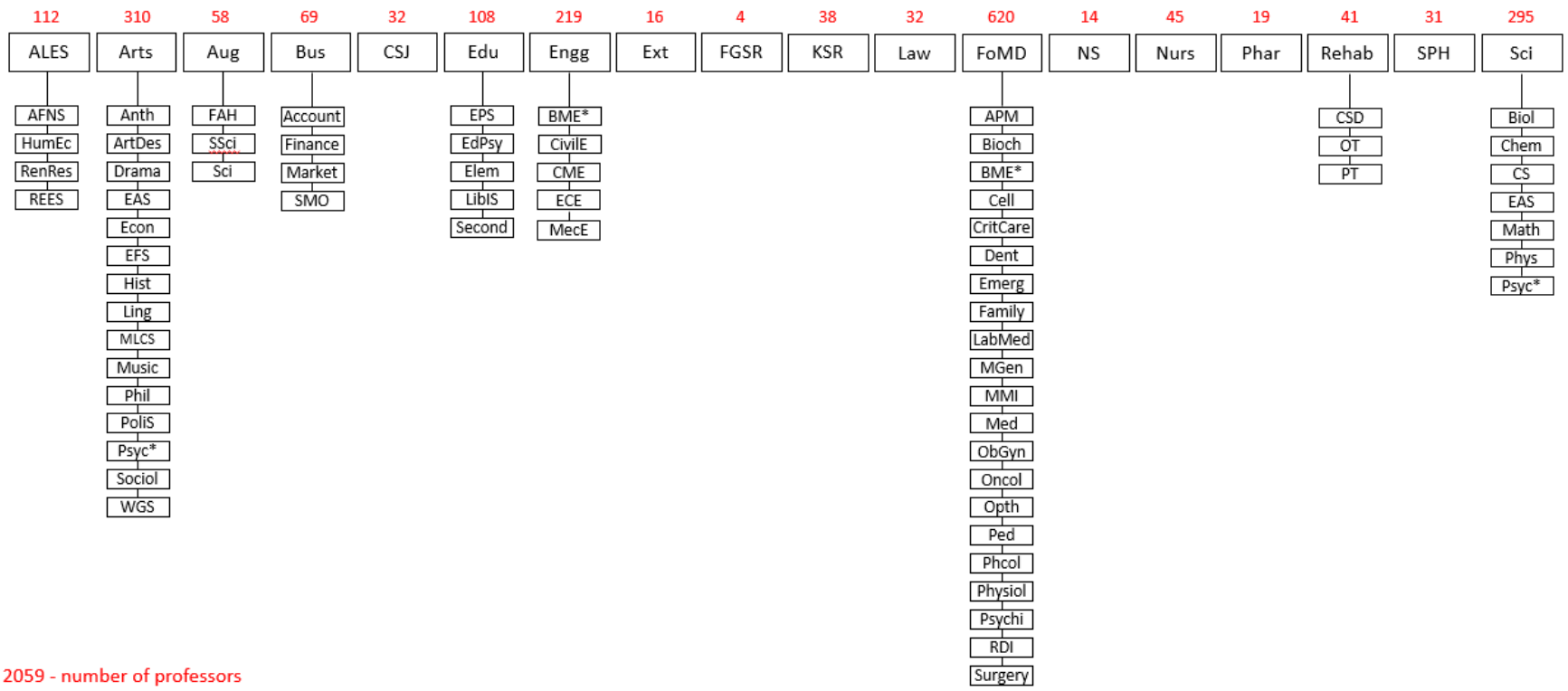
Timeline and Support

The goal is to have recommendations issued by September 30, 2021. This will include a break for some period during summer to accommodate vacations. Support for the ALTG will be provided by the Office of the Provost with assistance from VP (USF) including SET.

Background Information

The current academic structure is shown in Figure 1.

The current distribution of academic leaders is provided in Table 1.



2019 - number of professors

*joint department

Figure 1: Current academic structure of faculties and departments

Table 1: Distribution of academic leaders by faculty or unit

Faculty/Unit	AVP/ VProv	Dean	Vice Dean	AD Res	AD Grad	AD Acad	AD Stud	AD Int'l	AD EDI	AD Other	Chair	AC Grad	AC Ugrad	AC Res	AC Other	Grad Coord	Dir*	Total
ALES		1	1	1	1	1					4	2	1	2		2	3	19
Business		1	1	1	2	1			1		4							11
Arts		1	1	1	1	2	1				15	15	15	1			4	57
Augustana		1	1	1		1	1				4		2				2	13
CSJ		1	1	1	1	2												6
Education		1	1	1	1	1				1	5	4	4			2		21
Engineering		1	1	1			2			1	4	4	5	3			6	28
FGSR		1	1		4													6
KSR		1	1	1	1	1												5
Law		1	1	1	1													4
FoMD		1	4		1	4		1	1	9	21	4	3	1	7	15	7	79
Native Studies		1		1	1	1												4
Nursing		1	1	1	1	1				1								6
Pharmacy		1		1		4		1									2	9
Rehab Med		1	1		1	1					3				3	1		11
SPH		1	1	1		1												4
Science		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		6	6	7	6			4	36
Students		1	1															2
VP(Academic)	4																	4
VP(R&I)	4																	4
Grand Total	8	18	19	14	17	22	5	2	3	12	66	35	37	13	10	20	28	329

*Director title inconsistently used and list probably incomplete