RESOLUTION TO CLOSE THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

Academic Area: College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

Effective Date: July 1, 2027

- The Department of Religion and Culture will be closed effective July 1, 2027. The department's degree program and graduate certificate program will relocate to the Dean's Office to complete teach-out plans. One minor program will transfer to the Department of Sociology; remaining minor programs will be relocated to the Dean's Office or discontinued.
- The closure follows a university-wide review by the Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC), which indicated that the department's only degree program (B.A. in Religion and Culture) was unable to consistently meet SCHEV degree program productivity and viability benchmarks, and had a low financial return on investment. Additionally, findings indicated that the department was overstaffed relative to benchmarked peers.
- Fourteen of the department's 15 full-time faculty will be relocated to existing departments and schools within the College. One faculty member is voluntarily leaving the institution. No faculty positions will be eliminated.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the resolution to close the Department of Religion and Culture in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences be approved and the proposal forwarded to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) for approval.

June 2, 2026

Table of Contents

Institution 1
Nature of Proposed Change 1
Background 1
Purpose of Proposed Change 3
Mission 3
Rationale for Proposed Change 4
Academic Units 5
Academic Programs 6
Resources/Budget 6
- Administration 6
- Faculty 7
- Space 7
- Miscellaneous 8

Appendices 9
- Appendix A – Current Organizational Structure College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Organizational Chart A-1
- Appendix B – Proposed Organizational Structure College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Organizational Chart B-1

Institution
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Nature of Proposed Change
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) requests approval to reorganize the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences to close the existing Department of Religion and Culture.

Appendix A presents the existing organizational structure of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.
Appendix B presents the proposed organizational structure of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences after the reorganization.

Background
The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences oversees academic units that focus on liberal arts and human sciences disciplinary areas. The Department of Religion and Culture was established in 2009. The purpose of the department was and remains to administer academic programs focused on religion, culture, and related areas of humanistic and social inquiry.

Beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year, a university-wide Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) was charged by the Executive Vice President and Provost with conducting a comprehensive review of academic departments, programs, and courses to assess their alignment with student demand, institutional priorities, workforce relevance, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) Degree Program Productivity and Viability Policy metrics. As part of the review, the committee evaluated how departmental resources and academic offerings align with student interest and university strategic goals as well as degree program productivity. The committee examined enrollment trends, degrees conferred, student credit hour production, instructional faculty FTE, and instructional cost and revenue data. Using these measures, the ARAC conducted an initial screening of all academic units, followed by more in-depth analyses of selected departments.

As part of the comprehensive departmental analyses, the Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) included peer benchmarking and financial return on investment metrics, along with the overall capacity and sustainability of the department, including staffing levels and faculty expertise. Further, the committee analyzed the departments' academic offerings using multi-year FTE enrollment trends and degrees awarded compared to SCHEV's Degree Program Productivity and Viability Policy benchmarks for FTE majors and graduates. When the data demonstrated performance below, or trending below, established minimum thresholds, the committee consulted with the relevant dean to consider appropriate responses, including enrollment strategies, resource reallocation, and/or consideration of departmental and degree program closure.

In the spring semester of 2025, the Department of Religion and Culture was identified by the Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) as a department to investigate further based on quantitative performance indicators, including enrollment trends, degrees awarded, and instructional resource utilization. On March 31, 2025, the committee presented data to the

Department of Religion and Culture, and the department was asked to respond. The department submitted a response on April 11, 2025.

On April 15, 2025, the Executive Director for Organizational Excellence, a member of the Academic Resource Alignment Committee, met with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS), the Department Chair of the Department of Religion and Culture, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs for the CLAHS, and the Assistant Dean of Finance and Administration for the CLAHS, to discuss the future of the Department of Religion and Culture. The group discussed the allocation of resources to the Department of Religion and Culture and the department's overall viability within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences' academic portfolio. The discussion included previously implemented strategies to strengthen enrollment and degree production of the only degree program in the department and the data indicating that the department is overstaffed, currently in the 87th percentile relative to benchmarked peers. Additionally, the group discussed the potential next steps, including potential adjustments to resource allocations and the possibility of closing the degree program and the department.

