Final Report

Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence Evaluation Committee

To the Binghamton University Faculty Senate

March 23, 2018

Prepared by:

Thomas Sinclair, (Public Administration), Chair
Anne Brady (Theatre)
Scott Craver (Electrical and Computer Engineering)
Shelley Dionne (School of Management)
Anthony DiPasqua (Pharmacy)
Pam Steward Fahs (Decker School of Nursing)
Christopher Hanes (Economics)
Aleshia Huber (Libraries)
Adam Laats (Teaching, Learning and Educational Leadership)
Xingye Qiao (Mathematical Sciences)
Bruce White (Physics)

Contents

1) Executive Summary

Binghamton University's Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence initiative was launched with the desire to push the University into new areas of research excellence. By 2013 five groups were formed: Sustainable Communities; Material and Visual Worlds; Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging; Smart Energy; and Health Sciences. By 2016, the apparent roles of the TAEs in influencing the University's hiring priorities and their operations became a focus of the Faculty Senate which voted to form an ad hoc Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence Evaluation Committee at its May 17, 2016 meeting. The committee was charged to:

- Request the Provost Office to provide a document describing the history and the future of the TAE program as a whole.
- Request each one of the TAEs to conduct a self-evaluation by the end of the fall 2016 semester.
- Survey all faculty in the spring 2017.
- Conduct conversations with groups of faculty to further explore issues raised by the survey.
- Elaborate a report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Provost and TAE Chairs.

The committee reviewed documents, conducted focus groups with faculty groups (including TAE chairs, TAE hires, department chairs, those not affiliated with TAEs) and graduate students during the Spring of 2017 and developed and administered the evaluation survey during the Fall of 2017.

The committee limited its conclusions and recommendations to issues raised by many survey respondents. Survey respondents were clearly concerned about three aspects of TAEs: governance, role in tenure and promotion, and role in hiring. Our recommendations focus upon specific actions that the faculty senate and the provost can take to address respondents' concerns.

We recommend:

I. Establishment of a standing joint committee of the provost and faculty senate to govern the TAE system.

II. TAE steering committees implement procedural and structural changes including:
i) a process be put into place to identify what the best-functioning committees are doing and how other committees can learn to do the same things;
ii) steering committee chairs receive some form of course release;
iii) steering committee chairs serve fixed terms;

3

iv) new chairs be nominated by steering committee members and confirmed by the provost;

v) either steering committee membership should be made open to any interested tenure-track faculty member, or members should be chosen by a process that is not dominated by existing members.

III. Tenure and promotion be the first issue taken up by the new standing joint committee on TAEs. This committee should decide whether or not TAEs are to have a specific role in the tenure and promotion process. The committee's decision should be communicated clearly to all parties concerned, including junior faculty and personnel committees, and the role of TAEs in the tenure process should be clearly stated in the provost's guidelines for tenure and promotion cases.

IV. The new standing joint committee on TAEs provide specific written guidance about the role(s) of TAEs in setting hiring priorities and participating in hiring committees.

2) Organization and Purpose of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence and the Faculty Senate's TAE Evaluation Committee

Binghamton University's Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence initiative was launched with the desire to push the University into new areas of research excellence. In 2012 an ad hoc committee formed by Provost Don Nieman and comprised of faculty from a broad range of disciplines[1] suggested three "broad areas of inquiry rooted in the social sciences and humanities in which Binghamton University can achieve international distinction if it makes strategic investments." (Provost Neiman, e-mail 12/20/2012). These areas would prioritize hiring faculty to strengthen areas identified by the committee. Three new initiatives, Sustainable Communities, Material and Visual Worlds, and Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging, would join two established interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary strategic research collaborations, Smart Energy and Health Sciences.
When they were organized in 2013, the TAEs had five primary goals:

1. **Build a critical mass of outstanding faculty in the five areas**.
2. **Enhance research collaboration.**
3. **Grow external support for research.**
4. **Recruit excellent graduate students.**
5. **Create an international reputation for excellence in research.**

Although each of the TAEs adopted their own internal procedures, the University initiated some activities that supported them in 1) recruitment of faculty, 2) providing funding for the establishment of research seed grants, and 3) providing funding to convene faculty with common research interests across disciplinary boundaries.

By 2016, the apparent roles of the TAEs in influencing the University's hiring priorities and their operations became a focus of the Faculty Senate which voted to form an ad hoc committee for the Evaluation of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence Program at its May 17, 2016 meeting. The committee was charged to:

- Request the Provost Office to provide a document describing the history and the future of the TAE program as a whole.
- Request each one of the TAEs to conduct a self-evaluation by the end of the fall 2016 semester.
- Survey all faculty in the spring 2017.

---

[1] Howard Brown, chair of the FSEC and Professor of History chaired this committee. Other committee members included Bat Ami Bar On (Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Philosophy), Laura Bronstein (Social Work), Dave Clark (Political Science), Shelley Dionne (Management), Joe Keith (English), Mohammad Khasawneh (Systems Science and Industrial Engineering), Adam Laats (Education), Tom McDonough (Art History), Randall McGuire (Anthropology), and Susan Strehle (English).

- Conduct conversations with groups of faculty to further explore issues raised by the survey.
- Elaborate a report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Provost and TAE Chairs.

The TAE Evaluation Committee (TAEEC) was formed in the Fall of 2016 and was comprised of Thomas Sinclair (Department of Public Administration) as the chair, Anne Brady (Theatre), Neil Christian Pages (Department of German and Russian Studies), Scott Craver (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Shelley Dionne (School of Management), Anthony DiPasqua (Pharmacy), Pam Stewart Fahs (Decker School of Nursing), Christopher Haynes (Economics), Aleshia Huber (Libraries), Adam Laats (Graduate School of Education), Xingye Qiao (Mathematical Sciences), Benita Roth (Sociology), and Bruce White (Physics). Faculty appointees included members with an initially wide range of opinions about the value of TAEs and although two members resigned during this lengthy review process, all contributed significant time and effort to completing this evaluation. Specifically, the committee received and reviewed documents from the Provost and the TAE self-evaluations in the spring of 2017. The committee conducted focus groups with faculty groups (including TAE chairs, TAE hires, department chairs, those not affiliated with TAEs) and graduate students during the Spring of 2017. The TAE committee developed and administered the evaluation survey during the Fall of 2017.

The balance of this report is organized as follows: Section 3) summarizes self-evaluation reports provided by TAE steering committees and information provided by the Provost's office. Based on this information we describe the impact of TAEs on faculty hiring over 2013-17, TAE budgets and key activities of TAEs during their first three years of operation. Section 4) describes the methodology, administration and survey design process developed by the committee. The survey instrument utilized software designed by Professor Scott Craver to address needs that could not be accommodated by more familiar platforms like SurveyMonkey. Section 5) gives the committee's conclusions and recommendations.

Appendix 1 gives detailed survey results, including all written responses. Appendix 2 gives the Frequently Asked Questions included in the survey instrument. Appendix 3 gives the self-evaluation reports of the TAE steering committees as presented to the Evaluation Committee.

3) Summary of TAE Self-Evaluations and Documents Provided by the Provost

<u>**Hiring**</u>

The TAEs' influence on Binghamton University's hiring practices between 2013-14 and 2016-17 is significant. During those four years, the University had a total of 96 net new hires. During that time, 83 TAE-affiliated and core faculty hires were made. [Note: The TAEEC does not have data on replacement hires, so the percentage of all faculty hires that were TAE affiliated is not known.) While it is clear TAEs influenced the University's and departmental hiring, the impact was not proportional across the campus. Table 1 presents a breakdown of all TAE hires by academic department through 2016-17. A total of 33 academic departments had at least one TAE-affiliated hire and some (Anthropology, Biology, Geography and SSIE) had five TAE hires. In contrast, many departments received no TAE-affiliated hires.

This distribution of faculty hires provides a picture of the University's strategic priorities with respect to growth and where it anticipated that its investments would elevate its research reputation. For departments and/or faculty whose work was not supported by these priorities, there is a risk that absent other supportive institutional actions; they may feel marginalized. On the other hand, if strategic hiring is spread too thinly, the potential for strategic impact may be diffused across the campus, and the desired impact may fail to materialize.

Table 1

TAE Hires 2013-2016 By Department[2]

Department/School[3]	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Totals
Anthropology	X[4]	1 HS	1 CRCB, 1 MVW, 1 SC (Core), 1 MVW (Core)	X	5
Art and Design	X	X	1 MVW	X	1
Art History	X	1 MVW	X	X	1
Biology	1 HS	1 HS	1 HS, 1 SC	1 SC	5
Biomedical Engin	X	X	1 HS	1 HS	2
CCPA PhD	X	1 SC	X	X	1
Chemistry	1 SE	1 SE, 1 HS	1 SE	X	4
Classics	X	1 CRCB, 1 MVW	X	1 MVW	3
Comparative Literature	X	X	1CRCB	X	1
Computer Science	1 SE	X	2 HS, 1SE	X	4
ECE	1 SE	2 SE	X	X	3
Economics	1 HS	1 SC, 1 HS	1 SC	X	4
English	X	X	1 CRCB, 1 SC, 1 MVW	1 CRCB	4
Geography	1 SE	X	1 SC, 1 CRCB	2 SC	5
Geology	X	X	1 SE	1 SC	2
German Russian Studies	X	1 MVW	X	X	1
History	X	1 CRCB	1 MVW	X	2
Judaic Studies	X	X	1 CRCB	1 CRCB	2
Mathematical Sciences	X	1 SE	1 HS	1 HS, 1 SE	4
Mechanical Engineering	X	1 SE	1 SE	X	2
Music	X	X	X	1 MVW	1
Pharmacy (Health Outcomes)	X	X	2 HS	X	2
Pharmacy (Pharm Prac)	X	X	X	1 HS	1
Pharmacy (Pharm. Sci)	X	X	X	1 HS	1
Philosophy	X	1 CRCB, 1 HS	X	X	2
Physics	1 SE	2 SE	1 SE	X	4
Political Science	X	1 CRCB	X	X	1
Psychology	X	1 (SC &HS)	X	X	1
Romance Languages	X	1 CRCB, 1 SC, 1 MVW	X	X	3
School of Management	1 HS	1 SC, 1 HS	1 HS	X	4
Social Work	X	X	1 HS	X	1
SSIE	1 SE	2 HS	1 SE	1 HS	5
Theater	X	X	1 MVW	X	1
Total	9	29	31	14	83

[2] Source: Binghamton University Provost's Office.
[3] Departments that are not shown in the table had no TAE hires between 2013 and 2016.
[4] Abbreviations: CRCB – Citizenship, Rights and Community Belonging; HS-Health Sciences; MVW – Material and Visual Worlds; SC – Sustainable Communities; SE – Smart Energy; X – no TAE hire in that year.

TAE Budgets

TAE resources are a product of decisions made on Binghamton's campus and no additional allocations from SUNY or the State of New York are directed to the TAEs. In 2013, the Provost asked the Binghamton Foundation Board of Directors to support the TAE through the Academic Program and Faculty Development Fund through an annual allocation of $25,000 per TAE. Figure 1 summarizes each of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence's expenditures of the Provost's allocations between 2013 and 2016. (Note: data for the Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging TAE from the 2014-15 academic year were not provided to the TAE Evaluation Committee.) Data for year 2016-17 were dropped because they were incomplete. The TAE category's primary expenditures supported recruiting in the form of meals, airfare and lodging. In addition to the funds included in Table 2, the TAE category included $298,196 in start-up funds expended in 2015-16 which were excluded from this figure. Table 2 details how each TAE expended its allocations from the Provost's office between 2013 and 2016. Expenditures were used primarily for speaker series and talks, followed by seed grants to researchers and support for conferences or workshops. The table also shows that the TAEs prioritized different activities. While the Material and Visual Worlds TAE focused its activities almost exclusively on a speaker series, the Sustainable Communities TAE made more use of the seed grants. These expenditure data also show that the TAEs often did not fully expend their $25,000 annual allocations.

