

CALS Academic Planning Council
6201 Microbial Sciences Building
November 1, 2022, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Attendees: Todd Courtenay, Noah Feinstein, HuiChuan Lai, Jamie Nack, Patrick Masson, Sean Schoville, John Shutske, Michael Thomas, Thea Whitman, Michael Xenos

Absent: Glenda Gillaspy, Bradley Bolling, Francisco Peñagaricano, Jed Colquhoun, Mehdi Kabbage,

Ex Officio: Mark Rickenbach, Doug Reinemann, Karen Wassarman.

Guests: David Eide, Paul Mitchell, Aurelie Rakotondrafara

1. Oct 18, 2022 meeting minutes for approval

Without any revision, minutes were approved. Approved minutes will be posted on the APC website.

2. Nutritional Sciences graduate programs – name change proposal

David Eide, the department chair of Nutritional Sciences, discussed the proposal to change the name of the graduate programs (MS and PhD) from Nutritional Sciences to Nutrition and Metabolism. After giving a brief overview of the programs, David offered four rationales for the proposed name change:

1. To better reflect student research trainings in these programs
2. To better reflect the core curriculum
3. The new name better reflects the future in nutrition research, and
4. To better connect with applicants and students with the unique aspects of their programs.

David also pointed out that the proposal to change the name has been embraced by current students.

Question: What do other departments and programs with overlapping courses think about the proposed name change?

Answer: We contacted all the graduate programs in Biological Sciences for feedback - many supported the proposal, and none opposed it.

Question: Are the trainers in your department, the ones that do metabolism research and those who do not, supportive of this change?

Answer: All the faculty in the department are in support 100% - the new name is viewed as inclusive, not exclusive.

Question: Do other departments in the country share the same naming, Nutrition and Metabolism?

Answer: Yes! There are four others that we have found with similar titling: Columbia, Boston University, Baylor, and University of Chicago.

Question: Have you connected with APIR regarding analysis and marketing?

Answer: We have not.

Note: It was suggested at the meeting that connecting with the APIR might be helpful.

John Shutske moved to approve the changing of the name, Michael Xenos seconded and there was an unanimous vote in favor of approving a name change from Nutritional Sciences to Nutrition and Metabolism.

3. **Renk Agribusiness Institute Center Review (second discussion)**

Associate Dean, Karen Wassarman reminded the members of the following two questions from the first discussion:

- Have you captured a vision for the future of the center and a succession plan?
- Is there a plan that includes succession, diversity, record-keeping, and general operations?

Paul Mitchell, the director of the Institute began the discussion by thanking his colleagues for doing the review, and the APC members for their time. He also said that he and the associate director agree with the findings and suggestions including:

- Creating better documentation and guidelines
- Updating the vision of the institute as the world around changes
- Rotation of Board members and potential expansion

Question: Do you have people working on developing a succession plan?

Answer: It is difficult to work on a succession plan with a faculty director as it is depending on faculty hiring in this area.

Question: Can you talk about the investment in student time, scholarship, and support?

Answer: We inherited a business certificate program and a scholarship program, and we are making them work. We are focusing on giving more scholarships to transfer students and with the new Dean as a partner, the focus is to expand our undergraduate recruiting by utilizing these programs and with the new (4+1) MS-Professional Option Agribusiness track to target students interested in the vision of the Renk family.

Question: Diversity and inclusion in recruitment?

Answer: Our diversity plan is to participate as part of the department, and through scholarships we will focus on bringing more diversified student body. Some suggestions made by the members for consideration include using forums to bring in minority representatives and indigenous groups and think about farm labor and workforce development.

Question: What are you thinking about for a “business track” as that is not a defined option in our academic structure?

Answer: Further discussion is needed here but essentially this entails offering business related electives for the MSPO students.

Thea Whitman moved to consider the review complete, Sean Schoville seconded. The council voted unanimously in favor of deeming the review complete and no further recommendation were made.