In summer 2025, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences developed plans for the future of the college in a document named "CLAHS 2030." On August 11, 2025, based on the discussions in the spring semester with the Academic Resource Alignment Committee and the Department Chair of the Department of Religion and Culture about the department's only degree program, the data indicating the department has a low financial return on investment, and the vision for the college in the CLAHS 2030 plan, the Dean proposed developing a plan to discontinue the department's degree program and to propose an organizational change to close the Department of Religion and Culture to the Executive Vice President and Provost. On August 11, 2025, the provost expressed support for the plan.

On August 14, 2025, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences notified the Department Chair of the Department of Religion and Culture of the plan to propose an organizational change to reorganize the college and close the department. On August 18, 2025, an official announcement from the Dean to the Department of Religion and Culture indicated the plan to close the department. On August 20, 2025, the Department Chair of Religion and Culture and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences met with the program faculty to discuss the plan to close the department.

On September 16, 2025, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences met with the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Portfolio Management and SCHEV Compliance to discuss the requirements for proposing an organizational change to close the Religion and Culture department. The internal and external processes required were communicated.

In October 2025, the Department Chair of the Religion and Culture Department conducted an online survey of the department's 13 tenured/tenure-track faculty members (including six (6) Professors, three (3) Associate Professors, four (4) Assistant Professors), and two (2) Visiting Assistant Professors. The survey, in part, asked for feedback regarding the plan to close the department. The results of the survey were as follows: one (1) faculty member voted to "Start the

formal process of reviewing the matter of the closure of the two majors and the department"; four (4) faculty members voted to "Start the formal process of reviewing the matter of the closure of the two majors and the department, while stating our opposition to it"; two (2) faculty members voted to "Do something else." Regarding the two (2) "Do something else" votes, one (1) faculty member did not provide any comment and one (1) faculty member suggested doing something similar to the "Start the formal process of reviewing the matter of the closure of the two majors and the department, while stating our opposition to it" option.

Also in October of 2025, the Department Chair met individually with 11 program faculty members, including three (3) Professors, three (3) Associate Professors, three (3) Assistant Professors, and two (2) Visiting Assistant Professors, regarding, in part, the plan to close the department. On October 21, 2025, the Department Chair reported the outcome of the initial faculty survey and the individual meetings to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences including that while the faculty reported opposition to the plan and felt they had not been consulted, the majority reported that the department should begin the process as directed by the dean.

In November 2025, the Department Chair of the Religion and Culture Department conducted an additional online vote of the 13 tenured/tenure-track faculty members and two (2) visiting assistant professors. Nine (9) faculty members responded to the survey. In response to the prompt, "Should we move ahead with the formal process, starting with the IPC (Institutional Planning Committee), of dissolving the two majors and the department?", two (2) faculty members voted yes, six (6) faculty members voted "Yes, but under duress," and one (1) faculty member voted no. Two (2) comments were received indicating a lack of faculty consultation in the process. On November 10, 2025, the Department Chair reported the outcome of the faculty survey/vote to the Dean. On November 10, 2025, the Dean instructed the Department Chair to move forward with the plan to close the department.

On November 20, 2025, the plan to propose an organizational change to close the Department of Religion and Culture was reviewed and endorsed by the Institutional Planning Committee.

Purpose of Proposed Change
The purpose of the proposed organizational change is to close a department that is no longer needed to administer degree programs and other academic programs.

Mission
The proposed organizational change will not alter or change the university's mission. The mission of Virginia Tech states:

> "Inspired by our land-grant identity and guided by our motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), Virginia Tech is an inclusive community of knowledge, discovery, and creativity dedicated to improving the quality of life and the human condition within the Commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the world."

The proposed organizational change will align with Virginia Tech's mission. The proposed reorganization of the College to close the department will help the College to redirect resources

to academic units that administer academic programs to support "knowledge, discovery, and creativity" in the liberal arts and human sciences.