In addition to the Provost's funds, Binghamton University's Road Map provided funding; the Smart Energy and Health Sciences TAEs each received $40,000 in 2013-14, $75,000 in 2014-15 and $50,000 in 2015-16. The other three TAEs received $20,000 each in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years (Source: TAE Self-Study).
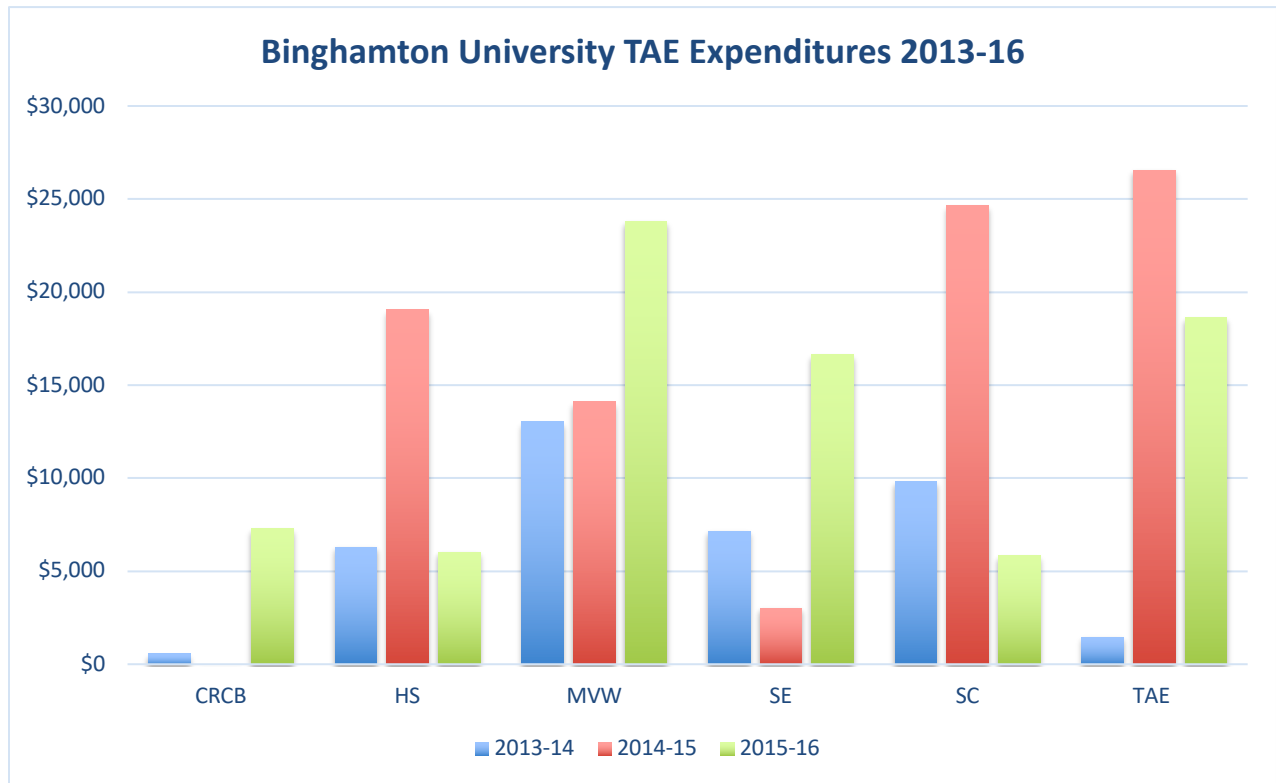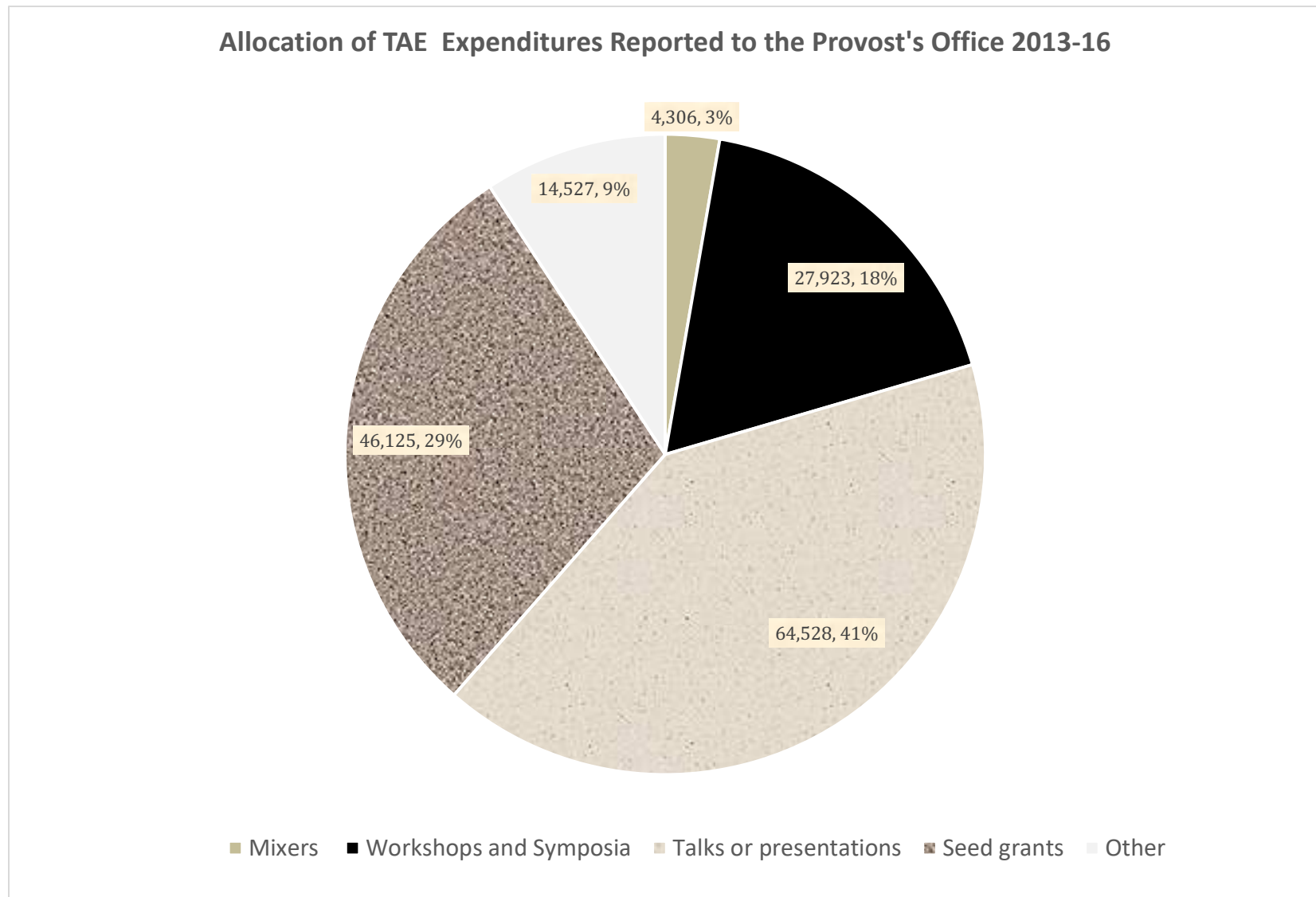
Figure 1

Binghamton University TAE Expenditures 2013-16

Table 2

TAE Expenditures by Category 2013-16 (Source: Binghamton University Provost's Office)

| | 2013-14 | | | | | 2014-15 | | | | | 2015-16 | | | | |
	CRCB	HS	MVW	SE	SC	HS	MVW	SE	SC	CRCB	HS	MVW	SE	SC	Total
Mixers	457	-	299	-	-	-	1,393	584	632	-	-	941	-	-	**4,306**
Workshops and Symposia	-	536	-	3,000	2,191	4,426	-	-	1,404	7,206	5,060	100	4,000	-	**27,923**
Talks or presentations	-	5,079	12,738	2,170	2,105	2,089	12,702	461	136	-	-	22,757	2,438	1,853	**64,528**
Seed grants	-	-	-	-	3,125	11,500	-	-	22,500	-	-	-	5,000	4,000	**46,125**
Other	96	702		2,000	2,400	1,025	-	2,000	-	89	1,000		5,215		**14,527**
Total	**553**	**6,317**	**13,037**	**7,170**	**9,821**	**19,040**	**14,095**	**3,045**	**24,672**	**7,295**	**6,060**	**23,798**	**16,653**	**5,853**	**157,409**

Figure 2.

Allocation of TAE Expenditures Reported to the Provost's Office 2013-16

4,306, 3%

14,527, 9%

27,923, 18%

46,125, 29%

64,528, 41%

■ Mixers   ■ Workshops and Symposia   ■ Talks or presentations   ■ Seed grants   ■ Other

TAE Activities:

What are faculty who are active in Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence accomplishing with these new university investments? The TAE self-evaluation, completed in early 2017, documents a number of activities and outcomes by each TAE. With respect to faculty activity, the Self-Study relied upon the 2015-16 faculty annual reports, and our committee had no additional data to analyze. Consequently, an assessment of the impact of TAEs on faculty productivity is necessarily both preliminary and incomplete. As the TAEs become more institutionalized, the University should develop a system for monitoring TAE productivity over time.

Table 3.

Self-reported Faculty Engaged in TAE-related Work (Source: Self-Study of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence 2013-16)

UNIT	Publishing Faculty	Presenting Faculty	Faculty engaged in research and creative activities	Faculty with funded projects[2,3]	Total proposals pending
CRCB	10	24	16	8	2
MVW	6	7	14	9	1
HS	16	21	30	20	18
SC	8	14	18	12	0
SE	16	16	24	15	11
TAE not specified	12	9	18	12	10
Total TAE related	68	91	120	76	42
Non-TAE related	270	369	292	225	167
% TAE related of total reported at Binghamton	20%	20%	29%	25%	26%

[1] Data from 2015-16 annual faculty reports made to the Provost's Office as of Nov 29, 2016. Not all faculty are reporting; 412 are reporting research and creative activities, 460 report presentations, and 338 report publications.

[2] Includes internal and external sources of funding.

[3] Internal funds support 54% of TAE related faculty and 37% of non-TAE related faculty.

Table 3 reproduces the table on faculty productivity from the TAE Self-Evaluation. In 2015-16, twenty percent of the faculty reporting completing publications credited the work as being related to a TAE. TAEs also comprised 25 percent of the total faculty receiving funded projects. These numbers suggest that faculty productivity is oriented toward transdisciplinary areas of research. It is less clear whether the TAEs have stimulated research activity that would not otherwise have occurred.

Similarly, the TAE Self-Evaluation reports a total of $621,632 in seed grant funding, but it is not possible given the manner in which data are reported to assess how successful those grants were in leveraging external grant funding. It appears that generating external funding may not be a priority among all of the TAEs. (See Table 4) When listing accomplishments in their self-evaluations, several emphasize other foci including speaker series (Material and Visual Worlds), program formation (Sustainable Communities) and a working paper series (Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging).

Table 4:

Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence Seed Grant Awards, 2013-16
(Source: Self-Study of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence 2013-16)

TAE	Total Awards	Total Dollars
Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging	4	39,777
Material and Visual Worlds	7	68,024
Sustainable Communities	7	79,894
Smart Energy	12	191,350
Health Sciences	16	242,587

Given the variety of standards that different disciplines use to benchmark research productivity, and the diversity of products generated by transdisciplinary research groups at Binghamton University, it is difficult to evaluate the relative success of these efforts. We must also recognize that while some activities will spawn significant research programs, not all of them will. As the TAEs mature, it will be a useful exercise to continue to evaluate their activities and design appropriate metrics for measuring their success.

