



# SIUC Faculty Association

IEA – NEA

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## Faculty Association Review: School of Agricultural Sciences<sup>1</sup>

The program change plan under consideration would affect the four departments currently in the College of Agriculture. Here are the departments, together with their votes on the plan:

Agribusiness Economics (ABE)	0 for - 4 against - 1 abstention
Animal Science, Food, and Nutrition (ASFN)	3 - 6 - 1 (1 not voting)
Forestry (FOR)	0 - 4 - 1 (2 not voting)
Plant, Soil, and Agricultural Systems (PSAS)	6 - 0 - 0 (7 not voting)

These departments would be merged into a School of Agricultural Sciences, but with the following changes:

- Agribusiness Economics would enter into a confusing status in which it would be half retained with agriculture programs in the School of Agricultural Sciences, and half associated with the School of Analytics, Finance & Economics in the College of Business.<sup>2</sup> ABE faculty voted 4-0 (with one abstention) to oppose the plan, largely because they prefer to remain unambiguously associated with Agriculture.
- The nutrition program from ASFN would be moved to the proposed School of Human Sciences. ASFN faculty oppose this move, and voted accordingly.
- The Hospitality and Tourism Administration program would be moved to the proposed School of Marketing and Management. It is not clear that faculty were consulted about this move (see item 1.4 below).

Faculty have rejected the formation of this school by a vote of 14-9 (with 3 abstentions, and 9 faculty recorded as “not voting.” Three of the four departments involved have rejected the plan, and in the one department to approve it (PSAS), more than half of the faculty failed to vote on the plan at all.

Given faculty opposition, the FA recommends that the plan be rejected.

Some of the discussion below will point out contractual problems with this plan. We have filed grievances that identify prior contractual violations committed by the administration as it pushed

<sup>1</sup> As in our other reviews, we use a line in the left margin to note material that is of particular relevance for the particular school proposal under consideration.

<sup>2</sup> The Program Change Plan says that ABE would be affiliated with the School of Accountancy and Finances. This language pre-dates the administrative decision to split Accountancy to its own school, and propose a school of Analytics, Finance, and Economics.

its reorganization proposals through the Article 9 process. This is not the place to rehearse those grievances, which are now on their way to an arbitrator. Instead we emphasize problems that will arise in the future if this plan is approved in its present form.

In section I, we lay out some general problems with this plan. In section II, we evaluate the extent to which this plan satisfactorily addresses the seven required components of a “Program Change Plan” as they are laid out in Article 9 of the CBA.

And as we have indicated in other reviews, the FA would be happy to send a representative to meet with members of the FS or GC to answer questions that may arise about this review.

## **SECTION I: General Problems with the Plan**

### 1. The plan’s effort to “affiliate” ABE with Business while retaining its placement in Agriculture is incoherent.

As the ABE faculty point out in the minutes from their April 18 meeting (included with school vote materials), the school plan proposes cross-appointments of faculty between Agriculture (the School of Agricultural Sciences) and Business (Analytics, Finances, and Economics) and the possibility of new hires in ABE coming in Business rather than Agriculture. This “very unclear” situation would complicate any future hires in ABE, as ABE faculty note in the same document.

The plan essentially attempts to have things both ways: faculty are nominally given what they want, continued alignment with their colleagues in Agriculture. But the administration continues to push for their move to Business by holding out the possibility that faculty could transfer their tenure homes to Business, by suggesting that new hires could come in Business, and by saying that the degree program in ABE would be “jointly delivered” across two schools in two different colleges. The January 29 email (included with the Program Change Plan) from the chair of the ABE program, Ira Altman, raises some questions about how the program would be “jointly delivered”; these questions are not answered, at least in the materials provided.

The administration needs to fish or cut bait: if it is going to force ABE into Business against the will of faculty, it should say so directly and provide argumentation so that the FS and GC can evaluate the merits of this forced reorganization. If it is not going to force a merger, then it should not continue to insist on moves that would force ABE into a no-man’s land between Agriculture and Business.

### 2. The program in nutrition should remain with Animal Science and Agriculture, rather than being transferred to Human Sciences.

In their April 13 statement attached to the Human Sciences plan (and attached to this document) ASFN faculty outline their argument to retain the Food and Nutrition program with Animal Science within Agriculture. Their main arguments are as follows:

- Most activity in the College of Agriculture is ultimately aimed at human nutrition.

- Most nutrition programs at peer institutions are within colleges of agriculture, and more and more have been moving into such colleges.
- Nutrition and Dietetics has a successful track record in its current location within the College of Agriculture, and Faculty in the program already work across college boundaries with faculty outside the College of Agriculture.

None of these arguments is answered by anything in the materials provided the FA, FS, and GC in the materials for the proposed School of Agriculture or in those provided for the proposed School of Human Sciences.

Of the peer institutions the administration provides in its program change plan, two place nutrition within colleges of Agriculture (Clemson and Fresno State), two place it outside, in units more like Human Sciences (Louisiana Tech and Oregon State), and one (Xavier) lacks a nutrition program. If the administration's own peers do not show a preference for removing nutrition from Agriculture, this suggests that faculty's preference on this matter should not be overridden.

### 3. Faculty in ABE and Forestry reference alternative plans under consideration.

Both ABE and Forestry note that Faculty are interested in alternative plans that would better allow them to meet their units' goals. Faculty should be encouraged to work up such plans in a timely way, rather than being forced to implement a plan they reject.

