

Speaking Points

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Sept. 16 Faculty and School Structure Review Information Session

Slide 1

Good morning and thank you for being here.

This session is being recorded and will be available on Brightspace for future use.

We acknowledge that the lands on which Memorial University's campuses are situated are in the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous groups, and we acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit of this province.

My name is Jennifer Lokash and as you know I am your provost and vice-president (academic). I am also the chair of the Faculty and School Structure Review Working Group that has been tasked with developing recommendations for Memorial's academic structure. Over the last number of months, we've spent considerable time overseeing consultation sessions with campus communities, analyzing feedback, doing deep research on how universities are and can be structured, and engaging in thoughtful discussion and debate. While I am going to do the talking today, I do so on behalf of the working group. Most members are here on screen with me today, and I am deeply grateful for their commitment to this challenging work.

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Our purpose for today's session is to report on our progress and to share some information with our community all at once.

We'll begin with a quick reminder of the Working Group's mandate and the guiding principles we developed, and which have been significantly refined based on your feedback to date.

We'll then walk through the process we used to develop the four illustrative models we will share today, as well as the key factors we considered in their creation. From there, we'll explore each model in some detail and outline what comes next.

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Before we begin, I want to be very clear about the purpose of today's session and what you are going to see.

The illustrative models we are going to show you were developed to help our community explore non-abstract possibilities and to support informed discussion about different structural relationships. *They are not recommendations, and no decisions have been made.* These models are intended to stimulate discussion, not narrow it.

Just as the guiding principles were strengthened through community feedback, the next phase of work will depend on your perspectives and insights. We are looking to understand what opportunities, risks, challenges, and implementation considerations YOU see in these models and what elements might work best in Memorial's unique context.

Following today's session, the illustrative models and substantial supporting information will be shared through Brightspace, and there will be multiple opportunities to engage with the Working Group before any recommendations are further developed.

For that reason, today's session is intentionally focused on information sharing rather than feedback collection, so we will not do a Q&A here, though we will leave the chat open and take away any comments and questions that arise during the presentation. We want everyone to have time to review the material, reflect on it, discuss it with colleagues, and come to future engagement sessions prepared to provide thoughtful feedback. Your perspectives will shape where this work goes from here.

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I'd like to take a moment to ground us in the direction we received from the Board of Regents.

On May 4, the Board directed Memorial to review its faculty and school structure to identify opportunities for consolidation and expense reduction while preserving academic and research excellence and fulfilling our obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

From the outset, the Working Group recognized that this is a complex undertaking and that there are no simple, or frankly, quick solutions. We know that for this review to be successful, it must build understanding, trust, and confidence across the entire university community. That requires meaningful engagement, careful consideration of different perspectives, a willingness to work through difficult questions together, and a commitment to pivoting and iterating as the process unfolds. We know there are some who think this has a predetermined outcome. Unequivocally, it does not.

The clearest example of that is the way our thinking has evolved through engagement. As I said, the principles that guide this project today have been shaped and refined by what we've heard from faculty, staff, students, and other members of the university community. Before we discuss the models themselves, let's review those guiding principles.

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When we first began, we identified a set of commitments for the process, including transparency, meaningful engagement, evidence-informed decision-making, respect for diverse perspectives, and a commitment to Memorial's academic mission.

Through the survey, town hall discussions, engagement sessions, and comments we received from the community since the spring, it became clear that members of the university community wanted these principles to go

further. People emphasized the importance of academic and research excellence, collegial governance, student success, academic freedom, meaningful consultation, community and belonging, accountability, and Memorial's broader public mission.

We also heard concerns about trust, transparency, and whether the outcome of this process had already been decided. Others told us they wanted to see clearer connections between any future structural changes and the values that define Memorial as a university.

As a result, the guiding principles were strengthened. They now better reflect what we heard from faculty, staff, students, and academic leaders across the institution. While the Board's mandate remains unchanged, these principles help ensure that the options we consider are evaluated through the lens of the values and priorities identified by the Memorial community.

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The process to develop the illustrative models began with listening. Through surveys, town halls, engagement sessions, and conversations across the university community, we gathered feedback about what people value most at Memorial and what they believe should be considered in any future structure.

