

Proposal for the Development of a School of Life Sciences
Prepared by the Reorganization Steering Committee
April 29, 2002

Preamble: A School of Life Sciences will be created at ASU by merging the three existing life science departments of Biology, Microbiology and Plant Biology into a single academic unit. The school will be led by a Director, who will be advised by an Executive Committee and assisted by faculty coordinators for Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies and Research and Education Initiatives. Faculty will be organized into academic sections that will provide the tenure home. In addition, initiatives will provide opportunities to develop promising new projects and proposals.

There will be the following School-wide committees/working units:

Executive committee: minimally consists of official representatives from each sectionⁱ and the Coordinators.

The committee will serve as a general administrative and advisory group to the Director – advises the Director on developing strategic plans, hiring priorities, budget priorities, and the by-laws and provides oversight for the promotion and tenure process and annual performance review practices and merit distributions.

Research & Education Initiatives: directed by Coordinatorⁱⁱ for Research and Education Initiatives.

A key role of this unit will be to provide organizational support for the Working Groups (Initiatives). These groups are envisioned to be individuals or self-organized groups of faculty and/or research professionals that form to pursue emerging research opportunities, generate initiatives for new undergraduate and graduate education and training programs, promote improvements or additions to research facilities and infrastructure, promote innovation in our education and curricular programs, and/or develop outreach activities. Such working groups might include interactions of the type that led to the existing Astrobiology, HHMI, and IGERT programs, although this proposal is to support the development of new initiatives, not to support existing ones. It

is expected, though not required, that these working groups will cross-cut sections, and could also include faculty members/research professionals from other departments or colleges, although this proposal does not set a minimum size to an initiative “group”. Working groups will be supported by resources (money and staff support) through application at the School level for some pre-determined period of time, with allocation of resources determined by the Coordinator along with the Executive Committee. Working groups will have finite lifespans.

Sections: the faculty of the School will be organized into sections that will serve as the "tenure home" and will be the grass-root working units from which faculty contribute input to graduate and undergraduate programs and from which initiatives are developed. The sections will be organized so that they 1) localize appropriate disciplinary expertise most relevant for making hiring, evaluatory and promotion and tenure decisions of faculty in the School, 2) serve as a means of communicating focal interests & strengths to other university faculty, potential students and the public; 3) represent existing strengths within the School; 4) organize faculty to optimally facilitate the ongoing operations of the sections; 5) promote faculty interaction between the sections; 6) reflect a progressive approach to the research and education programs. We recommend that faculty have one primary section affiliation, although we anticipate that joint appointments among sections and with departments will occur (for example: integration of Biochemistry into the School of Life Sciences will be accomplished by permitting joint appointments of faculty in Chemistry/Biochemistry and the School). The role of the sections in areas of undergraduate and graduate programs is detailed below and on the two organizational charts. Responsibilities include:

- Official representatives from each section will serve on the Executive Committee
- Initial decisions on promotion and tenure will begin at the section level. A section personnel committee will write the “faculty letter”. This will be passed along to the director who will write the “unit letter” after receiving input from the executive committee who oversee the process.

- Annual reviews will proceed along a similar path, with recommendations about performance-based raises.
- Sections will prioritize hiring and development in their area in accordance with the School planning process.
- Contribute representatives to undergraduate curriculum and advising committees and appropriate graduate program committees.

General hiring decision will be made at the School executive level. Once a specific area for hiring has been identified, faculty from the appropriate section will form the core of a search committee, with others as appropriate. The search committee will then develop the specifics of the job description and select candidates, with input from the rest of the School through the Director.

Graduate Programs: directed by the Graduate Programs Coordinator with the Graduate Programs Committee. Coordinates graduate degree programs, graduate admissions, and financial support.

- Existing degree programs will be retained (at least for the time being).
- A representative from each degree program will serve on the Graduate Programs Committee, with some balance across sections.
- The Graduate Programs Committee will coordinate admissions and oversee graduate curriculum and requirements. Ranking of students will be done by faculty within the graduate programs and final admission decisions, support packages, etc. will be determined by the Graduate Programs Committee, with the expectation of some balance across sections and programs, and insuring that all teaching needs are covered.
- The Graduate Programs Committee will also be responsible for coordinating student issues, checking student progress, making student nominations for awards, etc.

Undergraduate Programs: directed by the Undergraduate Programs Coordinator who will coordinate the activities of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Undergraduate Advising Committee, with adequate faculty representation. Coordinates curriculum, teaching needs, advising, and undergraduate research programs and activities.

- The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will oversee all majors, with faculty in any given area guiding the individual “tracks” or majors. Current undergraduate majors/concentrations will be maintained (at least for the time being). Representatives from each major will serve on the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
- Initial advising will be administered by a central Undergraduate Programs Advising Office under jurisdiction of the Undergraduate Advising Committee. Students entering a specific major or track will also be mentored and advised by faculty members in the appropriate area.

Information Technology & Core Research Resources and Facilities: Oversees the distribution and maintenance of information technology and research facilities and resources and reports to the Director through the committee chair. This also applies to the Facilities group.

ⁱ The number of representatives from each section who will sit on the Executive Committee is not specified herein.

ⁱⁱ It is expected that Coordinator positions will be held by faculty members. The process by which the position is appointed/elected is not specified herein.