Recommendations of Consequence for CHS

The list below is not exhaustive and does not represent every recommendation affecting CHS, only those of greatest consequence. Please note that recommendations at every tier (1, 2 and 3) are under consideration. Each recommendation below has a hyperlink to the smartsheet where you can vote or offer commentary. The rationale for our response appears in brackets below each recommendation.

It is important, throughout this process, to continue to explore multiple mechanisms for innovative collaboration beyond only structural reorganization. That kind of change requires significant administrative labor (SCHEV, revision of departmental by-laws, p & t policies) as well as a timeline required.

Recommendations of Consequence with Dean's Office Support

Recommendations related to a School of Interdisciplinary Studies within CHS

1.1.1. Create School of Interdisciplinary Studies within CHS

1.4.1 Establish a School of Interdisciplinary Studies in CHS

3.5.6—More robust programs for undecided students/revamp Interdisciplinary Studies at both undergrad and grad levels; and 3.5.7—Improve communication and visibility of Interdisciplinary Studies at both undergrad and grad levels

[The best solution for these suggestions, which is really about enabling student pathways, is to create a School of Interdisciplinary Studies within CHS. Interdisciplinary degrees are best housed in units with academic disciplines. Currently, more than 60% of the credits earned by students in the current IDS (which houses the bachelors of interdisciplinary studies) are delivered by CHS. A degree-granting program like IDS should find an academic home in CHS among research and teaching faculty who already work extensively with those students. It would combine academic rigor, research opportunities, and innovative, often self-designed, curricular pathways. It does not preclude an incubator for new programs elsewhere.]

Recommendations around Focused Inquiry

1.4.2 Move Focused Inquiry into CHS as its own department

[The teaching mission of the FI faculty aligns with CHS. CHS has professional development and promotion pathways for FI faculty, many of whom have the capacity to contribute to the teaching mission of other departments in CHS. It also facilitates the movement of students into majors within CHS.]

Recommendations around Life Sciences/Biology

1.3+7.2—Fusion of VCU Life Sciences and the CHS Department of Biology

3.3 and 7.8 Disband VCU Life Sciences

2.6.1—Develop degrees (certificates, UG, and Graduate) in Sustainability

[Unifying these two programs will facilitate curricular innovation that attracts students interested in life sciences, environmental studies, and biology, and provides a natural academic home for degrees and initiatives in sustainability.]

Recommendations around collaborations among existing departments

1.4.5 Create a Department of Literature, Language, and Culture

[Combining the energies around foreign languages, literature, creative writing, and global cinema allows for new curricular pathways, broadened textual analysis (popular culture, sound studies, health humanities), and enhanced preparation for transferable job skills for graduates.)

1.4.4 Create a Department of History and Thought

[Combination of history and religious studies, although perhaps not philosophy, would align intellectually complementary disciplines and foster cross-disciplinary curricular innovation.]

2.4.5—Explore opportunities for innovative cross-disciplinary certificate programs, badging, niche minors

[CHS has planned a significant number of badges and has identified robust opportunities in this area for badges that offer multidisciplinary thematic threads, skills-based competencies, and further opportunities for undergraduate research.]

Recommendations around UC/CHS

3.5.4—Eliminate University College
3.5.5—University College should join CHS

[While the UC as currently structured should not join CHS, two of its components–IDS and FI–would enhance the mission of CHS.The movement of FI into CHS, like the creation of a School of Interdisciplinary Studies to house IDS (the two components of UC), would provide those faculty and program with a robust, supportive environment that advances their intellectual and pedagogical mission.]

Other general recommendations

1.4.7 Restore multi-year contracts to term faculty

[Multi-year contracts create stability for faculty, allowing them to focus on improving pedagogy and supporting students, enhancing efforts on student retention and graduation rates.]

Consequential Recommendations of Concern to the Dean's Office

3.1.3. and 3.4.3— School of the Arts & Humanities and College of Science and Innovation

[This division will diminish the autonomy of the humanities, incur the expense of creating a new college, and leave the social sciences without an academic community.]

2.2.1—Restructuring (division) of the College of Humanities & Sciences

[While vaguely stated, a blanket division of CHS would be fiscally demanding and administratively inefficient. While some merit might exist in select units joining other colleges within VCU, the wholesale 'division' of CHS does not. The arguments given in support of this division are, ironically, more persuasive as arguments in favor of its current structure.]