We also undertook research and an environmental scan, looking at trends and organizational approaches used at universities across Canada and beyond. The Working Group explored a range of structural arrangements commonly found in higher education—what we refer to as discipline-agnostic archetypes—considering the potential opportunities and challenges associated with each.

At a two-day retreat in August, Working Group members brought together all of this work. Through facilitated discussion and analysis, the group identified key themes, tested assumptions, and developed a set of illustrative models for further consideration.

Those discussions were informed by Memorial's unique context, the Board's mandate, the working group's research, the guiding principles we just discussed, and the resounding call to move beyond those principles and abstractions to concrete possibilities.

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The Working Group considered a range of factors that influence how an academic structure functions in practice. These factors helped shape the development of the models and informed our discussions about the opportunities, challenges, and trade-offs associated with each approach.

No model is perfect, and each has strengths and limitations. No model will maximize every objective at once. We now need to make those tensions explicit, assess the options honestly, and test how different approaches perform against the principles and priorities that have emerged through consultation, before coming to any final recommendations.

Some of the factors we have considered include span of control, academic leadership, governance, academic administrative support, resource allocation, and the impact on unit identity, relationships, and public perception.

As we move into the next phase of engagement, these are also some of the factors we'd like the university community to consider. How well does each model support academic excellence and student success? How might it affect research and collaboration? Would there be one faculty council, several school councils, or both? Who decides what?

We also encourage people to think about how each model would work in practice. For example, what would it look like to develop a new course, make a calendar change, or move through the promotion and tenure process?

These considerations are intended to provide a starting point for discussion. We know and hope members of our community will bring additional

perspectives and questions, and we look forward to hearing them during the engagement process.

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This is the most important slide you'll see today.

Many of you will see your faculty or school represented differently than it exists today. We recognize that can feel uncomfortable or even unsettling. The Working Group fully appreciates that these units represent academic communities, professional identities, longstanding relationships, and histories and traditions that people really care about. The Working Group has not lost sight of that and we are fully cognizant that any discussion about organizational structure is ultimately about people, communities, and the work they do.

We encourage you to view these models as tools for exploration and discussion, rather than as proposals for implementation, and to reflect on the opportunities, challenges, and trade-offs each presents. I do also want to note that while you will see examples and groupings reflected in the models, the Working Group recognizes that existing and ongoing structural work at Grenfell Campus, the Marine Institute, and within individual Faculties and Schools will need to be considered as this process continues. I'll also note that process improvement work, led by the VP Finance and Administration, is also underway.

All four models also contemplate a move away from departments and divisions.

These models are focused on the organization of academic units. They do not attempt to resolve every question related to implementation, budgeting, administration, policy, or labour relations. Those considerations require additional analysis that is beyond the scope of where we are today, but will certainly guide us going forward.

With that context in mind, let's look at the four illustrative models and the different ways they organize our academic units.

Slide 9: Blended

This model brings together a number of professional units while recognizing that different academic units may require different structural arrangements.

We are referring to it as the Blended Model- as it retains the structure of some existing units, while federating others. Calling it blended captures the fact that this model is not uniform **by design** - it is intentionally diverse in its types of structures.

One concept in this model is a host faculty with a nested school. In this arrangement, a smaller academic unit is situated within a larger faculty and benefits from its leadership and administrative infrastructure while maintaining its own academic identity, disciplinary focus, and, where required, accreditation requirements. In this example, Pharmacy is shown as a School nested within the Faculty of Medicine.

You'll also see the concept of a federated unit here. A federated structure brings together a number of distinct schools or units under a shared umbrella while allowing each to retain a significant degree of autonomy. Rather than being fully merged into a single faculty structure, the participating units continue to maintain their own identities, academic leadership, and disciplinary focus, while coordinating on select governance, administrative, or strategic matters.

In this illustrative model, Education, Music, Human Kinetics and Recreation, and Social Work are grouped within a federated arrangement. They were grouped because they share several characteristics that make them plausible partners within a federated structure. They are professionally oriented disciplines with strong external and community connections, significant experiential learning components, and missions that focus on preparing graduates for practice and service. Many also work closely with schools, community organizations, government, and public-sector partners.

I want also to be clear that the units shown as standalone in these models should not be interpreted as remaining exactly as they are today. Nursing, Business, Engineering, HSS, Science, Marine Institute, Grenfell and Labrador Campuses remain standalone in this model, but that does not necessarily mean status quo.

