

**COMPUTING, DATA SCIENCE AND APPLIED SCIENCE INITIATIVE
STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT
SUMMER 2023**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If approved, a proposed school of Computing, Data Science and Applied Science (“CDSAS”) at William & Mary would become the first new school established at the institution in more than half a century. Proponents of this new entity believe that once established, it will address increased student demands in these three areas, elevating William & Mary’s national profile in industries marked by robust economic growth across the country. They also note that increased visibility and autonomy for these three disciplines will strengthen recruitment of world-class faculty and graduate students and attract increased external funding for research (both external grants and state funds). Others in the community have expressed concerns that such a school might draw resources away from the rest of Arts & Sciences (A&S) and thus undermine William & Mary’s traditional strengths in providing undergraduates with a superlative interdisciplinary education.

Throughout the spring of 2023, this 15-member Steering Committee explored the possibilities for a new autonomous unit and invited comprehensive feedback from the community by holding various town halls (both virtual and in-person), attending meetings with faculty and student groups as well as others, and conducting multiple on-line surveys. Many of those consulted expressed particular concern about the administrative costs of a new structure. Of the different models under consideration, respondents clearly preferred those that offered students the opportunity to matriculate into the new unit after general admission to W&M and the completion of a defined number of credits. Far less support was offered for either a “graduate school only” model or a “direct admission” model. During the course of its work, the Committee was informed that faculty in the Physics (PHYS) department unanimously voted to become part of this new entity as well.

Whether a new unit for CDSAS is situated inside or outside of A&S (substantial support was expressed for both of those two options), an overwhelming majority hoped that such an entity would offer students throughout the university the opportunity to access the new school’s course offerings; many believe a new unit should facilitate cross-school collaborations between faculty and students of different schools, as well as foster the interdisciplinary teaching and research which aligns with William & Mary’s traditional strengths. Developing streamlined processes for faculty to hold joint and affiliate appointments with departments and programs in the new entity will be key to enabling such interdisciplinary collaborations. Finally, faculty and students alike urged the administration to design structures for undergraduate admission and/or majoring in the new school which will address and satisfy the needs of students throughout the university.

STEERING COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT (PDF)