4) Survey methodology, administration and response rate

The TAE EC obtained input and information via three key sources: a TAE self-study report (Phase I), stakeholder interviews (Phase II), and a faculty and administration survey (Phase III).

Phase I: TAE Self-Study

A self-study report of TAEs was provided to the TAEEC in March 2017. This report included self-assessments conducted by each TAE, in addition to input received from TAE focus groups conducted by the Division of Research independent of TAE steering committees. The self-study report is attached (see Appendix 1).
To prioritize and clarify several issues raised in the self-study report, the TAEEC elected to conduct interviews designed to gather information from a variety of key stakeholders.

Phase II: Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted in the spring of 2017 for any person or group requesting an interview with the TAEEC. Interviews were open to faculty, staff, students, administrators, community members, etc. Notes taken by TAEEC members during interviews were generally limited to 'keywords' describing issues raised by participants. The general 'keyword' approach was implemented to remove the possibility of linking specific comments to particular individuals, and ensured confidentiality within the interview process.

Phase III: Survey Construction

Survey design. The TAEEC explored comments raised during focus group interviews (Phase II) as well as information contained within the TAE self-study (Phase I). Issues common to all five TAEs emerged as key themes within the survey: general questions regarding TAE processes, hiring, outcomes, governance, and tenure. To better understand the nature of these issues, the TAEEC developed a survey designed to collect both generic TAE information (i.e., not related to any one specific TAE), and TAE-specific information (i.e., related to a particular TAE) from faculty and administrators.
Survey item and response set development was a collective and iterative process. All survey items and design features (i.e., response sets) were approved by the TAEEC via consensus. The survey was administered faculty-wide in Fall 2017 and results are included as Appendix 1.

Item development. The TAEEC used commentary and feedback from Phases I and II to design items within the major themes: general TAE processes (14 items), hiring (5 items), outcomes (3 items), governance (4 items) and tenure (3 items). Additionally, each thematic section included an open-ended comment box.

Response set design. Information from Phases I and II indicated each TAE was unique in its approach to operating. Moreover, some faculty interact with multiple TAEs and wanted an opportunity to offer commentary on several TAEs. These two factors necessitated a response set design allowing for differential input for each TAE by each question. The resulting response set ensured respondents could provide unique perspectives on each TAE within a single survey administration. Most response sets followed a Likert-based format (i.e., 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). An example of the response set is included in Section 4 of the report.

Survey Administration

The survey main page included a link to a list of frequently-asked questions about TAEs, prepared by the committee, and to the TAE self-study reports, prepared by the TAE steering committees. (See Appendix 2).

Owing to the complexity of surveying faculty about multiple TAEs, it was necessary for the committee to produce its own survey software. Because survey respondents could have different experiences with specific TAEs or with TAEs in general, most survey questions allowed multiple responses corresponding to different TAEs, which could be filled in or left blank depending on the respondent's range of experience.

The committee's survey software could present a survey question in a grid form, with a column for each TAE and one for TAEs in general. The software allowed a respondent to "gray out" any TAEs for which they would have no input, to facilitate data entry and readability. Hovering over a TAE's acronym revealed the full TAE name. Figure 3 shows an example. In this example, the respondent has grayed out the column for Health Sciences, and provided answers for three TAEs, and for TAEs in general.

The survey also included non-grid questions, and free text questions to allow respondent comments in each section. Any responses could be left blank if desired, and the survey could be partially filled out and revisited at any time to add or edit responses until the survey closed.

Each voting faculty member was sent a randomized survey URL by email, which did not contain personally identifying information. The assignment of randomized URLs to respondents was deleted after the survey closed. Survey responses were only reported in the aggregate (i.e. the total number of respondents who selected choice #1, choice #2, etc.), and the responses to each free-text question were ordered randomly in the final report, masking any information about the order or time of individual responses.

The survey was open from Monday, October 30 to Friday, November 10, 2017.

The survey response rate is difficult to quantify, because respondents were allowed to leave any questions blank as they saw fit, and because grid questions complicate the

computation of response rate. However, the introductory questions had a response rate of 152 and 153, and subsequent non-grid multiple-choice questions had response rates ranging from 136 to 80. Free-text questions had response rates ranging from 75 responses to 24 responses.

Figure 3

An Example of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence Survey Question Format

TAE Survey

| Welcome | Instructions | Intro Questions | General |

Additional specific survey sections:

| Hiring | Outcomes | Governance | Tenure | HELP! |

| Previous: Introductory questions | Save | Next: Hiring |

General questions

Please answer about any or all TAEs. If you need an explanation of the grid entries, check the instructions tab.

1.1: **Since its establishment, this TAE is making important contributions to the University.**

Sustainable Communities

CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general	
●	○	●	●	○	●	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	Neutral
○	○	○	○	○	○	Disagree
○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○	○	○	N/A or no basis to judge

5) Conclusions and recommendations

The Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence Evaluation Committee was careful to limit its conclusions to issues that could be identified directly from respondents' concerns. Our recommendations focused upon specific actions that the faculty senate and the provost can take to address respondents' concerns and strengthen appropriate faculty oversight of the TAEs.

Governance

Under the general topic of governance, the survey questions elicited the faculty's views on two different topics. One is faculty governance over the TAE system. The other is the way the TAE steering committees operate and how steering committee members and chairs are chosen.

Faculty governance over the TAE system

Most major decisions about TAEs have been made by the president and provost: To adopt the TAE system in the first place; how many TAEs to have; whether TAEs would be involved in hiring; what fraction of hires would come under TAEs and so on. Faculty members have been invited to give opinions and make lower-level decisions within a framework determined by the provost. But there has been no independent faculty governance applied to the TAE system through representatives chosen by the faculty or the structures of the faculty senate.

The majority of survey respondents are dissatisfied with this governance structure. Very few respondents believe that "established institutions of University governance such as the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council have played appropriate oversight roles in the creation of TAEs" (Q1.10: 45 disagree or strongly disagree versus 20 agree or strongly agree and 15 neutral). Most respondents believe that administrators have not been transparent and informative about TAEs (Q1.12: 62 "disagree" or "strongly disagree" versus 41 agree or strongly agree and 18 neutral). In written comments, one faculty member described TAEs as "only for the provost and his own friends" (Q3.4). About governance of TAEs (Q4.5), one said, "This remains a complete mystery to me and nearly everyone I know;" another recalled ruefully that "The TAEs were established from above, by a committee and the Provost, and staffed by appointment"; another said "Too many faculty feel completely shut out of the governance of the TAEs."

As the TAEs have developed, they touch on many university functions. Some, such as allocation of faculty positions across schools and departments, are appropriately under the control of the president and provost. But others, such as curriculum, academic standards and program development, are in the faculty's purview according to accepted principles of university governance and the traditions of the SUNY system.

Fortunately, Binghamton has a well-established way to govern functions that mix the responsibilities of the administration and the faculty: A standing joint committee of the provost and the faculty senate. We think that system should be applied here.

We recommend the establishment of a standing joint committee of the provost and faculty senate to govern the TAE system.

TAE Steering Committee Operation

The survey respondents believe that some TAE steering committees function better than others (see answers to questions Q4.3 and Q4.4).

Many faculty complained that there is no process for replacing committee chairs and no clear process for choosing members of a TAE (Q4.5). "The chairs of the TAEs seem to have been appointed in perpetuity with no transparency." "The Chair of the...TAE is doing an excellent job, but some rotation of this position would be good for TAE development. I suspect this is true for all TAEs. Just like department chairs, TAE Steering Committee chairs should be recommended by the members of the TAE and, once appointed by the Provost, should serve a limited term of office (three or four years)."

On the other hand, respondents pointed out that steering committee chairmanship, if done right, is a burdensome job for which chairs receive no course release. As one respondent noted, "TAE chairs need to get at least a course release, because their 'intellectual matchmaking' work requires much effort."

We recommend that the TAE steering committees implement procedural and structural changes including:
i) a process be put into place to identify what the best-functioning committees are doing and how other committees can learn to do the same things;
ii) steering committee chairs receive some form of course release;
iii) steering committee chairs serve fixed terms;
iv) new chairs be nominated by steering committee members and confirmed by the provost;
v) either steering committee membership should be made open to any interested tenure-track faculty member, or members should be chosen by a process that is not dominated by existing members.

Tenure and promotion

The survey respondents are confused about the current role of TAEs in tenure and promotion. The overwhelming majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposition that any "TAE's involvement in the tenure process is clear" (Q5.1). In written comments (Q5.4), faculty complained that "There is a lack of transparency

19

about the tenure and promotion processes for TAE-affiliated faculty." "Nobody not directly involved knows what the role of the TAEs is in tenure and promotion." "I am in a TAE and have no idea what the relevant expectations are for tenure of TAE faculty." The "provost guidelines for tenure and promotion processes do not include and specify the expectations for TAE-hired faculty. This is a good example of how non-transparent the processes are."

Most survey respondents do *not* want TAEs to be *more* involved in tenure and promotion (Q5.2). Written comments: "I do not think that TAEs should play significant roles in tenure and promotion, and I certainly am not in favor of 'two track' tenure processes for faculty (i.e. TAE and non-TAE)." "I do not understand what authority the TAEs have now over departmental tenure and promotion processes, but the answer appears to be: None at all. If so, that is the right answer." "In my department, TAEs have not as yet screwed up any tenure or tenure-related decisions. But I worry about the future."

That would seem to point to a simple recommendation: Clarify to the faculty that TAEs have no role in the tenure process. But there would be a problem with this which came out in several written comments. Junior faculty hired with TAE affiliations believe that they are expected to provide service to their TAEs. How will they get credit for this at tenure time? "I have seen no indication that my interaction with my TAE has any bearing on my eventual tenure case. I strongly recommend some formal universal notification of what role is played by TAEs in tenure review." Some (apparently) senior faculty think this is unfair to the junior faculty involved. "I am not sure there are sufficient safeguards to protect junior faculty involved in interdisciplinary research...I don't think there are safeguards to make sure that service to TAEs is properly valued." "The service one performs for the TAE should be taken into consideration during tenure and promotion."

We recommend that tenure and promotion be the first issue taken up by the new standing joint committee on TAEs. We recommend that the new committee decide whether or not TAEs are to have a specific role in the tenure and promotion process. We recommend that the committee's decision be communicated clearly to all parties concerned, including junior faculty and personnel committees, and the role of TAEs in the tenure process should be clearly stated in the provost's guidelines for tenure and promotion cases.

<u>Hiring</u>

TAEs have played a significant role in faculty hiring decisions. Between 2013 and 2017, 83 new hires have been either TAE affiliated or core hires. The review committee notes a generally mixed feeling among faculty respondents about the role of TAEs in the hiring process. We draw attention to the following results:

- Of the 44 narrative responses to introductory question 5 ("please elaborate on activities that you would like to see TAEs do less of"), 14 respondents identified hiring.
- Of the 36 narrative responses to question 2 in particular ("please add any comments that you may have regarding the TAEs and faculty hiring at Binghamton University"), 22 were unambiguously negative, while 7 were unambiguously positive. Negative comments regarding TAE involvement with hiring decisions included language such as the following:
  - "a disaster";
  - "failed";
  - "turmoil";
  - "a very bad idea for Harpur to emphasize TAE hiring over specific departmental needs."
- Respondents noted confusion in the process for TAE-affiliated hiring.
- Responses suggest variability between TAEs; different TAEs played different roles in the hiring process.

We recommend that the new standing joint committee on TAEs provide specific written guidance about the role(s) of TAEs in setting hiring priorities and participating in hiring committees.

Appendix 1.
Survey Results

All typographical errors in the responses are as written by survey respondents, free-text responses have not been altered from their submission except that phrases that could identify individual respondents were deleted. Deletions are marked by "[ ]". To visualize the response distribution, the aggregate survey results are presented in tabular form, with cells shaded to indicate a response's relative popularity in its respective column - darker shading indicates a more popular response. At a glance, the shading illustrates the distribution of responses for each TAE, and for TAEs in general.