2.2.2–Create a new MBU entitled STEM College

[To create a new academic unit incurs the financial expense and administrative duplication of new college; additional consequence of siloing disciplines. While augmenting the College of Engineering with select units such as the physical sciences might achieve a similar goal, the creation of a parallel

structure runs counter to the objective of fiscal/administrative efficiencies and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.]

[3.4.4—Create the School of Natural Sciences and the School of Liberal Arts](#)
[To create a new academic unit incurs the financial expense and administrative duplication of new college; additional consequence of siloing disciplines and limiting opportunities for truly interdisciplinary curriculum and research.]

[3.3 + 7.10 Condense CHS into a smaller number of schools](#)
[This 'condensing' incurs additional financial costs and administrative duplication. It creates silos that inhibit interdisciplinary collaboration and runs counter to the purpose of repositioning.]

[3.4.5. Move the Robertson School of Mass Communications and the da Vinci Center into the Brandcenter in the School of Business](#); [3.4.2—Explore greater collaboration between the Robertson School of Mass Communications and the School of Business](#); and [2.1.2 Explore the opportunities of stronger connections between Robertson School and School of Business](#)
[The accreditation standards of Robertson do not align with this recommendation. Additionally, Robertson has made a robust statement seeking to remain in CHS. Finally, potential conflict of interest when journalism is associated with business objectives.]

[1.5.1—Administrative and fiscal centralization of student services and resources to ensure equitable student access/ experience](#)
[Centralization of other services within VCU has proven less than successful. Separation of student services from the academic units that house those students limits student success.]

[1.5.2 Create a Division of Undergraduate Studies](#) and [3.5.3—Create a Division of Undergraduate Studies that would include University College (focused inquiry), the Honors College, Undergraduate Research, REAL/Engaged-Transformational Learning, and the Career Center](#)
[Problem of divorcing academic enterprise from academic units. This proposal would create a large, unwieldy unit that would duplicate initiatives that exist across multiple schools and colleges–including CHS–and create challenges in consistency, communication, and execution.]

[1.5.4—Reposition the interdisciplinary degrees (IDS and MIS) and the da Vinci Center into a new college/ school that provides for autonomy, flexibility, exploration, and innovation](#)
[Interdisciplinary degrees are best housed in units with academic disciplines. Currently, more than 60% of the credits earned by students in IDS are delivered by CHS. A degree-granting program like IDS should find an academic home in CHS among research and teaching faculty who already work extensively with those students. It would combine academic rigor, research opportunities, and innovative, often self-designed, curricular pathways.]

[3.5.10—Create a da VInci School of Interdisciplinary Inquir](#)y
[Interdisciplinary degrees are best housed in units with academic disciplines and administered by individuals with academic degrees. Currently, more than 60% of the credits earned by students in IDS are delivered by CHS. A degree-granting program like IDS should find an academic home in CHS among research and teaching faculty who already work extensively with those students. It would combine academic rigor, research opportunities, and innovative, often self-designed, curricular pathways.]

[3.5.1 New unit that combines University College, Honors, REAL, and undergraduate research](#) and [3.5.2—New unit to support student success and engagement that combines functions/services of Honors College, University College, Undergraduate Research programs, perhaps even daVinci](#)
[To divorce these four things (which are a disparate combination of administrative structures and academic initiatives) from academic units jeopardizes their intellectual and academic integrity. Replicates the challenges of siloing that created problems for university college. Questions about the size and administration of the unit.]

[1.2.1—Virtual MBU for Interdisciplinary and Integrative Studies](#)
[A unit devoted to interdisciplinary studies belongs in CHS, which houses the most robust and diverse group of disciplines]

[1.6.2—Return Forensic Science to the Wilder School](#)
[As a science, Forensic Science is best served by remaining with other sciences.]

[3.6.2—Return Political Science to the Wilder School](#)
[Political Science, a fundamental discipline in the liberal arts education offered by CHS, is a robust and engaged department well-served by and, in turn, contributing to the mission of the College of Humanities and Sciences.]

[3.6.4—Combine School of Social Work, Psychology, and Sociology](#)
[For purposes of accreditation, student pathways, and intellectual integrity, it is in the School of Social Work's best interest to remain autonomous. Similarly, Psychology and Sociology are two central units advancing the mission of the College of Humanities and Sciences.]