School vs. College Designations

Supplementary materials related to the Category I proposal to rename the School of Education to the College of Education.

Response from Gary Beach (Director, OSU Office of Institutional) to Walt Loveland’s inquiry regarding the distinction between a school and college:

I do not believe that OSU or OUS have an officially adopted definition for "School" and "College".

If I were given this school versus college question on an exam, this might be my response:

Definitions

University:
A University should be a higher education institution that is comprised of two or more colleges. Further, a University would generally be a higher education institution that offers graduate degree programs. A large university, with large being a relatative term; i.e., above some critical mass of faculty and resources, would generally offer one or more doctoral degree programs whereas a smaller university would only offer master-level graduate degree programs.

College:
(1) Within a university, a college is an academic unit with a focus or foci of several closely related academic disciplines. A college is usually, but not always, comprised of two or more departments and/or programs.

(2) A college can be the name of a higher education institution. Colleges are generally restricted to institutions who offer associate (two-year) degree programs such as community colleges, and liberal arts institutions who offer baccalaureate degree programs.

School:
(1) Within a university, a school is an academic unit with a focus or foci of only one or two academic disciplines. A school would be a step below that of a college and a step above that of a department. A school could be centered around one disciple, such as a law school or medical school or education school, or it could be comprised of two or more departments. A school can be an independent unit such a college, or it can also be a subset of a college. In the former case, a school is treated either on par or a step below a college while in the latter a school would be treated as a super department.

(2) A school can be the name of a higher education institution. Schools are generally restricted to institutions who offer technical training. The credential awarded would either be a certificate or possibly an associate of arts degree.
Historical Background of Name Changes
Oregon University System
In 1997, Governor Kitzhaber approved a Legislative measure that resulted in three regional colleges becoming universities; i.e., Western Oregon State College to Western Oregon University, Eastern Oregon State College to Eastern Oregon University; and Southern Oregon State College to Southern Oregon University. None of the new universities offer doctoral degree programs.

Oregon State University

- OSU officially changed from Oregon State College to Oregon State University on March 6, 1961 following a Legislative act that was approved by Governor Hatfield.
- Up until 1983 and 1984, all of the academic units at OSU were called either "schools" or "divisions".
- Beginning Fall Term 1984, all of the academic units except for the School of Education had changed their names to "College of..."
- The School of Education, lead by a dean, became the College of Education in 1989. This title change occurred when the partnership with Western Oregon State College dissolved in 1989; i.e., the OSU-WOSC School of Education. It is inferred that Education retained the title of School rather than changing to College because of this partnership arrangement.
- The College of Education retained its title until July 1992 when, following the budgetary cutbacks that subsequently followed the passage of Ballot Measure 5 in 1990, the college was merged with the College of Home Economics. As a result of this merger, the College of Education was renamed the School of Education within the new College of Home Economics and Education because a college does not report to a college. In essence, the School of Education became a large super department within the new college and was treated as such by Dean Kinsey Green. Also, as a result of this change, the title for the senior administrator in Education was changed from dean to director.
- Fall Term 2002, the College of Home Economics and Education was split into two college level academic units; the College of Health and Human Sciences and the School of Education. The School of Education was once again elevated to the level of "college" headed by a dean rather than a director, but the title of School was retained rather than being changed back to College.
- Spring Term 2003, the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science within the College of Engineering was approved. The new school is headed by a director.
- Administratively, through Banner (SIS, FIS, and HRIS), DataWarehouse, and other administrative, organizational, and operational structures of the University, the School of Education and the Graduate School are both treated as a college while the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science is treated as a department.
- OSU currently has 11 colleges, including the University Honors College, all lead by a dean. Also, OSU currently has 3 schools, with the Graduate School and
School of Education the real distinction between these two designators is supposed to be. lead by a dean and the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science lead by a director.

Academic Unit Administrative Hierarchy
At OSU, the academic unit organizational structure, would look like this:
University - President/Provost
  College - Dean
  School - Dean
    School - Director
    Department - Chair or Head
      Program - Director or Manager or Coordinator

In other words, colleges and two schools report to the university, while one school reports to a college.

Recommendation: In order to maintain some consistency with regard to unit names and administrator titles, from my perspective, I would recommend the following:

• All colleges should be lead by a dean.
• Schools can either be lead by a dean or by a director. Schools lead by a dean would be treated at the same level as a college and would report to the provost, while schools lead by a director would be treated as a very large department and would report to a dean.