Introductory Questions

Q1	What is your primary role at Binghamton University?	Overall
	Faculty member and hired as part of a Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence	20
	Faculty member, not hired as part of a Transdisiplinary Area of Excellence	129
	University Administration (Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Provost's Office)	2
	Other	2
TOT		153
2	What is your home academic unit?	Overall
	Harpur College Science and Mathematics	41
	Harpur College Social Sciences	35
	Harpur College Humanities and Fine Arts	36
	Watson School	6
	Decker School	6
	College of Community and Public Affairs (including the former Graduate School of Education)	18
	The School of Management	4
	The Pharmacy School	2
	The Graduate School	0
	Other	4
TOT		152

CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general	Q3: In this question, please check all activities in which you have participated.
20	12	21	25	10	12	Attended one or more Symposia
5	2	5	11	0	3	Gave a TAE-sponsored talk or presentation
1	15	9	15	5	2	Applied for a TAE Seed Grant
2	12	7	9	4	1	Received a TAE Seed Grant
16	18	14	13	13	6	Served on one or more search committees for TAE faculty hire
9	9	19	13	7	5	Participated in a TAE-organized discussion or study group
8	7	17	13	4	6	Participated in a TAE-organized or sponsored mixer
0	9	5	6	7	2	Published research funded or attributable to TAE activities

Q4: In the box below, please elaborate on activities that you would like to see TAEs do more of (seminars or symposia, faculty mixers, financial support for research, etc.)

More speakers.

Initiatives that bring faculty, grad students and staff together - not lose sight of the mission. Support research; help faculty/staff/students with resources.

More seminars, faculty mixers and financial support (particularly for course releases to encourage collaboration among faculty in different departments on campus).

More seminars, more community building. Possibly administering grants, hiring support staff (_research_, staff, such as lab technicians or statisticians, who could support multiple projects, without having to be partitioned across grants). Housing trainees.

provide more financial support for research

I have little to do with the TAEs in any form and therefore don't feel that I can instruct them as to what they should do.

faculty mixers, financial support for research presentation at professional meetings

Seed grants and symposia.

Financial support for research Graduate student opportunities (including funding)

Use small stipends (2K) to commission co-authored, transdisciplinary papers on approved topics. Then have the authors present the papers to the TAE membership. Ideally, after the presentation, the authors will prepare a research proposal for external funding. These funds should be considered "seed grants". Larger seed grants would be eliminated.

Team proposal planning

I like the idea of seminars/symposia or other programming that would help bring faculty together

Seminars, speaker series, brownbags

TAEs are a top-down structure when it really should be a bottom-up network. It needs to involve faculty working in related fields and often to reconstruct the fields to tackle contemporary issues and problems.

This is my first year at BU, I would appreciate more opportunities to meet faculty across the campus.

workshops/symposia

The TAE program should be abandoned as a complete waste of time.

Financial support for research; faculty mixers

seminars and symposia

More seminars, settings in which faculty from different departments mix.

Supporting research, presenting guest speakers

Seminars; faculty mixers so people can get to know one another; mini-conferences on relevant topics

More seminars or symposia and faculty mixers

I don't know what the TAEs do, practically speaking. I have read the forms listing the intention of the programs, but I am confused as to what the practical, tangible benefits to the university are.

symposia, faculty mixers, financial support for research

I believe the TAEs would be well served to host world-class symposia featuring BU faculty alongside external leaders in their fields. This could serve to raise the visibility of the institution and create awareness of the expertise that resides on campus. Financial support to research would be welcome but must be intelligently utilized. Awards for pilot projects and direct support for recruitment and retention seem to be high priority goals.

More financial support for research is an obvious one. In particular, release time from teaching to do collaborative work.

None.

I would like to see the TAEs do more curricular development -- including certificates and degrees -- at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In order for these initiatives to have meaningful impact on the reputation of the institution, there needs to be more deliberate impact on the education of our students.

I would like to see TAEs eliminated. Whereas I strongly believe interdisciplinary research is important, I do not believe TAEs are the appropriate mechanism to foster such research. TAEs seemed to have been formed because the university could not make a good decision about where to build and thus created amorphous groups with far too heterogeneous a set of participants. I have been at other universities that have more interdisciplinary research done through research centers rather than TAEs. These research centers were far better organized than our TAEs and had far better leadership. They provided research help not just in terms of small amounts of seed money, but editorial assistance, grant writing assistance, and interesting on-going seminars with important outside speakers from major universities.

Support for students.

Seminars, financial support for research

Seminars related to department research and curricula. Financial support for research.

Not sure the TAEs do anything or contribute anything to the University. So, no interest.

Attend speakers presentations.

SC does a great job right now

More seminars, symposia and financial support for research

more faculty mixers, and also more interTAE mixers

More symposia

TAE-organized discussion, faculty mixers, financial support for research

Mixers. Support for research.

more mixer like activities to enhance collaboration and/or learn about other's research

Bringing excellent high-profile speakers to campus. Seminars for speakers, faculty & grad students.

I am very excited about the new projects being developed by MVW and CRCB and I think they will yield a range of new and expanded activities.

Seminars and symposia, or even direct instruction aimed at people outside a narrow field. For example, the Data Science working group could make itself useful by offering occasional overview lectures on data science methods to people outside the field. In practice, the barrier to collaboration and spread of information is that people don't know what's being worked on in other fields, especially since

seminars within a department are usually narrowly aimed at experts in that field. This is a problem which TAEs can actually solve.

research seminars and financnial support

I'd like to see TAEs continue with their current initiatives, and continue to draw junior faculty into their projects.

Hold conferences or speaker series on well focused themes.

support more research

Hire faculty. Purchase equipment for new faculty. Hire new tenure track faculty. Support new faculty.

Financial support for research, seminars, workshops

core facilities for health sciences research interdisciplinary symposia on campus to link research interests

I would appreciate more opportunities to get to know an interdisciplinary body of faculty who are interested in similar topics. That amounts to: more seminars, symposia, and mixers. Seed grants would be wonderful also, though I have less knowledge or experience with them and I don't feel like I can speak to their merits.

support for research

Faculty mixers AND financial support.

Financial support for research, grad student support, and advertising of funding opportunities.

In my experience, none of the TAEs are very visible as parts of the intellectual life of the campus. Anything at all really would be a big improvement. They are pretty invisible.

The TAE's act like closed communities--they are not at all open to suggestions beyond what they see as their area. For instance, the Material and Visual worlds TAE has almost refused to invite any speakers in pre-modern, even though many have been proposed. It is unacceptable to have university resources tied up in small "in-groups" that dismiss the suggestions of highly-active faculty. I think the TAE's should be abolished unless they can reach out and actively involve more faculty and stop acting like the in-crowd.

all of the examples - talks, esp. from the TAE affiliated and core faculty, but also those who do that work but were hired prior to TAE, networking events/mixers, financial support, but also more interdisciplinary teaching initiatives -, esp. for the humanities and social sciences, for whom external resources are that much more challenging to seek and find

I would like to see the TAEs and Sustainable Communities in particular actually provide support for research activities. [ ] I have been unable to obtain support from SC on projects that I have been able to get external support. I am really disappointed with how Pam Mischen is running the SC!

support for a collaborative work (financial support for collaboration, co-teaching, etc.)

I'd love to see more prominent invited speakers / symposiums, and also more involvement of graduate students.

I think the TAEs do quite a bit in terms of seminars and symposia based on what I see on Dateline - all interesting topics for sure. I think additional support for research is always needed. I am not sure about faculty mixers. Maybe something informal once a semester per TAE would be helpful - although I know such gatherings can be expensive.

I see very little in the area of TAE symposia- it would seem groups who receive funding should be expected to present their findings to the University community.

More financial support for research and conference travel.

This is hard - the idea is to create cross-disciplinary collaboration, but this absolutely falls into the category of "bringing horses to water..."; people really do not, in my experience, form collaborations through this type of interaction.

Truly innovative transdisciplinary collaborations which result in external grant applications.

I'd like to see a focus on aligning the TAEs with increasingly transdisciplinary education at BU. Courses across the university that align with TAE areas could be mapped as well as faculty who are able to mentor Masters and Doctoral level students as advisors or committee members. It would also be useful if the TAEs spent time thinking about the process of transdisciplinary research and teaching and how they might support faculty and graduate student development in these areas.

Seminars for general faculty audiences.

Seminars/symposia sound nice

Seminars; problem-focused (and hence interdisciplinary) study groups; financial support for interdisciplinary course development (along with the ability to co-teach courses across university units)

Seed grant; Mixer (meet and greet); Seminars;

None.

Faculty mixers to increase opportunities for collaboration. Additional funding for research activities would be welcomed, even if just small seed money or the availability of support for UG/Grad assistants.

Symposia including across schools.

75 responses

Q5: In the box below, please elaborate on activities that you would like to see TAEs do less of:

Fewer meetings, emails. More focus on what needs to be done, and doing it.

Hiring

Seed grants seemed useful but seemed to be a lot of effort for TAE committee (my experience was with Smart Energy)

driving departmental hiring decisions

They don't seem to do very much

See previous response.

Hiring. The TAEs have dominated recent hiring in Harpur, and the results have not always been good. The TAEs should supplement strengths in the disciplines, not attempt to supplant them.

See above

SC providing support to research projects with more transparency on how seed grant money is allocated. No transparency whatsoever and when asked for feedback similar to NSF we can't figure out what and how money is allocated based on their own criteria.

N/A

Hiring. TAEs should not be involved with hiring in any way.

A couple of TAEs seem to do quite little in fostering collaboration and seem to be just an inner circle of people (MVW, CRCB) doing what they would do anyways. I'd like to see them have particular goals and a mission as to how they benefit the campus. They are poorly defined.

N/A

Not hire faculty.

Nothing that I can think of at this time.

Hires should be in coordination with departments rather than imposed on departments; more, they should be an intellectual assessment of university-wide needs

Less invited talks -- they seem to require a significant amount of resources and contribute very little (if at all) to the campus climate. All talks should be scheduled during the working day (i.e. 9-5) so as to accommodate faculty who rely on childcare to be able to attend.

hiring tenure-track full-time faculty for TAEs and heavily focused on research funded to TAE activities
Since the TAEs have been fairly invisible to me, it's hard to imagine them doing less of anything.
No idea.
Hires
Seed grant competitions (there are too few grants and too many applications--this is clearly the most visible thing the HS TAE does, and the focus on seed funds and not on community building means that this TAE seems to have very little to offer me). The TAEs also seem to spend inordinate amounts of time fighting each other for turf.
TAEs should not monopolize hiring resources.
less meetings
Taking resources from other parts of campus.
Hiring decisions
Mixers. Inviting important talking heads who expect high honoraria; spend money on research synergy.
None
Dominate hiring.
Hiring.
Hiring, especially determining hiring at departmental level.
--Involvement with hiring. Nobody else actually cares who we hire, and having external people on a hiring committee adds a lot of noise to candidate evaluation and creates hassle. --Seed grants restricted to those working in TAE areas, rather than available to all faculty. The TAEs are so broad and vague that most faculty work on something which can be spun into being TAE-related. But it would still make much more sense simply to evaluate projects on their overall merit, rather than relatedness to a TAE.
always do more, not less
The CRCB should not attempt to create a center on human rights, or hire a faculty member to do this, until a significant amount of funding has been raised to make such an institutional entity viable and attractive. As an example of how things should not be done, the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities, as a result of being created without adequate funding or a clear mission, remains nothing more than a means to cannibalize department's of teaching faculty.
The TAEs are not really effective academic units in the sense of promoting activities such as symposia, because their mission is too broad. It would be better to leave this to ORCs, departments, and other units within the University.
I would like to see less of a focus on subject area talks by outside experts and more

of a focus on developing faculty and graduate students as transdisciplinary scholars. It would also be helpful if the TAEs would help identify and address institutional barriers to transdisciplinary research and teaching such as P&T expectations and teaching across departments and colleges.

