

**CALS Academic Planning Council**  
6201 Microbial Sciences Building  
December 6, 2022, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Attendees:** Glenda Gillaspy, Noah Feinstein, Patrick Masson, Sean Schoville, Michael Thomas, Thea Whitman, Michael Xenos, Bradley Bolling, Francisco Peñagaricano, Jed Colquhoun, Mehdi Kabbage

**Absent:** Todd Courtenay, Jamie Nack, John Shutske

**Ex Officio:** Karen Wassarman (zoom).

**Guests:** Patrick Krysan and Chris Kucharik

**1. Nov 15, 2022 meeting minutes for approval**

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

**2. Agronomy/Horticulture Dept merger**

The Chairs of the Departments of Agronomy and Horticulture, Patrick Krysan and Chris Kucharik, opened the second discussion on the merger of the Agronomy and Horticulture Departments merging into the new Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences by noting that they took questions during the first meeting and that the council has the department merger proposal at their disposal. They also informed the members that the Agronomy and Horticulture votes to merge the two departments were successful.

No concerns were brought forward; Dean Gillaspy suggested the council could share their thoughts and any words of encouragement for the departments. Members thought the merger will strengthen the programs, that it is a wise strategic move, and a vision that will bring us forward.

Next, the challenge of bringing different cultures and subcommunities together was discussed. It was suggested that strong leadership, integration of the subcommunities (groups), and updating majors has worked for the Animal and Dairy Science merger.

**Question:** Have the departments thought about bringing together the graduate students? Especially the new class coming in fresh, how do you answer their questions?

**Answer:** All graduate programs will continue (in the near future) and the only difference will be the organizational structure of the faculty. The new department is expected to create an interdisciplinary seminar across all disciplines as a focal point to build community. There are joint orientations already in place for the coming students every fall and we will create more such opportunities, such as social activities, to bring graduate students together.

**Question:** Have you discussed how the faculty positions will be prioritized and handled in the future? Do you see that as a challenge?

**Answer:** That is not viewed as a challenge as we have been working together for several hires (TOP, water quality position, physiology position, etc.). After the holidays, we will be working, jointly, on developing a plan for all the positions in general and to ensure there is not a “you get one we get one” approach expected.

**Question:** Is the criteria the same in both departments related to tenure decisions for current Assistant Professors?

**Answer:** The understanding is that the current assistant professors will be evaluated by their current peers (e.g. Horticulture cohort judges the Horticulture Assistant Professors. Agronomy cohort judges the Agronomy Assistant Professors) based on their original appointments, to reduce stress among the junior faculty even as the criteria are essentially the same between the departments. Moving forward, the new faculty appointments will have a unified set of criteria and be evaluated by the new department executive committee.

Dean Gillaspay congratulated the two chairs, expressed the excitement of the council, and said that we are all looking forward to the great things to come from the new department.

Thea Whitman raised the issue of the vestigial majors tailing along discussed previously. The Chairs of the Departments (Agronomy and Horticulture) reported that the majority of people in the departments thought those majors should disappear in favor of a new one. The new department will have to make decision regarding any changes to the academic programs once it is established.

Noah Feinstein moved to have a vote to approve the Agronomy and Horticulture Departments merge into the new Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, Thea Whitman seconded, and the council approved it unanimously.

Chair Gillaspay congratulated the APC.

### **3. Graduate Student Stipends (discussion)**

Dean Glenda Gillaspay started with some context, including news headlines with student’s strike at the University of California, in Berkeley, and a letter by UW-Madison students discussed during the last CALS Departments Chairs meeting. Then, she asked the APC members to share what they are seeing, hearing, and thinking regarding elevating students’ stipends.

Following is a summary/highlights of the discussion and comments that ensued:

There is unrest growing within the graduate students, not seen in a long time. They are proposing that stipends be raised as they cannot afford to live in the city of Madison with the current income.

There is even bigger inequity within competing campuses; not surprised students believe they cannot

live in Madison anymore. It would be a good idea to have initiatives in CALS or campus broadly to make informed decisions regarding this matter based on data.

The data are already out there. It is generally believed that UW central administration are unlikely to elevate/do anything this year.

Stipends are something programs/departments have some control over, but tuition remission and segregated fees are two that cannot be changed by programs.

One change that could come from top-down (central administration) could be related to segregated fees.

For dissertators, the segregated fees are reduced in half, but tuition remission remains fixed.

UW pays similar (a bit higher) stipends compared to competitor institutions such as Iowa State and Michigan; however, UW-Madison pays higher in fringe rates for graduate assistants: 21.7% compared to other institutions that pay in the single digits.

Better communication between the institution and the students that takes into account all related costs and benefits included in the services that students receive (e.g. health benefits). In particular the MIT calculator being used by students assume health benefits are not included while health benefits are included for our graduate students.

What is needed is to develop trustworthy, transparent working groups that include faculty, staff, and students to have open and transparent discussions to interpret available data together and note what is and is not within our control.

Keep students informed regarding our efforts for equity in this matter. Acknowledge the complexities and difficulties of parity among programs.

There was discussion about raises for graduate assistants while graduate rates on grants were fixed (re RSP)

Discussion also ensued about if there were mechanisms to raise funding for graduate students.

Meeting adjourned at 2:26pm.