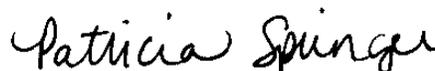


January 24, 2015

To: Jose Wudka, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: Patricia Springer, Vice Chair, Executive Committee  
College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences



**Re: Proposal to Realign UCR Academic Units**

The CNAS Executive Committee discussed the *Proposal For the Realignment of Academic Units at the University of California Riverside* at its Jan 20, 2015 meeting. In general, there is little support for the proposal. We believe that the proposed merger between CNAS and CHASS is not well justified. The committee is concerned that undergraduate education is the driving force behind the proposal, with little regard for the resulting impact on research and graduate training, which a majority of faculty view as likely to be negative. We acknowledge that providing high-quality undergraduate education is important. However, the formation of a merged college will mask the existing research strengths of each college, eroding our national and international status, while not necessarily improving undergraduate education. The proposed merger will also establish a large imbalance, with one large college housing ~70% of the instructional faculty and the remaining ~30% of the faculty distributed over 5 smaller colleges. Moreover, it will be very difficult for the Dean of the proposed College of Arts and Sciences to apportion resources to best meet the needs of such a diverse faculty without establishing additional complex administrative bureaucracy. Colleges of Arts and Science are common at small liberal arts universities and also a few very expansive research universities, in which large Arts and Science Colleges are balanced by large colleges in other disciplines (Law, Medicine, etc). UCR is too small to support such a structure.

Faculty in the AES departments (BPSC, ENT, ENSC, NEM, and PPM) view both proposed options as detrimental to agricultural research at UCR. CNAS faculty involved in agriculture conduct research that falls along a continuum from basic to applied. Agricultural research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be strongly rooted in basic biology and this strength is better sustained by context and ties within biological sciences. The Cooperative Extension (CE) Faculty provide a critical liaison between researchers and growers and other end users. Establishment of a School of Agriculture (option A) would destroy this continuum and fragment agricultural research, with some faculty in the College of Arts and Science and others in the School of Agriculture. In addition, UCR is not large enough to support a strong College of Agriculture. Furthermore, the formation of a separate College of Agriculture would be detrimental to both undergraduate and graduate education. Faculty in the AES departments are heavily involved in instruction at both levels. The AES departments offer undergraduate majors and house successful graduate programs. Faculty in the AES departments also participate in teaching the large undergraduate Biology major, in several non-AES departmental graduate programs (Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, and Statistics) as cooperating faculty members, and in several successful interdepartmental graduate programs within CNAS (CMDDB, GGB, Microbiology, ETOX, and Neuroscience). Creation of a separate College of Agriculture would

require coordination of all of these programs between two colleges. The alternative proposal to establish an Agriculture Institute (option B) would segregate CE faculty from AES faculty and erode the strong ties between research and outreach that we have worked for decades to establish. Implementation of either proposal would ultimately marginalize Agriculture, which is currently an important strength on campus.

One justification for the merger is that it will address problems related to student success, particularly coordination of course offerings and difficulties that some students may experience transferring between majors in CNAS and CHASS. It is not clear to us just how serious these problems are as data documenting the number of affected students have not been provided. Over the last few years, the CNAS faculty has worked hard to improve our student success rate and we are beginning to see positive results from these efforts. Selective admissions procedures combined with the implementation of student-success programs such as Freshman seminars and Learning Communities are beginning to have a measurable impact on student retention within the College and overall success as measured by grades and graduation rates. In addition, transition advising and peer mentoring, designed to ease the movement of students from CNAS to CHASS, are currently being implemented, and may act to minimize problems with transferring between majors in the future. A wholesale change in college organization at this juncture may, at least in the short term, erode these gains. It is far from clear to us that it will lead to long-term improvements. Concerns about changes to undergraduate advising, which might dilute the robust advising system currently in place in CNAS were also voiced.

A second justification for the merger is that in the current structure, there is too much overlap between the roles of the Provost and the Deans, with too much decision-making power residing with the Provost. A majority of CNAS Executive Committee members feel that resolution of this problem does not require a massive restructuring of the campus, but rather that this problem can easily be resolved by giving more decision-making authority to the Deans. We encourage the Provost to consider this simpler solution. In addition, we note that the structure for the CNAS Dean's office proposed in 2008 but never implemented, would have given budgetary authority to Divisional Deans. Thus there is an established precedent for proposing re-delegation of budgetary authority in the College.

Some support for the Proposal (particularly option A) was voiced by members of the Departments of Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy, and Mathematics, who consider that the proposal may benefit undergraduate education by grouping the majority of the undergraduate curriculum in one college and might simplify advising. In addition, faculty in Mathematics and a minority of faculty in Biology voiced the opinion that a merger between CNAS and CHASS might resolve the balance of power issues that they view as problematic in CNAS and would better align them with other departments who have a core teaching mission. Members of Chemistry and Physics and Astronomy consider that the proposed merger will shift budgetary authority to the Divisional Deans, which they see as advantageous, but, as we note above, this transfer could also be achieved within the current College structure.

Other CNAS Executive Committee members expressed the view that formation of a College of Arts and Sciences might simplify making joint appointments between CNAS and CHASS departments, although we have strong joint programs in both Neuroscience and Material Science that suggest cross-college programs are able to work well within the current structure.