



University of Toronto

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

APPENDIX "F" TO REPORT NUMBER 147
OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD
January 11, 2007

TO: Planning and Budget Committee

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DATE: November 13, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 7

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Proposal for the Restructuring of the Department of Life Sciences into the Department of Biological Sciences and the Department of Psychology, University of Toronto at Scarborough.

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee recommends to the Academic Board on plans and proposals to establish, disestablish, or significantly restructure academic units and resulting planning and resource implications.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

Governing Council approved the establishment of the University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC) Division of Life Sciences in 1970. On February 3, 2003, Executive Committee approved the name change of the Division to Department.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Division of Life Sciences, University of Toronto at Scarborough, was created in 1970, when the Division of Science was dissolved to create the Divisions of Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. Arising from the Stepping UP planning process, external review, and extensive consultation within the unit and across the three campuses, UTSC proposes that the Department of Life Sciences be split into two departments – the Department of Psychology and the Department of Biological Sciences. The attached proposal, dated October 31, 2006, sets out the rationale and structure for the restructuring. At its core is the aim to strengthen the teaching and research endeavours of the two disciplines, with a size and coherence that is reflective of a critical mass of faculty and students.

Since its creation, the Department of Life Sciences has consisted of the two disciplines of biology and psychology. With the exception of interdisciplinary activity in the collaborative Neuroscience program, each discipline has remained distinct from the other. In the last decade, undergraduate enrollment has increased dramatically and demand for the programs offered by Life Sciences has been very strong. The research enterprises of each discipline have grown substantially.

The increase in teaching and research activity has posed a serious challenge in the leadership, direction and effective management and promotion of the Department as a single entity. It has become clear in recent academic planning and external reviews that the structure is no longer optimal and that the needs of the faculty and students in Life Sciences would be better supported through two separate departments with two discipline specific chairs.

The rationale for the restructuring is described in the proposal. In particular, the restructuring of the Department will enable clearer focus on undergraduate teaching with each new unit fully engaged and understanding program delivery and student needs in their respective disciplines. During the past five years each discipline has experienced a doubling of enrolment and the introduction of co-operative programs in the two disciplines. The simultaneous introduction of a tri-semester system has also necessitated the provision of a full summer teaching program. The complexity and scale of the teaching enterprise requires very engaged, knowledgeable chairs who will understand the respective discipline thoroughly and attempt to help balance the conflicting responsibilities of and pressures on faculty and staff. The existing undergraduate programs will be unaffected as they are either already distinct from each other or the provision has been made in the proposal for collaborative arrangements to be continued.

Complement planning, including the setting of teaching loads, oversight and nurture of the career progression of faculty and budgetary responsibility will be clearly delineated with the proposed structure. This reorganization will

effectively focus efforts on two separate and distinct disciplines, thus enabling targeted leadership, planning and advocacy.

The creation of two departments will enhance the already strong graduate activity on the campus in the two disciplines and faculty and staff are eager to engage in efforts to increase graduate enrolment and programs at the University. The proposed restructuring will not affect the current tri-campus graduate structure; rather the new departments will align with the existing graduate departments and will give the students clearly defined graduate homes. The proposed structure will mirror that of the cognate departments on the other campuses: the Departments of Psychology at St. George and University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM) and the Departments of Cell Systems Biology and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology on St. George and the Department of Biology at UTM. The Chairs of these departments as well as the Deans of Arts and Science, UTM and the School of Graduate Studies have been consulted and view this change as a very positive step forward for UTSC.

There has been extensive consultation regarding the proposal within UTSC. Department of Life Sciences faculty members unanimously support the restructuring. The proposal was approved by the UTSC Faculty Council on November 7, 2006.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

The restructuring of the current Department into two departments will not result in any changes in ongoing funding resources at a University level. The increases in funding to support the two new departments described below will be allocated from existing operating resources or through appropriate mechanisms within UTSC.

The Department of Life Sciences offers an interdisciplinary program in Neuroscience and houses the Centre for Neurobiology of Stress, a multidisciplinary research facility that was established with the support of a CFI infrastructure award. The program in Neuroscience will be administered by the Department of Psychology, since faculty in psychology already have primary responsibility for maintaining the core curriculum; however, there will still be close collaboration between the two new departments. The program will be coordinated and administered by a supervisor of studies who will be drawn from either department and there will be a steering committee comprised of representatives from both disciplines. The budget to support this program will be drawn from both departments.

The Centre for Neurobiology of Stress will be based in the Department of Biological Sciences, but will continue to serve the needs of neuroscientists in both of the new departments. It will be administered by a Director and a steering committee of major users. The Director will be appointed by the Chair of Biological Sciences for a three-year term following consultation with the Chair of Psychology and major users from both departments. Funding for the Centre will continue according to the current arrangements, namely through funds in the Department of Life Science, to be transferred to the Department of Biological Sciences, that are currently used to support the Centre, user fees and UTSC central support for service contracts. Administrative responsibility for the budget of the Centre will be held by the Department of Biological Sciences.

The faculty members, administration and budget of the current department will be redistributed and transferred to one or other of the two new departments. There are needs for additional space and administrative staff, and the Dean of UTSC has committed to providing funding for two additional administrative positions, an academic administrative stipend for each department and the costs for additional administrative offices.

The animal care facilities will continue to serve the needs of faculty in the two new departments and the administration of these facilities will become the responsibility of the Vice-Principal (Research and Graduate Studies).

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning and Budget Committee recommends for approval that:

The Department of Life Sciences at the University of Toronto at Scarborough be disestablished coincident with the establishment of the new Department of Biological Sciences and the new Department of Psychology, effective July 1, 2007.