Sponsoring projects and speakers that represent the pet projects of the TAE chairs and steering committee members, and which would probably occur even in the absence of the TAE.

Some meetings really don't apply to everyone. It's time-consuming.

None.

Sponsor symposia. The ones I attended were really geared to the usual audience although funding was obtained from the TAE.

The TAE I was involved in spent a year with boring weekly meetings trying to figure out what it stood for. The faculty on the so-called steering committee had far too wide a set of interests, agendas, and research skills.

The Health Sciences TAE has consistently acted like it does not need any engagement or any connection with the Humanities. This is unacceptable. It is not a TAE if it is going to only speak to other people in the Health Sciences. The provost and the dean have been asked to intervene, and nothing happens. Essentially the TAE's are not transdisciplinary but they serves very narrow disciplinary interests with a veneer of interdisciplinary talk.

I would hope that the TAEs will soon be abolished.

Wasting money on poorly run and/or repeats of failed (poorly run) searches. Offering TAE faculty hire candidates inflated salaries and relocation packages that squander large sums of precious money simply to attract them to accept job offers and thereby prove the search was a success.

44 responses

General

Q1.1	Since its establishment, this TAE is making important contributions to the University.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	5	17	12	24	16	18
	Agree	2	13	12	15	10	12
	Neutral	10	12	9	10	12	20
	Disagree	15	5	6	1	2	15
	Strongly disagree	19	8	8	6	3	12
TOT		51	55	47	56	43	77

Q1.2	University financial support for this TAE is:	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Insufficient and should be increased.	5	15	5	12	9	15
	About right.	5	14	13	16	10	19
	Excessive and should be decreased	23	10	13	8	8	20
TOT		33	39	31	36	27	54

Q1.3	This TAE contributes to my personal research productivity.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	2	5	11	5	2	7
	Agree	2	8	4	9	5	8
	Neutral	7	5	8	8	6	14
	Disagree	15	7	9	7	6	12
	Strongly disagree	20	20	16	15	17	29
TOT		46	45	48	44	36	70

Q1.4	Besides research activity, the presence of this TAE contributes positively to the quality of life at Binghamton University, by expanding networking, social contacts, etc.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	6	6	16	18	6	16
	Agree	2	9	8	6	9	21
	Neutral	11	9	5	8	7	16
	Disagree	8	4	3	1	2	10
	Strongly disagree	17	12	9	7	7	14
TOT		44	40	41	40	31	77

Q1.5	In general, it would be better if the University redirected its support for the TAEs to other core academic functions.	Overall
	Strongly agree	34
	Agree	21
	Neutral	25
	Disagree	35
	Strongly disagree	21
TOT		136

Q1.6	The TAEs' collective contributions to the diversity and inclusion goals of Binghamton University are:	Overall
	Very positive.	21
	Somewhat positive.	29
	Neither positive nor negative.	31
	Somewhat negative.	11
	Very negative.	9
TOT		101

Q1.7	**In general, transdisciplinary research, encouraged by Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence, is**	Overall
	Not as valuable as disciplinary based research	24
	As valuable as disciplinary based research	65
	More valuable than disciplinary based research	36
TOT		125

Q1.8	How effective has the TAE been in improving Binghamton University's overall research effectiveness?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very effective.	3	6	10	9	7	11
	Somewhat effective.	3	14	9	8	12	20
	Has had no effect.	2	4	3	5	3	7
	Somewhat ineffective.	4	4	1	1	3	11
	Very ineffective.	20	9	12	7	5	16
TOT		32	37	35	30	30	65

Q1.9	How effective has the TAE been in enhancing Binghamton University's image and reputation?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very effective.	3	5	13	12	10	12
	Somewhat effective.	3	10	6	7	8	16
	Has had no effect.	5	9	5	5	3	16
	Somewhat ineffective.	1	1	0	0	2	6
	Very ineffective.	21	7	11	7	5	15
TOT		33	32	35	31	28	65

Q1.10	**In general, established institutions of University governance such as the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council have played appropriate oversight roles in the creation of TAEs.**	Overall
	Strongly agree	5
	Agree	15
	Neutral	15
	Disagree	28
	Strongly disagree	17
TOT		80

Q1.11	**The University should have specific policies and/or procedures to dissolve TAEs that do not meet established criteria for success.**	Overall
	Strongly agree	47
	Agree	60
	Neutral	19
	Disagree	5
	Strongly disagree	0
TOT		131

Q1.12	**In general, university administrators have been transparent and informative about Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence.**	Overall
	Strongly agree	13
	Agree	28
	Neutral	18
	Disagree	38
	Strongly disagree	24

TOT		121

Q1.13	**In general, the establishment of TAEs at Binghamton University has weakened departmental control over the tenure and promotion process.**	Overall
	Strongly agree	16
	Agree	18
	Neutral	20
	Disagree	36
	Strongly disagree	22
TOT		112

Q1.14	**In general, the TAEs are effectively integrated into established University tenure and promotion procedures.**	Overall
	Strongly agree	4
	Agree	4
	Neutral	30
	Disagree	36
	Strongly disagree	29
TOT		103

Q1.15: In the space below, please add any additional comments that you wish to include in this evaluation of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence
We have lost core hires to the TAEs, so there is a negative influence on our departments. Further, the TAEs have done nothing to enhance the University's reputation--in fact, our overall ranking has decreased.
The CRCB has a slight effect on the hiring priorities of departments and on tenure and promotion decisions. It should have a slightly stronger effect on tenure and promotion decisions. TAE Steering committees should more regularly submit letters supporting faculty who have played an important role in supporting their respective TAEs
The university is all about how things look to outsiders and nothing about quality

of academics, scholarship or teaching. The questions about the administration are absurd as the schism between the faculty and university is not addressed by TAE; Yet it's hard to know how a corrupt administration could be addressed.

The TAEs are redundant in terms of sparking collaboration and interdisciplinary work. They were not chosen in a democratic fashion, are reactive to current trends in academia, like cluster hires-- and the latter concept would be more transparent potentially. The TAE hiring process has led to a lot of wasted time for some depts. as well. Generally speaking, the TAEs seem to have been a way for the administration to take greater control over the hiring process. In all, I don't believe the effort has been worth the effect.

TAEs seem like a good idea overall, but there is a great deal of confusion about what they are, and their role in hiring and tenure. The FAQ at the start of this survey has given me a better understanding of TAEs than I had up until now. An explanation that clear, simple and complete should have been given to us a long time ago. Regarding specific TAEs, my limited experience is with Smart Energy, and I like the way they have focused on efforts like seed grants, and less on hiring. I also like the organization, professionalism and transparency I saw from the steering committee under Wayne Jones. Other TAEs may be different, but this one seemed well-managed.

The TAEs do not seem to foster interdisciplinary work. They simply direct resources toward targeted areas and exclude too many faculty.

Policies and requirements for new hires in interdisciplinary positions and with responsibilities to more than one department are always a bit stickier than those in single departments. That could be clarified for TAE hires, but also for other similar appointments.

I was attracted to my current position because of the existence of the TAE, and thanks to my involvement in the MVW tae the quality, quantity and impact of my research increased exponentially.

The biggest problem with CRCB has been an apparent unwillingness in administration to replace its director. This group, one of two that build the humanities, arts and social sciences substantially, must have strong, pro-active, visionary leadership.

Library faculty here (I chose other for that demographic question). While I have limited experience with the TAEs, I think there could be better communication regarding core hires, affiliates, etc. Based on the one TAE I've been involved with (SE), not all TAEs may have been as enthusiastic about the policies and programs in place. Not sure if the programs without significant TAE activity are less invested than others or if other factors could account for this.

Abolishing them forthwith would be a welcome step

The impact of the TAEs is wildly variable depending upon the TAE - MVW and CRCB seems to have no mission and wouldnt be missed - they dont do anything that isn't being done anyways by the very same people. Thus, they should be

dissolved.
Thus far TAEs seem pretty invisible
The TAE that is most relevant for my own research and teaching is CRCB. It has had no effect whatsoever on my work, or on the work of any colleague I know. I do not know what if anything this TAE actually does.
I am not aware that the TAEs have affected the tenure process at all
Regarding question 1.5: the MVW TAE is especially important in that it provides resources that would otherwise be unavailable to Humanities and Fine Arts, which have been starved.
the core hires with tenure were a problem as the departments get almost not time with the candidates before being asked to add a new tenured person.
The biggest problem that I see is in the tenure and promotion issue. The university has always supported interdisciplinary work but faculty have too often been punished by their departments for doing such work. Better organized TAE's with a formal stated role in the tenure and promotion process could help fix this problem.
TAEs have definitely raised the profile of the university and have increased scholarly opportunities on campus. My dept and my students have benefited greatly from TAE programs and speakers.
The idea of the TAE's is excellent; in practice, the TAE's have been taken over by a small group of people and used to advance the careers and interests of a small in-crowd, and in-crowd of not very high profile researchers. This is backwards. The high-profile researchers on campus are cut out of the TAE decisions. Also, long-standing ORC's, like the Braudel Center and CEMERS, have been effectively excluded.
The university should encourage interdisciplinary collaborations to emerge organically between particular faculty and departments who find that they have interests in common. It is deeply counterproductive -- not to mention patronizing, frustrating and clumsy -- for the university to try to dictate the areas in which such collaborations are to emerge.
My exposure is mostly to CRCB. [ ]CRCB's leadership has been poor. It lacks direction. Its original mandate, though difficult, pointed in an intellectual direction. The steering committee's first several meetings redefined that mandate - that's fine - but did so in a way that is intellectually vague, its goals ill-defined, difficult to achieve. The focus on human rights is particularly problematic. The social sciences and humanities understand "human rights" in fundamentally different ways. This too is okay, but it makes collaboration on human rights very difficult (impossible). Focus on other, more specifically defined things (citizenship, violence, political rights, economic rights) as the committee originally imagined might have given CRCB a better chance at success. My view is this is the lowest-performing of the TAEs - though it's closest to my own research, I think it probably should be shut down.

The TAE structure provides no direct line of communication to department chairs, leaving chairs to scrounge for information.

Both the TAEs themselves and the leadership of them should be reevaluated every year or two. They have become little fiefdoms of their chairs to the detriment of participation of faculty and effectiveness.

I found participating in the MSW TAE for a couple years to be a positive intellectual experience for me that affected my research in positive ways and help me catch up to some new research trends. And I think its been good for the graduate students and core faculty involved.

The TAE project is a failure. The Provost should redirect his energies more to day to day running of the university and abandon mindless initiatives such as the TAE program.

an interesting and worthwhile experiment, though one that hasn't panned out all that well

There is wide variation in the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the TAEs.

In some cases the TAE's have been subsumed to the research interest of their chairs, rather than a more collaboratively determined list of priorities.

Although I am a new hire [ ], my experience with the TAE has been a very positive one for making interdisciplinary connections that will hopefully result in collaborative projects in the near future. Although I was not initially hired as a TAE faculty member, the existence of this program was an important factor in my decision to come to Binghamton University. These programs represent to me a sincere commitment to trans-disciplinary research and collaboration within the university, and create an important framework for fostering these connections.

My responses are heavily influenced by my negative experiences with CRCB. In general, the success of the TAEs appears to depend on the initiative and effectiveness of the people in charge of them, and the genuineness of the transdisciplinary research area they are supposed to serve. They have not been overseen effectively. Ineffective TAEs should be abolished.