3a. Announcement added to the agenda: Senior Associate Dean, Mark Rickenbach, announced the vacancy for Associate Dean for Research, informed the council about the roles and duties of this position, and encouraged the members to reach out if they know interested individuals or just want to learn more about the position.

4. **Soil Science Academic Programs Review (first discussion)**

Associate Dean, Karen Wassarman, explained the academic program review process, and reminded the council of their role and the academic programs under review with this discussion: Soil Science BS, MS, PhD and PhD Minor.

Aurelie Rakotondrafara, the chair of the review committee and Associate Professor in Plant Pathology, provided the overview of the work the review committee had done. She highlighted that some programs have put the department in a great trajectory and that some are producing a very low number of degrees. Highlights from the overview include:

- Review committee was asked to report on the low producing programs, the BS, and the PhD minor.
- Department is aware of low producing BS program and is considering closing it in 2023, with a backup plan being worked on to serve students interested in soil science into the future.
- PhD Minor is serving 8 students currently, not a concern for the committee
- The MS and the PhD programs are welcoming and collaborative to students
- The department is struggling with lack of resources
- The committee felt there should be ways to support the existing and new programs
- Recruitment, diversity, and inclusion, are areas in which the department can improve

Question: Any concern over the level of stipends compared to other peer institutions regarding attracting talented and minority students?

Answer: When talking to students, the review committee felt that stipends were not a concern to students as they felt that department supported them. The committee recommended the department come up with strategic approaches to improve on this matter.

Clarification: Additionally, the department, in consultation with students, has recently developed a long-term plan to supplement the stipend and cover segregated fees.

Question: You gave a very positive overview of the programs while your report outlines a number of program issues and examples where students have some concerns. Aren't these contradictory points? It seems that there were outlined several fundamental problems and red flags.

Answer: As a committee we raised all those concerns and we felt as those are things that are easily rectified. The self-study was poor, and not very good at highlighting everything – especially the positive accomplishments. As a committee we had to dig in and felt that the department is moving in the right direction.

Question: You mentioned closing the BS program and needing a plan B with regards to a new major in planning. Why has this new major not moved forward?

Answer: The new direction in this program included many departments, not only the Soil Science and given other factors (e.g. COVID19) the progress has been slow.

Clarification: The new major is moving forward, and it is expected that CALS APC will see a notice of intent to plan for that new major later this academic year.

Question: What is the size of the Environmental Science major and how does that compare to the Soil Science BS? Are these the same students or different undergrads?

Answer: It is believed that one reason the Soil Science BS numbers are decreasing may be a shifting interest towards Environmental Science. Environmental Science is a bigger major than Soil Science; attracting a considerable number of students although given the breadth of Environmental Sciences it could be even larger.

Question: Do the undergrad students continue to grad programs in the department or do they continue in other departments? How does the undergrad program impact the graduate program?

Answer: Undergraduate students move into the industry and do not usually join the graduate program. As for the students in the new professional MS program in Environmental Remediation and Management, many come from the environmental studies program. The Soil Science BS is small in relation to number of students and does not impact this or the Soil Science MS program.

Associate Dean Karen Wassarman and members of the council discussed the process of the discontinuation of an academic program.

Question for the second discussion with Alfred Hartemink, Chair of Soil Science Department.

1. How does the low number of students in the Soil Science major impact course offerings?
2. What are the department plans to continue to engage with undergraduate students in courses and majors into the future?
 - a. Is the department looking to offer more courses in the Environmental Sciences major? Other majors?
 - b. Has the department considered a certificate to capture the current soil science undergraduate students?
3. Has the decline of Soil Science majors over the past 10 years a result of the opening of the Environmental Sciences major?
4. Please comment of what is being done to address elements of the graduate programs highlighted for improvement in the review committee report.
5. Have the graduate programs considered removing the GRE from admissions consideration to align with recommendations of the Graduate School? In particular, such a change is intended to remove barriers to recruitment of a more diverse pool of student applicants.

Meeting adjourned at 2:09pm.