School of Plant Sciences  
in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)

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This White Paper was based on the report presented to the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences by a Committee on Biological Sciences. The committee membership and the process are described in the text.

Units to be Reorganized:

Department of Plant Sciences
Proposed School of Plant Sciences

The principal goal of this proposal is to maximize visibility of faculty strengths in several related areas of plant sciences including plant biology, plant pathology/plant-microbe interactions, and crop and horticultural sciences. Another goal is to make the unit more easily managed in order to consolidate administrative services for faculty and student programs and to align this unit with other proposed schools based on the strategic plan for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The proposed School consists of three discipline-based Divisions: (1) Horticultural and Crop Sciences (2) Plant Pathology and Microbiology and (3) Plant Biology. The School Director works with three Division Chairs to manage programs in instruction, research and extension. This proposal is based on the work of The Biological Sciences Committee appointed by Dean Sander and composed of Ron Allen (Chair), Peder Cuneo, Glenn Duff, Molly Hunter, Raina Maier, Carl Olson, Sandy Pierson, Mark Riley, Donato Romagnalo, Chuck Sterling, Valerie Teetor and Rod Wing. This committee was composed of faculty and staff from several units within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences including the Department of Plant Sciences.

How will the School structure strengthen the unit? Establishing a School of Plant Sciences fulfills the 2009-2013 University Strategic Plan in instruction by engaging and graduating students who are more broadly prepared in the field of plant sciences and therefore able to contribute expertise in addressing the numerous issues facing agriculture in the State of Arizona and throughout the world. The school structure facilitates efforts to develop teaching programs that include basic plant biology and plant diseases as well as the application of such knowledge to crop and horticultural plant production. The diversity of faculty expertise within the same unit also facilitates team approaches allowing faculty members to be highly competitive for research and extension program funding. Additionally, extension and outreach programs are enriched by the availability of broad faculty expertise housed within the same unit.

How will the reorganization raise the unit’s and the university’s ranking or reputation? A major advantage to having a divisional structure within a school allows smaller groups of faculty members in a particular sub-field of the plant and microbial sciences to remain highly visible to potential students as well as peers at other institutions across the nation and the world. Without such a structure, peer recognition may be lost leading to difficulties in attracting and retaining top quality scientists to our university and in support of grant funded research and extension programs. Organizing a more robust group of faculty members who work in the plant sciences and related fields into the same unit enhances peer recognition and strengthens both undergraduate and graduate teaching programs.

What consultation was done in developing the proposal for a School in Plant Sciences? In addition to the committee referred to above, the concept of developing a unit with three divisions was recommended during the most recent annual program review process conducted by a CSREES/APR Review Team of faculty from peer institution across the nation. Following that recommendation a faculty committee was appointed to develop and recommend a departmental administrative structure that will “retain program visibility and ensure enfranchisement of important components.” The committee developed and presented its recommendation at a Faculty Retreat where it was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote of the 35 faculty members in attendance. The proposed school is a direct outcome of this process.

What Budgetary Savings will or has accrued from the formation of the School? The units that compose the proposed School of Plant Sciences combined two departments into one with budgetary saving of a 10% stipend for a department head, two full time administrative staff lines and two part-time support staff positions. Additionally, savings exist because of reductions in some recurrent maintenance and replacement costs associated with unnecessary duplication in office equipment such as copiers, scanners and computers.
What are the administrative and structural responsibilities with the proposed school? A school such as proposed here will require administration and leadership at both the school and program levels. A suggested structure along with anticipated areas of responsibility is included below. The final details in this area will reflect further consultation and input from faculty members.

**Responsibilities of the School Director**

- Consult with Division Chairs on all pertinent matters
- Assign faculty space, staff support, budget, and other School resources
- Provide centralized business and finance services and centralized computer support
- Recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty and administrative staff
- Allocate resources to maintain viability of Division-specific areas of emphasis in the graduate program
- Review faculty performance annually with Division Chairs and meet with each faculty member to discuss performance evaluation
- Perform final review of faculty P&T/C assessments
- Report to CALS Executive Council
- Act as spokesperson for the School on campus, in the local community, and to State and National audiences

**Responsibilities of Division Chairs**

- Serve on Executive Committee consisting of Division Chairs, Manager of Business and Finance, and School director to consider research, instruction, extension, and resource issues
- Advise School Director on Division faculty space and resource needs
- Allocate and manage Division-specific resources as assigned by School Director
- Develop Division-specific faculty hiring plans
- Review and modification of Division-specific academic matters, such as undergraduate and graduate courses and curricula
- Selection, recruitment, admission, and support of graduate students and undergraduate students
- Review faculty annual performance reviews (performed by School-wide Annual Peer Review Committee) and summarize and forward to School Director
- Provide Division-specific input of P&T/C assessment to School-wide P&T/C Committee and to School Director
- Consult with Division faculty on all pertinent matters

**School-wide Committees**

**Appointed by School Director, in consultation with Division Chairs**

- Annual Peer Review Committee
- P&T/C Committee
- Post-Tenure Review Committee
- Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
- Graduate Curriculum Committee
- Graduate Student Oversight and Recruitment Committee
- Awards and Nominations Committee
- Seminar Committee
**Budget savings**

This reorganization has resulted in a savings of approximately $130,000 and 2.5 FTEs.