



Committee on Planning & Budget

January 25, 2016

To: Jose Wudka
Chair, Riverside Division Academic Senate

Fr: Kenneth Barish 
Chair, Committee on Planning and Budget

Re: Review of the CNAS Reorganization Process

The Committee of Planning and Budget (CPB) has reviewed the proposal for reorganization in the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at UCR. The provided document does not adequately address the budget ramifications of such a change, provide a real plan for the implementation of the reorganization, or make clear how the proposal has been vetted. As such, we would ask for greater and more careful detail on these points before we can articulate an informed opinion.

In terms of budget, the proposal outlines the administrative structures, but does not make any direct statements about the impact of the reorganization on budgets. In particular, what are the financial costs for implementing the change? And what will be the long-term "steady-state" differences between the current budget requirements and the new ones?

In terms of an implementation plan, the proposal is almost equally silent. Two paragraphs (titled "Transition") state that the proposal may be cause for concern among junior faculty and that they should discuss these with senior faculty and administrators (discussions which, presumably, should have happened prior to this proposal) and that a mentoring program will be available to junior faculty. No other mention of how to manage the transition is made. The entirety of the treatment of the Biology major after the closure of the Biology Department is confined to a single footnote to Table IV.

This is troublesome, as the details of the implementation are critical. This proposal cannot be evaluated without understanding the answers to questions such as,

- How will undergraduate and graduate programs be administered during the transition?

- How will degree programs be transferred?

- What will happen if a faculty member chooses not to change departments (out of one scheduled for removal)? Will such departments be removed, thus terminating the faculty's positions? Will the departments be allowed to remain with only a few (one?) members?

- How will faculty requests for transfers be handled? Who decides whether it is approved? Will this create a situation in which departments have members who were not approved by the other members of the department?

- How long will faculty have to make a change?

- How many faculty are expected to change and in what way? It is surprising the proposal does not have a matrix showing rough numbers of people "from" and "to" each department to give a sense of scope. In particular, the notion of "open enrollment," is not sufficiently explained. Hope and expectation that things will proceed smoothly are not sufficient.

Finally, we are uncertain about whether this proposal has broad support from the CNAS faculty. The report does not read as a carefully considered plan in which all faculty's concerns have been vetted and weighed. The "History" section states that various (often small) groups met and made decisions. The core text occasionally mentions that various faculty groups or departments were (or were not) in support of different aspects. However, the methods for determining these supports are missing. The executive committee gave its approval to a particular subset of the proposed changes, but we would expect letters of support from the departments involved or evidence that more than just 10-20 faculty approve the changes.

The proposal's discussion of the various changes occasionally mentions differing viewpoints, and then either accepts them, dismisses them, or delays them for future consideration. Which of these three options are selected appears arbitrary. The document is filled with statements such as "we believe" and "we do not believe," and it is unclear who is represented by "we."

Specific examples of the variety of rationale and justifications in the document include the following. In each case it is not clear whether a small group is making this decision, or whether there is overwhelming support for the opinion.

- The Department of Nematology's request to remain intact is honored, but with voiced reservations on the part of the proposal writers.

- The Department of Biochemistry voiced concerns about losing its independent status, and this is both honored and supported by the document.

- The rationale for "Department of Entomology" seems to imply that the generation of the MCSB department will have ramifications on Entomology; yet

it is not clear what faculty (especially in Entomology) feels about this change; only that the proposal writers view it as positive.

- The rationale for the "Department of Environmental & Ecosystems Sciences" expressly states that this may not be the final structure and that there are unaddressed concerns about the location of ecology under the new structure.

- The rationale notes that the Department of Statistics has an impact on a "range of scientific disciplines." While asking that collaborations with other departments continue, it places it in Life Sciences based on current collaborations (a departure from the "forward-looking" view taken with Biology and the approach taken with mathematics, a department with a similar role).

While the proposed changes may be well considered and enjoy broad support, the current proposal document does not provide enough detail and clarity for this committee to support it in its current form. We would like to see additional information addressing the above points before making a recommendation.