I would like to see the TAEs and Sustainable Communities in particular actually provide support for research activities. [ ]I have been UNABLE to obtain research support from SC [ ]. Ironically, I have been able to get external support for the same projects. Shouldn't it work the other way around? I am extremely disappointed with how Pam Mischen is running the SC in that the TAE is basically ineffective in promoting research projects that sit at the core of area that this TAE is geared towards. I am extremely supportive of the idea of TAEs and interdisciplinary research but the TAEs should be a transparent vehicle for promoting research not a vehicle for promoting the interests of those that manage the TAE.

The TAE hiring (such unconventional hiring practices) created confusion and chaos. Some faculty received an additional 1 or 2-year extension (6 years plus 2 years!) during the tenure and promotion process. This is unethical!!

In relation to 1.14, above, as I understand it, TAE chairs can and do write letters for tenure and promotion files of their affiliated faculty, outlining their contributions to the TAE. The weight that is given to these letters or to the activities described therein, is beyond the influence of the TAEs.	
34 responses	

Hiring

standalone	Q2.1: In your department or unit, which TAEs have had a role in the hiring process? Check all that apply.
39	Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging
43	Health Sciences
32	Material and Visual Worlds
40	Sustainable Communities
26	Smart Energy
28	No TAE hires

Q2.2	In my department or unit, the number of TAE hires relative to non-TAE hires is	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Excessively high.	5	3	3	1	0	8
	Somewhat high.	3	4	1	2	4	7
	Neither too high nor too low.	13	17	13	11	13	28
	Somewhat low.	0	2	4	5	0	8
	Excessively low.	5	5	2	2	4	12
TOT		26	31	23	21	21	63

Q2.3	In my department or unit, the involvement of the TAE in the hiring process has generally been	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Excessively high.	6	5	3	3	1	10
	Somewhat high.	5	1	5	2	4	9
	Neither too high nor too low.	10	16	9	12	9	27
	Somewhat low.	1	0	2	3	3	11
	Excessively low.	3	5	1	2	3	8

TOT		25	27	20	22	20	65

Q2.4	How effective has the TAE been in the recruitment of a diverse group of faculty in terms of race and/or gender?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very effective.	4	2	3	1	0	2
	Somewhat effective.	2	5	3	1	4	7
	Has had no effect.	3	6	7	7	5	20
	Somewhat ineffective.	2	1	1	2	0	10
	Very ineffective.	8	8	8	8	7	20
TOT		19	22	22	19	16	59

Q2.5	How helpful has the TAE been in the recruitment of faculty for your department?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very helpful.	5	5	11	7	4	9
	Somewhat helpful.	5	7	4	9	7	15
	Has had no effect.	8	11	5	7	6	14
	Somewhat unhelpful.	3	3	3	2	4	11
	Very unhelpful.	10	11	5	6	6	27
TOT		31	37	28	31	27	76

Q2.6: In the box provided, please add any comments that you may have regarding the TAEs and faculty hiring at Binghamton University.

The TAE hire was an interesting exercise and working with some new colleagues was nice. But the TAE did not really contribute in any substantive way to the hiring process except for taking up more time.

I don't think TAE hiring has made any difference in who we needed or who we hired, but the positions were only available through TAE hiring.

Best program that ever happened for our department. Matched our desires and strategies for growth with a university strategic plan, represented us well outside BU in our disciplines, profiled transdisciplinary work as fundamental, rather than exceptional, in our disciplines.

In my department TAE involvement made hires possible that otherwise would never have happened. The TAE has also served as an important tool in recruitment.

Again, the idea of a TAE-driven hiring process has been a good idea, in practice, the wrong people (low-profile researchers) have had too much power and voice, and

the hiring process has been skewed. Also, the Health Science TAE was asked to be involved with a Harpur hiring process, and they flat-out refused. So what is actually transdisciplinary about the Health Sciences TAE? Nothing, it appears.

Search for faculty under TAE was unsuccessful

It was good for recruiting to advertise the existence of a TAE. Upon arriving the faculty was disappointed that there was little to no follow up, no physical space, and no ready support to pursue transdisciplinary work.

TAE hires considered by our department were in areas that were not considered high priority by the department; no departmental input was solicited before we were asked to consider TAE candidates

We have had some good luck: the TAE process turned out to allow a few good hires. Had the department been granted the autonomy to actually ask for what we needed in order to meet educational needs and advance our research mission, instead of having to strategize endlessly about how to game absurd TAE processes, we would likely have been able to obtain an even better outcome.

The participation of the TAE in our affiliated faculty hiring process enriched the process, and the presence of the TAE on campus was regarded by candidates as a very positive aspect of the position. Subsequently, the successful candidate has been a significant participant in the TAE and is now a member of the steering committee.

We pretend our hires are health science TAE-affiliated, but they aren't. We neither encourage nor expect our hires to affiliate with the TAE. We view it as yet another layer of bureaucracy established by an administration that does not understand our discipline.

While some of the core hires have come in and added actual transdisciplinary dimensions to our collaborative work, others are simply just doing their own thing that tends to be within a discipline (e.g., MVW). We need to carefully vet core hires for individuals who want to *build* new collaborations and not just see this as a bump in salary. That is a major problem.

We get faculty we do not need (a spousal hire that we would have never considered) rather than core hires we desperately need.

Throwing the TAEs into the mix along with the previous (non-interim) dean's confusing priorities complicated hiring in my department enormously, with the result that we had some very strangely worded recruitment ads and odd twists to our hiring. I don't feel that we really benefitted as much as we should have from the hiring wave. I would have preferred that we could have determined departmental priorities at the department level with input from the dean. We were forced to skip over priorities and twist priorities to make them fit with TAEs. One of our most beneficial recent TAE-connected junior hires is leaving, in part due to lack of a serious retention effort on the part of the interim dean. We now can't meet our enrollment demands in some areas, and we're over staffed in other areas. This is partly the department's fault and partly the result of micro-managing of

hiring by the last (non-interim) dean and the need to link everything to a TAE. The senior core TAE recruitment processes we participated in at the departmental level were debacles; the candidates would not have been able to make strong contributions to our department and were not even close to up to our standards for a senior hire. I do think that the TAE hiring was beneficial for some departments that were in crisis before the hiring wave, though I think the same goal of renovating those departments could have been accomplished without the TAEs.

As Dean, Don Nieman made himself very available to departments, listened openly and receptively to their aspirations and rationale for hiring priorities, compromised and was eventually able and willing to support hires where the departments themselves believed they were most needed. Despite having the same critical hiring priority for the last five years or so (two senior faculty who used to teach six courses per year for one of our programs retired without being replaced),our department has not been granted a hire even after working closely with and securing the support of the department that originally lost the two positions. This, I believe, is closely related to the TAE system, which I have been very frustrated with to say the least. My understanding was that TAE hiring would be limited to 40% or at most 60% of overall hiring, but it soon became clear that it represented nearly 100%. Of the five TAEs only two are directly related to Harpur Humanities and Arts--CR&CB and Material and Visual Worlds. Requiring every hiring request to conform/contribute significantly to these two disparate areas greatly restricted our department's ability to request the core hire that we desperately needed for our own thriving program. On top of that, it was also required that such a hire simultaneously serve at least two, and occasionally three other departments' needs. Sometimes, such job descriptions ended up being an artificial cobbling together of different fields and disciplines, making it all but impossible to find a suitable candidate. Leadership of one of these TAEs in particular, has been maintained despite numerous problems and complaints, and this is indicative of the provost's reluctance to change directors in response to negative feedback.

Regarding increasing diversity, was this a goal of the TAEs?

My unit's hiring has occasionally led to consultation with TAE faculty & TAE priorities, and vice versa, with the result seeming to be a narrowing of the pool of potential candidates. But as far as I know nothing has ever come of it. Binghamton's procedures for hiring seem to bear no relationship to academic unit needs or requests (in my limited experience, this appears to be primarily due to decanal interference, not the TAEs).

Hires associated with the TAEs have constituted an excessive proportion of hiring in Harpur, crowding out legitimate departmental needs. The TAE core hiring process--at least in CRCB, which was my main experience--was a disaster. The ads for the job were worded obscurely so we received few applicants, and even fewer who were genuinely qualified. By the end of the process, I was actually relieved

that we didn't hire anyone in my department, given the quality of the people under considerations. In fact, I would be reluctant to participate in a TAE core hire again in the future, because the risk of hiring someone unqualified is too great, and the odds of attracting qualified candidates with the ads the TAE has written are too small.

The TAE search we conducted produced an odd and arguably unsatisfactory pool of applicants because, understandably, nobody on the job market in our discipline had any clue what we were looking for and/or whether they should apply.

My dept benefited from several TAE hires, but although we grew in number, these hires have greatly changed the culture of the dept (and not necessarily in a good way). And, since these folks were hired with tenure, here we are. In retrospect, I think it was a very bad idea for Harpur to emphasize TAE hiring over specific departmental needs. Hindsight is 20/20, but let's stop that now, shall we?

It is difficult to understand the university's hiring strategy in my field. More hires are needed independent of the TAEs.

faculty hiring as well as tenure/promotion at BU need to be transparent.

Involvement of a TAE in hiring seems to mean basically that people who are less able to judge quality and less invested in the quality of our hire, get to have a role in hiring.

At the time that the TAEs in the Social Sciences and Humanities were created, the Provost stated (more than once) that their involvement in hiring would affect a maximum of 40 % of "new hires" (i.e. not those hires that came from the SUNY 2020 growth initiative). Instead, from the beginning, they were given a role in at least two-thirds of all hires (including replacements) in Harpur College. This appears to have been favored by Anne McCall during her time as dean because it increased her opportunity to define searches and to take a more active role in them. The dual effect -- greatly increased involvement of faculty from outside the birth department and greatly increased involvement by the dean -- led to turmoil, much smaller applicant pools, and manipulation of the outcomes. The interpersonal and interdepartmental conflict that this generated continues to have residual effects.

TAE was a major factor in convincing me to come to Binghamton.

In initial interviews for a position, the existence of TAEs frightens some applicants. They worry about TAE involvement in tenure decisions, and whether obligations to take part on TAE activities will impinge on their research time.

The TAE hiring priorities align well with my home department's priorities, so in general, there is little conflict here.

Contrary to what was initially announced--that TAE were only growth positions-- all searches in our department were made TAE searches. In one case, it was unclear that a search was a TAE search until final DEI approval. In another case, the draft job ad was altered by HS to make it sound that though the TAE was the

primary selective agent. Year to year, the roles of the TAE and the Dean's office in recommending searches varied and were unclear.

The Provost suggested [ ] the possibility that HS TAE could hire an historian of medicine. The TAE never seriously considered such a hire. [ ] the issue was simply dismissed. My sense was that its vision was so narrowly focused on science that such a hire did not fit its vision. This was shocking since, for example, most of the top medical schools appreciate the importance of the humanities and social sciences in the development of physicians. Our HS TAE appears to be too narrowly focused and it is a grave disappointment.

I believe that much of the problems of TAE hiring were the product of the former dean of Harpur College who put priorities on TAE hiring over department needs even though the TAE committees did not desire this done,

I wasn't a TAE hire, but got attracted to the TAE activities anyhow. This is because the MVW tae was very visible, transparent, inviting -- largely thanks to it's chair's incredibly active performance to get the word out. This person is the ultimate model of an interdisciplinary administrator ; "an intellectual matchmaker." TAE chair needs to, at least, get a course release.

Existence of TAEs greatly attributed to good image of our university and helped recruit the top candidates, in all our searches (even in the ones not affiliated with the TAE)

CRCB's core faculty hiring has failed for the reasons discussed in the last answer. It would have been fine to hire in human rights *either* in the humanities or social sciences. A hire across divisions in citizenship, immigration, violence, etc. would have had a better chance to succeed.

The hiring of core TAE faculty for CRCB has been disastrous. The applicant pools have not been strong. The candidates have been given insufficient information about the resources available to them for them to put together coherent plans for the TAE.

The value placed upon TAE positions in the hiring process encourages departments to shoehorn their proposals for new faculty lines into the TAE model, despite other more vital departmental needs. I don't think the university's emphasis on TAEs has been helpful in my department.

