

Larry, please share the contents of this (necessarily anonymous) letter at the next Faculty Senate meeting:

The Faculty Senate, the upper administration, and the Board of Trustees of the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) should be informed that the proposed strategic realignment of the Communication, Mass Communication, and Writing Departments of the College of Fine Arts and Communication (CFAC) expressly, deeply concerns the Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Writing (hereafter RCPW) faculty of the current Writing Department. As previously announced, the plan would take the Creative Writing faculty from Writing and add them to a new department with Film and Theatre, formerly combined with Mass Communication/Journalism, which would be moved to another new department merging RCPW with (Oral) Communication and Public Relations. The Creative Writing Faculty approves this proposed realignment; the RCPW faculty, the only UCA faculty who teach *two required Core courses*, does not.

The RCPW faculty points to three key reasons why the proposed realignment would be disadvantageous not only to the new Communication Department but to the University as a whole: **(1)** UCA's independent Writing Department has garnered prestige for UCA nationally and even internationally, this fall attracting four new tenure-track hires who specifically accepted their positions in the light of this reputation. This enhancement for UCA would be lost in the realignment. **(2)** Previously, the Writing, Oral Communication, and Public Relations Departments were combined, an alignment that proved unsuccessful for many reasons—especially including the lack of common training, disciplines (the distinction between *written* and *oral* communication is a crucial one), and curriculum and a paucity of major/minor correlations—and was abandoned. Recombining these three disciplines and adding a fourth would multiply the factors that doomed the previous attempt. **(3)** The new Film, Theatre, and Creative Writing Department would include only **18** permanent faculty; the new Writing, (Oral) Communication, Mass Communication, and Public Relations Department would include **41**. These numbers, which do not even take into account adjunct and part-time faculty (more numerous proportionately in RCPW due to heavy lower-division Core course teaching responsibilities), underline the disjunction between the two proposed departments and especially highlight how unmanageable and fragmented the new Communication Department would be.

If a primary incentive for this change is cost cutting, reducing the number of departments in CFAC from 5 to 4, other realignment models could meet that goal and join together faculty with more cross-disciplinary synergies likely and with more manageable, proportionate sizing of departments. Here is just one example of such a model: join Creative Writing, Film, Theatre, (Oral) Communication, and Public Relations for a combined permanent faculty of **29**, all of whom would share disciplines and pedagogy grounded in public expression and performance. Join RCPW and Mass Communication/Journalism for a combined permanent faculty of **24** (and a number of adjuncts), all of whom would share disciplines and pedagogy grounded in *written* communication (thus retaining UCA's much-admired independent Writing unit).

It has been announced that a task force with representatives from the affected departments will be formed to facilitate the realignment. A more cost-effective and efficient procedure would be to charge a Task Force with a feasibility study conducted before, not after, the realignment, the consideration of which may indicate delaying realignment at least to the Fall of 2017 after the feasibility study has been conducted and the Task Force has reported its findings.

Let us together work out what is best for UCA and, most importantly, our students.