Across Memorial, for example, academic units are already examining their structures. HSS is quite ahead of the curve with its ongoing re-consideration of its internal structure, Grenfell/Labrador Campuses has completed their own review that recommends changing the number of schools from three to two, and MI is in the process of transitioning from three schools to two as well.

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Again, this is not a final recommendation or a suggestion of a preferred outcome. It is one example of how academic units might be organized.

During our discussions, the Working Group identified several potential benefits associated with this approach. It could create opportunities to share administrative expertise and common processes, encourage collaboration among units with strong community and professional engagement mandates, and reduce duplication in areas where there are similar administrative or governance needs.

At the same time, members identified some questions and risks. A federated structure may create uncertainty around decision-making authority and accountability. Success would depend on clearly defined governance, strong relationships among participating units, and agreement on how resources and responsibilities would be shared.

As you consider this model, one question to reflect on is whether it strikes the right balance between preserving professional identities and creating opportunities for greater collaboration and coordination across related units.

Slide 11: Integrated

This model explores a more integrated approach to Memorial's academic structure.

One of the most significant features is the creation of a College of Health Sciences that brings together Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Social Work. The model also aligns Music with Humanities and Social Sciences, Human Kinetics and Recreation with Science, and reflects restructuring work already underway at Grenfell Campus and the Marine Institute.

The key difference between the federated approach in Model 1 and the integrated approach in Model 2 is the degree of autonomy retained by the participating units. In the federated model, the units continue to operate largely as distinct entities and coordinate through shared leadership mechanisms. In the integrated model, the units become part of a larger academic organization with a common dean, more integrated governance, and greater consolidation of administrative functions.

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Working Group members identified several potential opportunities associated with this approach. Greater integration could support resource sharing, reduce administrative duplication, simplify reporting relationships, and create more opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

At the same time, we also identified some risks and raised some questions. As academic units become part of larger structures, there may be concerns about maintaining local identity, autonomy, and representation. The Working Group is well aware that contemplating a move away from departments and divisions towards larger units like schools may have implications on collective agreements, workload, and disciplinary coherence.

As you consider this model, think about whether the potential benefits of greater integration, consistency, and coordination outweigh the challenges that can arise when units become part of larger organizational structures.

Slide 13: Pan-Memorial

This model explores the highest degree of consolidation (and thus the greatest amount of change) considered by the Working Group and is intended to help us think about what a more integrated, pan-Memorial academic structure could look like.

In this configuration, academic units are organized into a small number of large academic groupings that bring together disciplines from across our full multi-campus system. You'll also note that in this model, the schools from all geographical campuses are represented within pan-university groupings.

The model places a strong emphasis on reducing organizational complexity, increasing consistency across units, and creating opportunities for collaboration and shared services.

The rationale behind this model is that larger academic entities may be better positioned to coordinate planning, align resources with institutional priorities, reduce duplication, and support interdisciplinary teaching and research.

Perhaps more than any other model, this one invites us to think about the balance between institutional integration and local autonomy. It represents one end of the spectrum of possibilities and provides an opportunity to consider what might be gained, and what might be lost, through a more highly consolidated academic structure.

We did test out several alternative names for the Pan-Memorial Model, each highlighting a different aspect of the same organizational concept: for example, we might have called it the Disciplinary Model/Domain Model, emphasizing broad academic and research areas, or Tri-Council Memorial, which would highlight alignment of each grouping with major disciplinary and research domains.

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Working Group members identified several potential opportunities with this

model. A model like this could simplify reporting relationships, strengthen coordination across campuses and disciplines, and create greater flexibility in how resources and administrative supports are deployed. It may also encourage collaboration among disciplines that do not traditionally work closely together.

At the same time, this model raises some fairly significant questions. As entities become larger, maintaining local identity, disciplinary voice, and meaningful participation in decision-making becomes increasingly important, and potentially more difficult. Members also discussed whether larger structures could create additional layers between academic units and institutional leadership, and how governance would need to evolve to ensure representation and accountability.

Slide 15: Nested

Finally, this model explores an approach in which smaller schools are nested within larger host faculties while continuing to maintain their distinct academic focus and identity.