The TAEs should be given resources specifically earmarked for hiring members of underrepresented groups.

36 responses

Outcomes

Q3.1	How helpful has the TAE been in fostering interdepartmental collaboration among faculty?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very helpful.	4	7	10	15	5	7
	Somewhat helpful.	2	12	9	11	10	24
	Has had no effect.	8	8	5	4	5	19
	Somewhat unhelpful.	3	1	0	0	2	8
	Very unhelpful.	13	6	6	6	2	8
TOT		30	34	30	36	24	66

Q3.2	How helpful has the TAE been in your efforts to secure external funding or other resources?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very helpful.	0	2	4	3	2	2
	Somewhat helpful.	3	8	4	5	3	4
	Has had no effect.	15	14	11	13	12	32
	Somewhat unhelpful.	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Very unhelpful.	9	6	5	5	3	10
TOT		27	30	24	26	20	49

Q3.3	How helpful has the TAE been in your own research?	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Very helpful.	2	5	6	4	2	2
	Somewhat helpful.	1	5	11	11	5	12
	Has had no effect.	16	18	11	12	14	30
	Somewhat unhelpful.	3	1	0	0	0	3
	Very unhelpful.	9	5	5	4	2	13
TOT		31	34	33	31	23	60

Q3.4: In the box provided, please add any comments that you may have regarding the TAEs' outcomes at Binghamton University.

My "fit" with the Health Sciences TAE was one of the things emphasized in my interview and hiring--although I've reached out a few times, my involvement with the Health Sciences TAE remains minimal. Seed Grant funding is competitive enough that I've chosen to route my effort for small amounts of internal funds elsewhere (the ICD grant mechanism, for example), and there doesn't seem to be anything else the TAE _does_.

CRCB is a disaster, and ought to be abolished. It might be replaced by TAEs that do not require such extensive collaboration between the humanities and the social sciences. The overlap between these areas of scholarship is less than meets the eye, and has clearly been frustrating for everyone involved. At least some of the other TAEs appear to be performing better, so they really have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

They directly affect a fairly limited group of people.

Hearing that a new TAE may be established is nothing short of demoralizing. Aside from Smart Energy, Healthcare and Sustainable Communities, will Binghamton really become nationally and internationally renown for CR&CB and Material and Visual Worlds? Is this not another example of deciding on something and then doggedly sticking with it regardless of actual outcome, faculty concerns, complaints, and pullback? Have any funded centers been established? Has grant money been flowing in? I can only hope that there will be some changes going forward that will again make it possible for departments to propose and have approved hiring priorities that address their own critical needs and further their own aspirations and visions for the future. Perhaps under the new Dean; but only if the Provost is willing to provide her with a adequate hiring budget and allow her to make a reasonable number of hiring decisions in response to departmental requests.

The TAEs in general have contributed to increased and exciting interdisciplinary research. They have done more in my estimation than organized research centers.

The TAE program has been functionally irrelevant. It functions as background noise created by administrators with little to no experience in scholarship.

Again, I and my students have benefited greatly from TAE speakers, inter-dept'l mixers, and TAE seminars. I'd love to see more of those. I personally did not benefit from seed grant opportunities but several colleagues did. These are all great programs and should continue (and expand?)

Together with a faculty member in another dept., we are publishing a collection of essays that came out of an interdisciplinary conference that benefited from a collaborative grant from the MVW TAE.

The outcomes have been pitiful. I have tried to work with the MVW TAE in external funding and was rebuffed. I don't see that the people who are in charge are really very effective about research or external funding.

The CRCB TAE has made no contributions to my research, or to the research of any colleague I know.

The TAEs is only for the provost and his own friends.

The answers to these questions are going to depend largely on the work that individuals are doing -- thus may not reflect the values of people who want transdisciplinarity. That would be like asking alt-right Republicans whether public health care should be funded and then basing a decision on the "will of the people"

According to the self-study, they've been very successful in supporting collaborative research with seed grants that have yielded external funding that significantly exceeds the investment in the TAEs. The TAEs are also generating important curricular initiatives, specifically, the Sustainable Communities masters program, and the Material and Visual Worlds undergraduate Materials Matter course.

I have been involved in interdisciplinary groups which really work, and the basis for collaboration was the usefulness of a narrow set of analytical tools to multiple fields. It would make much more sense for TAEs to be constructed around methods of analysis. For example, you might want interdisciplinary groups on how to study the structure of molecules, or how to infer causation from observational data, or how to perform automated textual analyses. A focus on narrow tools fosters discussion and collaboration between people in different fields, while avoiding the problem of a lot of people showing up at a meeting and awkwardly discovering that there is nothing particularly useful to learn from each other.

General information on the activities and achievements of the TAEs seems rather scarce. If the TAEs are going to play a prominent role in defining Binghamton University as a research institution, then they need to feature prominently in how the university is presented to the public, from the home page to published literature. Moreover, there should be easy access to current activities of all the TAEs. The Provost has failed to make the most of the TAEs, leaving an ineffective and divisive leader in charge of CRCB, largely ignoring MVW, and allowing HC to be so ill-defined as to encompass whole colleges and departments.

These are very traditional structures of committee operations trying to achieve non-traditional outcomes. It isn't working. They are supporting bringing together people who work in related disciplines who would likely find each other and work together regardless. They are not leading to particularly innovative outcomes as expected.

TAE activities was critical to obtaining one of my grants.

I'm new, and perhaps I misunderstand TAEs, but right now it seems the TAE concept is reversed. Unless someone is already working with a multidisciplinary collaborator (or MC for short), it seems one would need a research question before a list of appropriate MCs can exist. For this reason, it seems unlikely that a TAE (basically, a rather random list of possible MCs) would be what leads a researcher to an MC. If the university wishes to prioritize MCs, then there should be an

incentive for a department to hire someone who is historically an MC. That person would have research projects that require other MCs.

As noted above, the one TAE in which I participated was fruitful for me in intellectual terms.

There is nothing magical about calling research transdisciplinary or interdisciplinary (or whatever the current buzz word is). Given the lack of serious and meaningful resources given to the TAEs (or, at least, the CRCB), it comes off as no more than an administrative attempt to advance excellence on the cheap.

Thanks to the efforts of the MVW tae, my loftiest goals in interdsciplinary research is being accomplished one by one. I am developing projects, publishing, exhibiting in collaboration with colleagues across 5 departments. TAE is helping breakdown departmental walls. We are all still fully committed to our departmental duties, but the extra work we get to do in the transdisciplinary domain is made so pleasurably easy by the TAE that it doesn't feel like work. All of us are growing intellectually thanks to contact with one another's disciplinary domains. This is the way to do scholarship in the 21st century.

The Health Science TAE explicitly excluded practitioners and human subject researchers at its formation and continues to minimize their participation. This has a net negative impact on those studying issues related to the assessment and treatment health problems.

Research infrastructure needs improvement to enable the full potential of the TAEs.

I would like to see the TAEs and Sustainable Communities in particular actually provide support for research activities. [ ] Ironically, I have been able to get external support for the same projects. Shouldn't it work the other way around? I am extremely disappointed with how Pam Mischen is running the SC in that the TAE is basically ineffective in promoting research projects that sit at the core of area that this TAE is geared towards. I am extremely supportive of the idea of TAEs and interdisciplinary research but the TAEs should be a transparent vehicle for promoting research not a vehicle for promoting the interests of those that manage the TAE.

I think that the TAE's are a great idea, but my TAE, the CRCB, does't really seem to do enough for me. I'd appreciate more events, more opportunities to get to know folks, etc.

TAEs have promoted some interactions and collaborations, but many of these links overlapped with organized research centers and would have occurred without the TAEs.

26 responses

Governance

Q4.1	The TAE has contributed to the mission and/or priorities of my department or unit.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	4	2	9	5	2	3
	Agree	3	9	9	9	7	12
	Neutral	7	9	5	6	5	14
	Disagree	6	4	3	2	2	13
	Strongly disagree	15	13	9	11	11	31
TOT		35	37	35	33	27	73

Q4.2	My department chair or unit administrator supports TAE-oriented faculty activities.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	7	6	11	5	4	7
	Agree	6	13	11	12	8	30
	Neutral	7	6	7	6	7	18
	Disagree	1	2	0	0	0	4
	Strongly disagree	6	6	4	4	5	4
TOT		27	33	33	27	24	63

Q4.3	The leadership of the TAE is effective.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general
	Strongly agree	4	5	13	15	7	5
	Agree	2	7	6	11	10	10
	Neutral	2	9	4	3	3	15
	Disagree	5	6	5	1	1	6
	Strongly disagree	28	4	9	5	3	17
TOT		41	31	37	35	24	53

Q4.4	The TAE steering committee ensures that interested faculty have the opportunity to be included in its governance.	CRCB	HS	MVW	SC	SE	general

	Strongly agree	3	1	9	10	1	4
	Agree	0	6	7	4	4	8
	Neutral	4	5	3	4	5	9
	Disagree	4	6	2	2	2	10
	Strongly disagree	15	9	9	9	7	16
TOT		26	27	30	29	19	47

Q4.5: In the box provided, please add any comments that you may have regarding the governance and/or oversight of the TAEs

I believe that participation in TAE steering committees has been viewed more as a responsibility than a right. Rather than ensuring representation, it can be hard to get people to participate because of the work involved and because such service is not rewarded or recognized at a departmental level. This is especially true for TAE chairs who serve voluntarily and receive no course releases or other support for their service.

There should be more oversight in the sense of evaluation of activities and success and satisfaction of the potentially involved departments and faculty.

Any evaluation of the effectiveness of TAE chairs should be conducted with recognition that they have, as I understand it, received no compensation at all for their service.

I have had no interaction with TAE governance of any kind, beside attending a meeting to discuss possible grant proposal topics.

Governance of CRCB must change to save it. We need this TAE at Binghamton, and others express a desire that it be dissolved - that is not the answer.

It is not clear to me how people are chosen for the committees that run TAEs.

The CRCB TAE was run ineffectively, with two failed core searches. They frequently failed to communicate with affected department chairs. In the end, I felt every minute I spent on it was wasted. By contrast, my much more limited exposure to the SC TAE has been quite positive.

TAE oversight seems to be something of a black box, although I suspect that is more because steering committee members are overworked than because of any Machiavellian urges on their part. The university should provide more resources (course releases, staff, etc) to TAE chairs and cttee members, and the TAE cttee members might think about creative ways to pull in more faculty participation/help. (Cttee recruitment cocktail parties?)

The governance of the CRCB has not been transparent and inclusive.

Again the answer depends on the individual (are people trying to be involved or not?). Many who complain are not actually making an effort to contribute or trying to be involved. That's not a fault of the TAEs per se.

This remains a complete mystery to me and to nearly everyone I know
Not clear to me how steering committees were constituted in the first place, or how they become repopulated over time.
Multiple faculty members in my department were declined membership on the HS TAE. In addition, multiple commitments made to the TAEs were broken. The provost clearly did not consider the long-term needs, plan or implications of the TAE program.
Too many faculty feel completely shut out of the governance of the TAE's. Our input is not sought; it is an entirely closed process.
The CRCB TAE is open to participation by all interested faculty. However, it is not perceived that way. More should be done to reach out to faculty who, given the overlap between their own research areas and the core areas covered by our TAE, should be participating. The Chair of the CRCB TAE is doing an excellent job, but some rotation of the occupant of this position would be good for TAE development. I suspect that this is true for all TAEs. Just like department chairs, TAE Steering Committee Chairs should be recommended by the members of the TAE and, once appointed by the Provost, should serve a limited term of office (three or four years). Then the Provost should request a new recommendation. After reviewing that recommendation, the Provost could decide to reappoint the Chair for a new term.
TAE chairs need to get at least a course release, because their "intellectual matchmaking," work requires much effort.
Leadership of the TAEs is mixed - some are more effective and inclusive than others.
The chairs of the TAEs seem to have been appointed in perpetuity and with no transparency. Despite the inability to fill vacancies, the leadership has not changed.
There should be more oversight from the administration so that the TAEs don't be hijacked as vehicles for other faculty interests than the objectives they were designed for!
The TAE chairs seem to consider the funds allotted to their TAE and the hires part of their personal power base. They were poorly selected to begin with and have not been evaluated or checked at all since then.
need to rotate people off the steering boards. same people over and over just lead to them hiring their own priorities. big problem
Have had limited experience with the SE TAE - this group seemed motivated, and the departments involved were fairly harmonious. Can't speak to any other TAEs.
I hope those involved in TAE governance are being recognized for their service. The TAEs lead to a significant increase in administrative and service work.
To gain lines, departments will redirect their priorities, so positive answers to question 4.1 are not necessarily good.