Rationale for Proposed Change

The proposed reorganization to close the Department of Religion and Culture will be advantageous to the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The proposed reorganization will help the college in two ways: 1) officially close an inactive academic unit, and 2) focus the resources of the college.

Inactive Academic Unit

Prior to 2025, the Department of Religion and Culture administered one (1) undergraduate degree program, one (1) graduate certificate program, and six (6) minor programs. Between March and April of 2025, the university's Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) communicated with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, the Department Chair of the Department of Religion and Culture, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and the Assistant Dean of Finance and Administration for the college about the department's degree program and resource utilization. The committee findings indicated that the degree program had been unable to sustain consistent enrollment and degrees awarded over time, frequently falling below SCHEV's Program Productivity Policy minimum metrics. Further, the ARAC reported that the department appeared to be overstaffed with a low financial ROI.

Over the course of the summer of 2025, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences considered the Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) findings regarding the Department of Religion and Culture's resource utilization and the degree program viability metrics relative to the college's full academic portfolio. On August 11, 2025, based on all discussions in the spring semester, the historical and current degree program data (i.e., FTE enrollment, degrees awarded), and the Dean's vision for the college, the Dean recommended developing plans to propose an intent to discontinue the degree program and to propose an organizational change to close the department to the Executive Vice President and Provost. On August 11, 2025, the provost expressed support for the Dean's recommendation.

From August of 2025 through October of 2025, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, and the Department Chair for the Department of Religion and Culture met with the department faculty and discussed the plans to propose the organizational change to close the department. During that time and extended through the spring 2026 semester, the Department Chair and the Dean and Associate Deans of the college supported faculty in identifying academic units in the college that would be appropriate for individual faculty transfers.

In spring and early summer semesters of 2026, the Dean, Associate Deans for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies and Research in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and Department Chair for the Department of Religion and Culture led internal processes for the transfer of faculty and for the relocation or discontinuation of the academic programs located in the department. The college is in the process of discontinuing the degree program located in the Department of Religion and Culture. Also during this timeframe, the

college made decisions about relocating or discontinuing the other academic programs administered by the department. As a result, the Department of Religion and Culture does not have any open and active degree programs, certificate programs, or minor programs.

The proposed reorganization of the college to close the department is needed to officially close an academic unit that is no longer needed.

College Resources

In spring of 2025, the university's Academic Resource Alignment Committee (ARAC) examined the Department of Religion and Culture's operations including academic program viability and resource utilization. The committee examined the costs associated with supporting the department's degree program and other academic programs (i.e., graduate certificate and minor programs), the degree program enrollment and degree production data, and the staffing levels in the department. The committee identified that the degree program was unable to consistently meet necessary productivity metrics and that the department appeared to be overstaffed, resulting in a low financial ROI. The proposed closure of the department will allow the dean to focus resources (e.g., faculty, staff, and funding) toward active degree programs and other academic programs in the other eight (8) department and three (3) schools. The dean will be able to reallocate funding from the department to support the academic programs and activities in the active departments and schools in the College. Focusing the College's resources will enable the university to support the College's goals for degree program productivity (e.g., enrollment and faculty effort). The proposed organizational change to reorganize the College to close the department will ensure efficient administration of the resources in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Academic Units

The proposed reorganization of the college to close the department will affect one (1) academic unit in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. There will be a change to one (1) existing department as a result of the proposed closure of the department. One (1) minor program will be moved to the Department of Sociology.

If the proposed department closure is approved, the college will have eight (8) departments and three (3) schools, for a total of 11 academic units. The academic units are:

Departments

Department of English
Department of History
Department of Human Development and Family Science
Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
Department of Philosophy
Department of Political Science
Department of Science, Technology, and Society
Department of Sociology

Schools

School of Communication

School of Education
School of Public and International Affairs

Academic Programs
The proposed reorganization of the college to close the department will have no effect on the academic programs in the existing departments in the college. The degree program and graduate certificate program in the Department of Religion and Culture will be relocated to the Dean's office while in the process of being discontinued. Teach out plans for the B.A. degree program in Religion and Culture will continue through spring 2033. Teach out plans for the Graduate Certificate in Religion and the Public Sphere will be developed and continued as approved. Administration of the B.A. degree program in Religion and Culture and the Graduate Certificate in Religion and the Public Sphere will relocate to the Dean's Office until teach out plans have expired.

