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RESTRUCTURING THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES

October 1, 2009

Executive Summary

A plan for restructuring the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) was developed to account for a possible cumulative reduction in revenues of 15% and to position the College for strategic future growth. An advisory committee consisting of department chairs, faculty, administrative staff, and College leadership was assembled and charged with developing, for Dean Susan Henry, a recommended restructuring plan. This committee engaged in an iterative and consultative process with the entire College community to develop a set of recommendations. This report presents the restructuring plan as endorsed by Dean Henry.

The restructuring plan has been designed to align College programs with available revenues and to propel the College toward realizing its vision of being the preeminent Land Grant College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The plan calls for a reduction in faculty from a current level of approximately 370 to approximately 330 and the reduction of academic departments from 26 to 17 or 18. The restructuring plan will help achieve four broad goals. CALs will:

- align College programs and activities to reflect a cumulative 15% reduction in revenue;
- adapt undergraduate and graduate curricula to be more interdisciplinary, better coordinated, and more responsive to changing student and societal needs;
- promote research that is interdisciplinary and integrated from discovery to application and meets dual objectives of disciplinary excellence and mission-oriented impact; and
- refine extension and outreach activities to be most responsive and effective to stakeholders.

The plan builds on a decade-long suite of activities that have responded to cutbacks in State support and have positively contributed to programmatic relevance and excellence. These activities include development of new educational programs to better meet changing student interests and needs, greatly increased coordination between the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) and the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station (CUAES), coordinated facilities planning, reorganization of administrative support functions to improve efficiency and consistency of support, strategic planning by all academic units, and coordinated management of farms, greenhouses, and growth chambers.

The restructuring plan will aggregate academic resources into larger units to promote better strategic planning and provide more flexibility in responding to future budget challenges; better coordinate undergraduate and graduate education; and facilitate multidimensional research, extension and outreach. The recommended changes will also result in the eventual elimination of one academic program. Recommended changes in administrative support structures will continue efforts already underway to develop a hierarchical organization that allows for improved resource flow and ensures consistency of process and procedures. Specific recommendations are as follows:

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- Department mergers will occur in the four program areas (horticulture, food science, entomology, and plant pathology) that are currently represented both in Geneva and Ithaca. When merged, the Geneva-Ithaca departments will continue largely with their current faculty, name, and overall mission.
- “Schools” are proposed as a new academic unit in CALS. Schools would include academic contributions from related disciplines, through both “core” and “affiliate” faculty, allowing for more explicit integration among disciplines and development of thematic strengths, more integrated design of undergraduate and graduate curricula and outreach programs, and more strategic and flexible resource allocation. Because Schools are a new concept within CALS, additional discussion with faculty and college and university leadership is required to fully develop these ideas and work toward implementation. The Department of Applied Economics and Management will be renamed as a School, bringing a greater level of visibility and external respect to an already very successful unit, and enhancing naming opportunities.
- We propose creation of a School of Environmental Sciences, pending additional discussion with faculty and college and university leaders. Such a School would integrate across biological, physical, and social sciences to address challenges in understanding and managing the Earth’s systems and resources, and would include “core” faculty from several existing departments that would be merged to create the School, and “affiliate” faculty from other related departments on campus. Such a School would better allow CALS and Cornell to meet the very significant environmental challenges facing society by improving the requisite integration of research, curricula and extension programs across the behavioral and life sciences, the earth and atmospheric sciences, the social sciences, and the mathematical, physical, engineering, and information sciences.
- Plant sciences are a core programmatic theme for CALS. The five departments that contribute to this theme will be consolidated into three larger departments that will be coordinated as a Plant Sciences Cluster. An executive council will be created to manage the budget allocation to all of the plant sciences, and catalyze joint strategic planning among these units. The clustered departments will collectively coordinate undergraduate and graduate education paying particular attention to curriculum and graduate student recruitment and support. Faculty hiring will be prioritized among the three departments based on their unified strategic plan. Clustered Departments will include Plant Biology, Plant Breeding and Genetics, and Horticulture and Crop Sciences. This organizational structure may evolve into a School of Plant Sciences in the future.
- Faculty in several existing CALS departments may affiliate with one of these Schools as they are established, but they will remain housed in their home department.
- Over time, Education will be phased out as a program in the College. No future hiring is planned in the area of Education. In the moderate term, the Department of Education will remain as a stand-alone department while a transition plan is developed and as current faculty remain.
- Restructuring of academic administrative support in CALS preceded the current mandate for budget reductions. Implementation of this model will be accelerated

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with the proposed changes in academic units. Department-based administration will continue to be consolidated into administrative teams with a Senior Administrative Manager overseeing other administrative units. Each Senior Administrative Manager will have a direct reporting relationship to a home department chair and the Associate Dean for Finance and Administrative Services and a dotted line relationship to other chairs in the team. The Department Administrative Managers within the combined units have a direct reporting relationship to the Senior Administrative Manager.