Its very unclear how you get onto the steering committee and seems to happen non-transparently.
The TAEs were established from above, by a committee and the Provost, and staffed by appointment. One could not simply volunteer to joint a TAE steering committee. So they seemed like exclusive clubs. I was included in one and then had to defend it to faculty members who were excluded. The leadership of that TAE responded to such concerns by saying if faculty were interested they shoudl attend the committee's programming, but that was not an adequate response since the interested faculty were not given the opportunity to shape that programming. A lot of money was spent to bring in big names for speaker series and on conferences and on efforts to recruit senior scholars (which when successful, which was the exception, typically broad in more mid-career faculty). Meanwhile, faculty efforts to develop initiatives "from below" (e.g. digital humanities) were given minimal support from the administration. Opportunities to capitalize on faculty initiatives from below were lost. The small grants were worthwhile, though I'm not sure that this was the best mechanism for giving them out. The intellectual and social connections on the TAE I served on were the best part.
See my previous comments in section 3.
27 responses

Tenure

Q5.1	The TAE's involvement in the tenure	**CRCB**	**HS**	**MVW**	**SC**	**SE**	**general**

	process is clear.						
	Strongly agree	1	0	1	0	0	1
	Agree	2	1	1	2	0	6
	Neutral	0	1	2	1	4	9
	Disagree	7	13	10	7	10	24
	Strongly disagree	14	11	9	10	9	32
TOT		24	26	23	20	23	72

Q5.2	The TAE should play a greater role in the tenure and promotion review processes of its affiliated faculty.	**CRCB**	**HS**	**MVW**	**SC**	**SE**	**general**
	Strongly agree	2	2	2	3	2	6
	Agree	1	2	3	2	3	9
	Neutral	3	5	3	2	6	14
	Disagree	4	8	7	8	4	19
	Strongly disagree	19	19	16	13	14	37
TOT		29	36	31	28	29	85

Q5.3	The tenure requirements of TAE-hired faculty relative to non TAE-hired faculty are reasonable.	**CRCB**	**HS**	**MVW**	**SC**	**SE**	**general**
	Strongly agree	2	1	2	3	0	4
	Agree	0	2	4	1	1	9
	Neutral	6	5	6	6	7	16
	Disagree	0	0	1	0	0	4
	Strongly disagree	4	2	2	2	1	5
TOT		12	10	15	12	9	38

Q5.4: In the box below, please add any comments that you would like to add with respect to the TAEs and the University or departmental tenure and promotion processes:

The TAEs seems to be pretty hands off in regards to tenure but I am not sure there are sufficient safeguards to protect junior faculty involved in interdisciplinary research from the effects of much narrower expectations in their departments. I don't think there are safeguards to make sure that service to TAEs is properly valued.

Other than HS and SE they are basically useless.

I believe that TAEs should play a role in the review and tenure processes for affiliated hires, but also that this role should not be so onerous that fewer people will be willing to serve on the steering committees.

The service one performs for the TAE should be taken into consideration during tenure and promotion.

The TAE program should have no relevance to hiring or tenure.

There is a lack of transparency about the tenure and promotion processes for TAE-affiliated faculty.

Nobody not directly involved knows what the role of the TAEs is in tenure and promotion. I would imagine that even some of those directly involved have some uncertainty

Unlike other faculty, the provost guidelines for tenure and promotion processes do not include and specify the expectations for TAE-hired faculty. This is a good example of how non-transparent the processes are.

Personnel committees in my department have never even considered consulting with a TAE on personnel cases. Doing so would seem to violate campus by-laws.

I have seen no evidence at all that TAE affiliation has had any effect whatsoever on t and p.

I do not think that TAEs should play significant roles in tenure and promotion, and I certainly am not in favor of "two track" tenure processes for faculty (i.e. TAE and non-TAE).

I am not aware that the TAE's currently have any role in personnel cases. I am involved in two JPC's in two departments where TAE affiliated faculty are up for renewal. No one has mentioned any TAE involvement, even though both of these faculty members were hired as the result of TAE searches.

I do not understand what authority the TAEs have now over departmental tenure and promotion processes, but the answer appears to be: none at all. If so, that is the right answer: TAEs should have no such authority.

I haven't seen any evidence of TAE involvement in tenure and promotion processes in my department.

The support from TAE is very limited.

I have seen no indication that my interaction with my TAE has any bearing on my eventual tenure case. I strongly recommend some formal universal notification of what role is played by TAEs in tenure review.

I don't think the CRCB TAE has any influence on the departmental tenure and promotion process. It should have a voice and it should exercise that voice on a regular basis.
Are there different tenure requirements for TAE faculty? If so what are they? I think any TAE affiliated faculty or core hires should have some feedback from that TAE committee as part of their personnel file. I'm not sure that is the case right now.
Since affiliated faculty have no obligation in relation to their TAE, and affiliated faculty are free to become involved in other opportunities instead, it would not always be appropriate for a TAE to be involved in the tenure and promotion process. For those who actively participate in the TAE, it is appropriate for the TAE chair to write a letter for the file outlining the nature of their contribution, and IPCs and the AUPC should be encouraged to recognize this in the course of their deliberations. For core hires, an argument could be made for the TAE to play a more significant role in their evaluation for promotion, since they are hired with the explicit expectation that they will play a significant leadership role in the TAE.
TAEs should have only an advisory role in tenure processes. Candidates for tenure and promotion ought to be evaluated by the standards of the discipline in which they received their doctorate.
I am in a TAE and have no idea what the relevant expectations are for tenure of TAE faculty.
On question 5.3, it is not clear TAEs affect tenure, thus I cannot judge if their requirements are reasonable. The uncertainty on that point is one of the unresolved issues of TAEs.
All our TAE faculty were hired with tenure. I didn't even realize the TAEs hired untenured people until reading this survey. So, I have no basis to judge!
In my department, TAEs have not as yet screwed up any tenure or tenure-related decisions. But I worry about the future.
24 responses

Appendix 2.
Frequently Asked Questions

Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence
Frequently Asked Questions
Prepared by the Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence Evaluation Committee
October 19, 2017

What do the Transdisciplinary Area of Excellence do?

Each TAE is involved in hiring, administers a seed grant program, and supports various events to discuss research including workshops, conferences, and outside speakers. Each TAE has a unique activity that responds to the needs of the group or the university at large. Material and Visual Worlds has an annual seminar series that features high profile guests and includes workshops with graduate students; Sustainable Communities is spearheading a campus-wide effort to design and build a "Living Building" at Nuthatch Hollow; Health Sciences has an ad-hoc sub-committee to plan a health sciences core facility; Smart Energy is working towards its fourth federal research center; and Citizenship, Rights and Cultural Belonging is planning a new research center in human rights, has a working group on migration, and a working paper series. (Source TAE Self-Evaluation).

How were the areas created?

Binghamton University created two areas for priority investment- health care and smart energy. In 2012, Provost Don Nieman appointed an 11 person faculty committee and charged it "to assess Binghamton University's existing strengths and identify two or three broad areas in which the University should make investments." The Faculty Senate Executive Committee selected the chair and five members including three chosen from Harpur College and two from the professional schools. The Provost named the other five members. Decisions about these areas were to "inform the University's faculty recruitment plan for 2014-15." (From the Provost's Charge). The new areas proposed by the committee and accepted by the Provost were: Sustainable Communities, Material and Visual Worlds, and Citizenship, Rights, and Cultural Belonging. These areas joined the Smart Energy and Health Sciences TAEs that were initiatives of SUNY 2020.

What are the goals of the TAEs?

Binghamton University's Road Map process outlined five primary goals for the TAEs and the TAE Self-Study reported that to varying degrees they guided TAE activities.
       1. Build a critical mass of outstanding faculty in the five areas.
       2. Enhance research collaboration.
       3. Grow external support for research.
       4. Recruit excellent graduate students.
       5. Create an international reputation for excellence in research.
In addition to these five Road Map goals, the TAE Self-Study also reported that "there is consensus that the central goal of the TAE program is to establish collaborations among

faculty in order to lead to innovative research projects that address world problems." (TAE Self-Study)

What is the process for selecting members of a TAE steering committee?

In April, 2013 the Provost appointed steering committees for each of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence. Some steering committee members volunteered while others were recommended by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee or appointed by the Provost. The Provost appoints the chair and TAE steering committee members annually.

What is the role of a TAE steering committee in the hiring process?

Two TAE "steering committee members will join three or more faculty members from the hiring department on search committees for TAE positions…[TAE designated] faculty will participate fully in the activities, deliberations, and decisions of the search committees…Candidates…will meet with members of the TAE steering committee…TAE steering committees will provide feedback to the hiring department and also to the dean of that department's college or school." (Binghamton University's Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence (TAEs) Frequently Asked Questions, Fall, 2013).

What role(s) do TAE steering committees have in the tenure and promotion process?

To date, there is no formal role for TAEs in the tenure and promotion process for affiliated hires. "Faculty hired as part of this initiative…have a tenure home in a department and will be considered for promotion and tenure according to their department's standards." (Binghamton University's Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence (TAEs) Frequently Asked Questions, Fall, 2013). TAEs may write unsolicited statements regarding a candidate for tenure and promotion. "Such statements will be made available to the candidate with the rest of the materials, and will not be included in the 'confidential file'." (Procedures for Personnel Cases 10(a)(iv)(2)(c), August 2017).

What are the TAEs budgets, and what do they use their money for?

TAE resources are a product of decisions made on Binghamton's campus and no additional allocations from SUNY or the State of New York are directed to the TAEs. In 2013, the Provost asked the Binghamton Foundation Board of Directors to support the TAE through the Academic Program and Faculty Development Fund through an annual allocation of $25,000 per TAE. For 2013-14 and 2014-15, the full $125,000 was not spent. (TAE Self-Study). Road Map funding of $10,000 per TAE was allocated in in 2013-14 and 2014-15. (TAE Self Study).

What is a TAE "core hire?"

A core hire emerges from needs identified by a TAE. In each case the TAE received support from possible home departments before hires were made. Potential candidates were only considered viable if a department was willing to berth them.

What is a TAE "affiliate hire?"

Affiliated hires arose from the departments' needs, in conversation with the TAE. The searches were chaired by the department and the TAE was invited to appoint a member on the search committee and meet with candidates. There is not a universal set of expectations about what affiliated hires are expected to do with TAEs. Between 2013 and 2016, the Citizenship, Rights, and Cultural Belonging participated in the hiring of 11 affiliated faculty, Material and Visual Worlds participated in the hiring of 10 affiliated faculty, Sustainable Communities participated in 13 affiliated hires, Smart Energy participated in 13 affiliate hires, and Health Sciences participated in 26 hires of affiliated faculty including the Pharmacy School.

How does a person become involved with a TAE?

Any faculty member can participate in TAE-sponsored activities. Events are published in Dateline or contact the TAE directly through its webpage. The TAE portal is located at: https://www.binghamton.edu/tae/.

Appendix 3.
Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence Self-Study Report