The underlying idea is that not every academic unit requires a fully independent leadership and administrative structure to thrive. In this model, some smaller schools would be supported by a larger host faculty while retaining responsibility for their academic programming, disciplinary expertise, external relationships, and, where applicable, accreditation requirements.

In a nesting model, the relationship would ideally create value for both the nested unit and the host faculty. The goal is to create opportunities for stronger collaboration, shared expertise, and more efficient administrative support while preserving the unique strengths of individual academic communities.

This model sees Music nested within Business Administration, reflecting some shared programming and opportunities to strengthen connections in areas like entrepreneurship and arts management.

Pharmacy is nested within Medicine recognizing the close relationship between the health professions and opportunities for increased coordination across health-related programs.

HKR is nested within Education reflecting shared interests in teaching, learning, wellness, community engagement, and professional practice.

Social Work is nested within HSS, which, as some may know, recalls an earlier organizational structure at Memorial. It also recognizes the discipline's connections to the social sciences and broader community and social justice issues.

As with all of the models, these arrangements are intended to illustrate possibilities and provoke discussion. The specific placement of units, while it has been approached thoughtfully, is less important than the broader question of whether nesting can provide an appropriate balance between preserving academic identity and achieving greater coordination and administrative efficiency.

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Working Group members discussed whether this approach could reduce administrative duplication, strengthen access to leadership and administrative support, and create greater consistency in academic and operational processes across the university.

At the same time, the model raises important questions about autonomy, representation, resource allocation, and how nested schools would participate in decision-making within their host faculties.

This model makes the fewest changes to existing governance and academic

structures. Existing governance arrangements, promotion and tenure processes, and accreditation structures would largely remain in place, with the primary change being the reporting relationship between nested units and their host faculties.

The Working Group explored this approach because it may reduce administrative complexity and leadership spans of control while maintaining disciplinary strengths, professional identities, and accreditation requirements.

At the same time, an important question is whether the relationship between a host faculty and a nested unit would feel academically meaningful and mutually beneficial. Some pairings may seem natural, while others may raise questions about alignment in mission, culture, or academic focus.

Members also discussed potential concerns related to visibility, influence, and identity, as well as how external partners, alumni, students, and accrediting bodies might view these arrangements.

More broadly, this model asks whether a lower-disruption approach goes far enough to achieve meaningful change, or whether it strikes the right balance between preserving what works well and pursuing renewal.

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I know that is a lot to take in. Our intention today has been to provide information and context, and set up further engagement.

Following today's session, the presentation materials, model descriptions, and supporting resources will be available on Brightspace, giving everyone an opportunity to review the information in more detail and discuss it with colleagues.

Feedback will be collected on Brightspace via a feedback form as well as discussion forums. The Working Group is also hosting a series of engagement sessions to continue informing our work.

We are particularly interested in hearing what opportunities, risks, challenges, and implementation considerations you see in each model, as well as any ideas or perspectives that may not be reflected in the models themselves.

Feedback will be accepted until **October 6, 2026**. At that point, the Working Group will review what we have heard and use that input to inform the next phase of its work.

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Before we close, I'd like to take a few minutes to share how we are approaching this next phase.

We all know that this project began with an ambitious timeline. We have been working diligently towards the dates included in the Board directive, but we have also heard from our community that change of this magnitude requires time and consultation. We are listening.

The report planned for October will be submitted simultaneously to the Senate and the Board. It will NOT recommend or announce a new academic structure. It will include a discussion of our process and what we have heard during prior AND upcoming engagement sessions, and refer a selection of, or all of, or tweaked versions of the illustrative models for further analysis.

We recognize that detailed assessment of feasibility, implementation requirements, governance implications, financial considerations, and operational impacts will take time and we are proceeding at a pace that balances the need for diligence and consultation with the importance of maintaining momentum.

So, today's session is one step in a much broader conversation. Your feedback, insights, and lived experience—which we encourage you to share with us fulsomely and openly—will be essential as we continue the work to identify a future academic structure. Our goal is to ensure that the

recommendations we finally make to the Board are genuinely informed by the people who will live, work, and learn within those structures and by the bicameral governance processes that guide academic decision-making at Memorial.

Thank you for your time today, the time you've already invested in this process, and your ongoing thoughtful engagement.