The Department of Religion and Culture also administers six (6) minor programs. One (1) existing minor program will be moved to the Department of Sociology. Two (2) minor programs will be moved to the Dean's Office. Three (3) minor programs will be discontinued.

Resources/Budget
No changes will occur in the administration of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences as a result of the proposed organizational change. All administrative and staff positions will remain the same. There will be minimal changes to the College's operating budget as result of the proposed organizational change.

The existing resources for the Department of Religion and Culture will be reallocated to the existing budget of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The budget includes faculty and staff salaries, and operating expenses of $121,825 including equipment and office supplies. The budget represents the current expenditures for the Department of Religion and Culture.

A total of $2,542,671 will be reallocated to the budget of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Office of the Dean.

<u>Administration</u>
Cost for the administration of the department is $346,073. The Department Chair receives $7,000 in additional compensation for the position. The stipend will remain until June of 2027. No additional benefits are added and thus, the salary is $152,669 and fringe benefits are $53,860, for a total of $213,529.

Administrative Support
The department is currently supported by two (2) administrative support staff members. One (1) administrative support staff dedicates 1.0 FTE to the department. One (1) administrative support staff position is shared, with 0.50 FTE dedicated to the department and the other 0.50 FTE dedicated to the Department of Science, Technology, and Society.

The staff member who dedicates 1.0 FTE to the department will be relocated to the Dean's Office. The 1.0 FTE staff salary is $56,760 and fringe benefits are $29,547, for a total of

$86,307.

The staff member who dedicates 0.5 FTE to the department will be reallocated to dedicate 1.0 FTE to the Department of Science, Technology, and Society. The 0.50 FTE staff salary is $30,840 and fringe benefits are $15,397, for a total of $46,237.

The total for staff salaries is $87,600 and fringe benefits of $44,944, for a total of $132,544.

Faculty

Currently, the department has 15 full-time faculty, including the Department Chair. Fourteen (14) full-time faculty will be relocated to teach in existing degree and certificate programs in other departments and schools in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. One (1) faculty member has indicated the desire to end employment with the university for a position at another organization.

Of the 14 full-time faculty members who will be relocated, four (4) faculty members will relocate to the Department of English, four (4) faculty members will relocate to the Department of History, and two (2) faculty members will relocate to the Department of Political Science. One (1) faculty member will relocate to the Department of Philosophy, one (1) faculty member will relocate to the Department of Sociology, and one (1) faculty member will relocate to the School of Public and International Affairs. One (1) faculty member will relocate to the Academy of Transdisciplinary Studies, Dean's Office. No faculty positions will be eliminated as a result of the proposed closure of the department.

The department currently has two (2) adjunct faculty members. Adjunct faculty will continue to be utilized by other departments and schools in the College as needed. No adjunct faculty positions will need to be eliminated.

The full-time faculty have a total salary of $1,474,923 with fringe benefits of $584,850, for a total of $2,059,773. Adjunct faculty are budgeted at $15,000 with no fringe benefits.

The total for salaries is $1,489,923 with fringe benefits of $584,850, for a total of $2,074,773.

Space

Currently, the Department of Religion and Culture is located in Major Williams Hall on the main campus in Blacksburg, VA. The majority of the faculty and staff will not move as a part of the proposed organizational change to reorganize the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and close the department. Of the four (4) faculty members that will be relocating to the Department of English, two (2) will remain in Major Williams Hall at this time and two (2) will relocate to Shanks Hall. All other faculty members are expected to remain in place in Major Williams Hall at this time. The oversight and administration of the physical space, including offices and meeting rooms, will be under the purview of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Office of the Dean. The space will continue to be used by existing personnel. No new space, including office and meeting rooms, will be required for the proposed organizational change.

