

A Vision for the College of Biological Sciences
Joan M. Herbers
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In September 2007 I charged the Strategic Planning Committee to develop recommendations for taking our College forward through the coming years, in alliance with the Academic Plan and President Gee's goals. I asked them to give special attention to the quality of our doctoral programs and our administrative structure. The review of our doctoral programs was forwarded to me in mid-December 2007. I used those recommendations to submit in January 2008 the College assessment of doctoral programs as required by the Graduate School.

The Strategic Planning Committee has deliberated a suite of issues concerning our administrative structures in the ensuing time. In addition, I have convened focus groups of faculty (including some members of the Strategic Planning Committee). Several individuals have suggested that I develop a possible plan to frame further discussion. The suggestion below incorporates the ideas and concerns expressed to me thus far. I believe it represents a strategy for leveraging our collective strengths while retaining the disciplinary identity that is highly valued by faculty.

I propose that the College of Biological Sciences restructure its current six departments into two Schools. Those Schools would divide broadly between faculty whose work is more cellular/molecular/biochemical and those whose work is more organismal/ecological/evolutionary. The recently-reorganized Center for Life Sciences Education would retain its current programs and be the third major unit within the College.

The concept of a School is much broader than a department, and would almost certainly entail additional subdivision into programs. Just as some OSU departments (Chemistry, Psychology) have established divisions, so too would our Schools probably want to define divisions or programs — possibly aligned with current departments or possibly some other configuration. I estimate that such reconfigured schools would divide our 102 faculty into groups of about 60 and 40 respectively.

If this idea has generally-agreed-upon merit, then a host of issues will have to be fleshed out, including but not limited to the following:

- Leadership: We currently have six department chairs in place. Of those, one is interim, one position ends in June 2008, two in June 2009 and another in September 2009. School Directors could be recruited from the current chairs, from other internal pools, or from external searches.
- Governance and programmatic structure: this is the largest set of issues to be thoroughly discussed. Faculty in departments that become subsumed into a school will be concerned about the visibility and viability of their disciplines, recruitment of faculty into those disciplines, their ability to recruit graduate students, representation on new governance structures, and many other issues. The first step

will be to identify programs to have formal status within each school, and for faculty to self-identify which programs to join.

- Graduate Programs: I anticipate we will wish to keep all the current graduate programs in the College, and may wish to broaden their scope sufficiently so that all faculty have direct access to students in School graduate programs
- Undergraduate majors: I do not foresee any immediate changes in our undergraduate majors. However, recent discussions of curriculum suggests we may wish to streamline our undergraduate majors and their curricula, which will require substantial discussion over the coming years
- Teaching responsibilities: Realignment of faculty into schools provides tremendous opportunities for faculty to be redeployed in classroom and laboratory teaching. We may wish to move additional courses out of the Schools and into the CLSE, and vice-versa
- Service Loads: if we move from six TIUs to two, the needs for faculty to serve on committees will ease substantially. However, the desires of faculty to be involved in governance will probably require that some committees (e.g. curriculum, promotion & tenure) be structured to include broad representation, and college-level committees will need to be carefully designed to allow for broad input
- Promotion and Tenure issues: The Assistant Professors would feel most vulnerable during a change of this magnitude, and we must work to ensure that their concerns are solicited, heard, and respected. It will be important that our junior faculty feel protected during this time, and that they receive clear and consistent communication concerning their status. *The expectations for promotion and tenure will not change, nor can we allow junior faculty to be subjected to disruptions in their research programs and teaching assignments.* I will take personal responsibility for regular communication with our untenured faculty to allay their concerns as much as possible.
- Staff: The amount of work to be done throughout the College is unlikely to decline, and I do not foresee that any staff members will lose their jobs. However, it is likely that staff responsibilities could be re-aligned to improve the services offered to faculty, staff, and students. For example, we might ask a staff person to be involved in developing budgets for grant applications, another to focus on graduate appointments, and so on. When staff vacancies occur, we can decide whether to use that opportunity to institute positions with entirely new responsibilities (e.g. graduate recruiter), to realign staff responsibilities within schools, to replace in kind, or to reallocate to other college needs.
- Space: Faculty would continue to occupy their currently-assigned space, and administrative support offices could be reconfigured and possibly relocated.