Miscellaneous

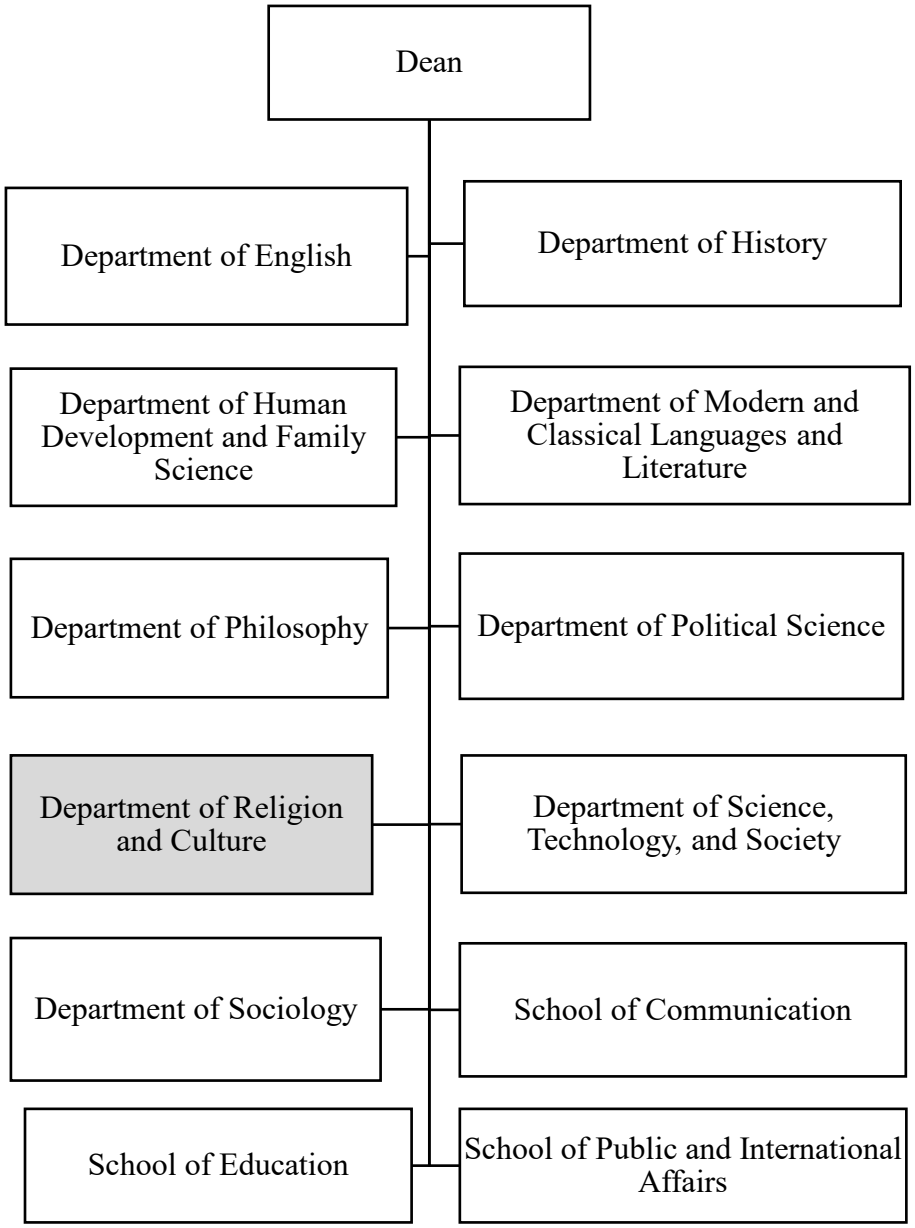
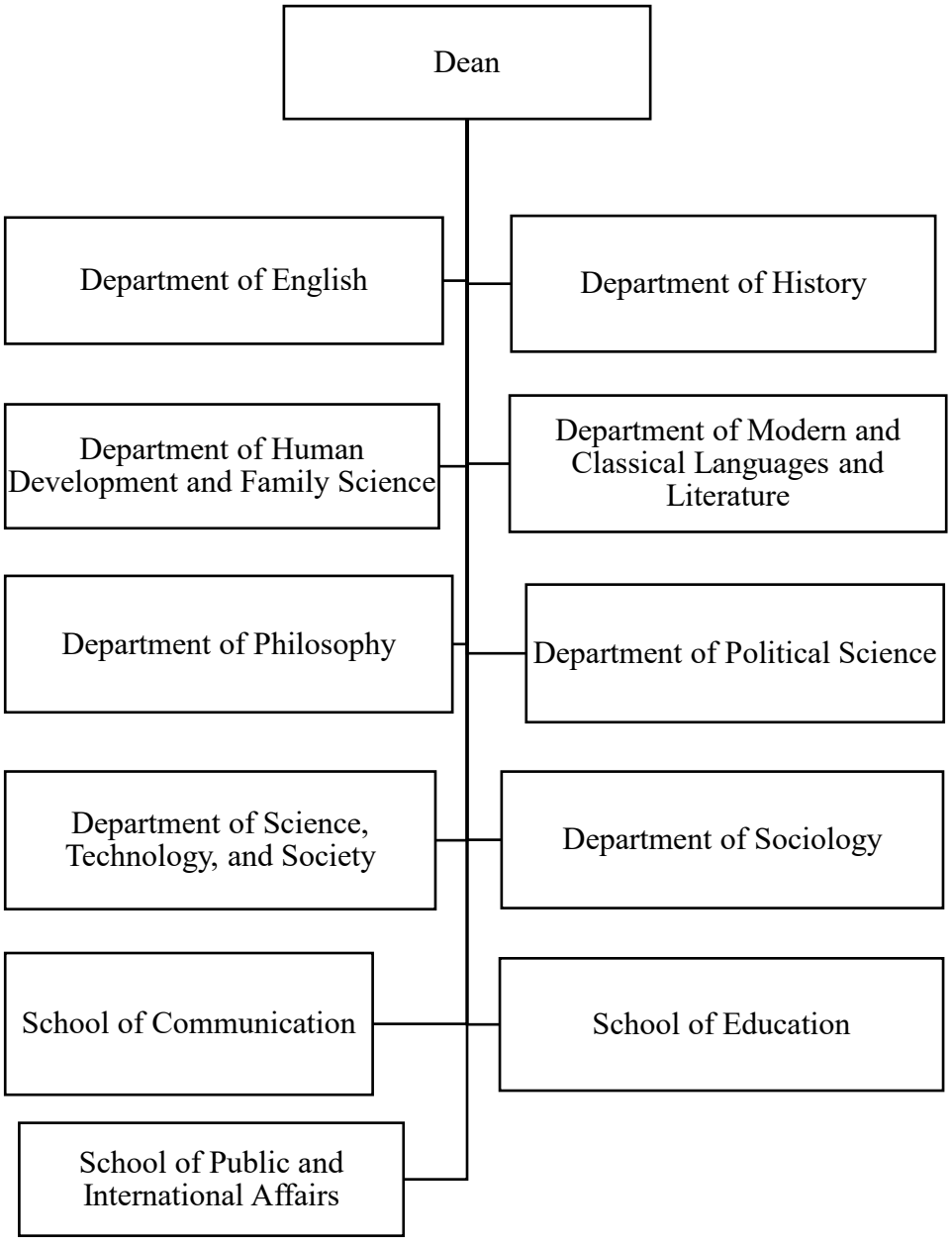
There will be an initial, one-time expenditure of $2,300 to be utilized for the signage (internal and external to the building) and print materials. The cost will be accommodated by existing resources in the budget of the dean's office in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Signage	$1,300
Print materials (stationery, business cards)	$1,000
Total	**$2,300**

No additional expenses are required to implement the proposed reorganization of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences to close the department. No new faculty or staff positions will be needed to implement the reorganization of the college to close the department. Virginia Tech and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences have adequate and sufficient resources for the proposed organizational change. No new resources will be requested from the state to establish or sustain the proposed organizational change to reorganize the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences to close the Department of Religion and Culture.

Appendices

Appendix A – Current Organizational Structure
College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Organizational Chart



Appendix B – Proposed Organizational Structure
College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Organizational Chart