### 4. The fate of the Hospitality and Tourism Program (currently in ASFN is matter for Article 9 consideration and FS and GC consideration.

As a degree program, the BS in Hospitality and Tourism Program falls under Article 9, even if none of the faculty associated with that program are in the FA bargaining unit. For Article 9 covers changes to academic programs, regardless of who teaches in those programs. Hence it is incorrect to say, as footnote 3 to the program plan states, that this move is not part of the Article 9 plan. Given this statement, it is not clear that Faculty in ASFN were given the opportunity to weigh in on this change. And the FS and GC obviously have jurisdiction over this part of the proposed change.

None of the documentation provided to the FS and GC directly comments on the move of Hospitality and Tourism Program. We would advise the FS and GC to make inquiries as to whether associated faculty (inside and outside the FA bargaining unit) regard this as a wise move.

### 5. Central features of the plan, especially features pertaining to tenure and promotion, would violate university policies and the current CBA

The procedures and processes for tenure and promotion that would govern the new school when it is placed under the administrative control of the provost would violate Article 13 of the CBA as well as university policies for the evaluation of tenure and promotion cases.

This plan, as others, calls for tenure and promotion review to be solely done by Faculty from the former departments or schools, regardless of their new placement in the organizational structure. Faculty who joined the new school from other units would not be involved in reviewing tenure and promotion dossiers of their new colleagues. This procedure would violate the CBA (including Article 13.05a), and it would also violate SIUC policy on tenure. Here is the most relevant language on tenure in university policy:

Basic Academic Unit: In conducting reviews at the basic academic unit level<sup>3</sup>, all tenured faculty shall have an opportunity to vote on a tenure decision, and only tenured faculty should vote on the decision.

The basic academic unit, if this plan is approved, would be the new school; and, if the proposed plan is implemented, all tenured Faculty in the basic academic unit would *not* be afforded the opportunity to vote on tenure decisions within what would now be their basic academic unit.<sup>4</sup>

#### 6. The plan would leave Faculty with little say in the selection of their director

This school plan, as others, states that neither the interim school director nor the permanent school director will be selected following a faculty vote. Instead, faculty will provide input as they currently do for searches for deans and other senior administrators.

This change in approach from the current method of selecting chairs within these departments to a top-down approach for selecting a director of the school would severely diminish shared governance at the level of the basic academic unit.

#### 7. The plan fails to address crucial issues

The plan does not say what impact, if any, the merger would have on recruitment or retention of students. Given the dire situation of our institution at this time, this is a problematic omission.

### **SECTION II: The Seven Contractually Required Components of a Program Change Plan**

#### A. Description of the proposed change(s)

The administrative housing of the resulting new school directly under the provost presents a series of problems.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://policies.siu.edu/personnel-policies/chapter3/ch3-faps/tenure.php>

<sup>4</sup> The CBA does require that if “guidelines and procedures” for promotion and tenure are changed, Faculty can use the old procedures (13.01.b). But the CBA cannot and does not guarantee that faculty will be evaluate by the same *people* who were colleagues when they were hire or last promoted. Faculty are not normally evaluated for tenure and promotion by former colleagues. And current colleagues should have the right to evaluate candidates for tenure and promotion. The administration’s interpretation of the contract is presumably meant to reassure faculty by changing as little as possible about tenure and promotion. But this plan would violate the spirit as well as the letter of university policies and the current CBA.

- The CBA requires that the college dean participate in the process of the assignment of Faculty workload (8.01.c, which states every faculty member's workload assignment "shall be subject to the approval of the Dean"). Yet, according to the changes outlined by the plan, the Faculty in the new school would not be part of any college and thus serve under no dean. This issue is not addressed in the plan.
- The plan also fails to address how the absence of a relevant dean will affect annual reviews of untenured Faculty. If such reviews were done by the provost, this would create an unforeseen problem at the time a final tenure decision is to be made by the provost, because the candidate would already have received a provost-level evaluation.
- Temporary placement of these programs under the provost would leave them in a state of limbo until final college arrangements are made. It would seem more prudent to decide on the college structure before implementing changes of this magnitude.

This plan, like other new school plans, describes the status of operating papers as follows:

During the period of creation of the School Operating Paper, day-to-day management of the school will be guided by applicable provisions of the former department/school operating paper and former college operating paper.

In some ways this particular school ought to be less problematic than most: the current units make up the current College of Agriculture, and (minus the programs noted above) would continue to be part of the same unit, albeit as a school rather than a college. But Faculty in ABE (minutes of April 18) note several concerns with the lack of clarity about the status of divisions and operating papers. The losses in demoting departments to the status of divisions seem rather clearer than the potential gain in merging them into a school.

## B. Rationale

The rationale for this particular merger is not unique to this plan, but is instead the same as the rationale for every other plan in the current restructuring scheme. The main rationale, here as elsewhere, is "to create opportunities for greater collaboration among students and faculty" and to align related programs "to foster synergy and innovation."

In the case of the School of Agriculture, all included programs are already aligned with one another within the current College of Agriculture. The plan makes no effort to demonstrate how a School of Agriculture with divisions within it would be superior to a College of Agriculture with departments within it. Faculty in Forestry note (in the statement included with their vote) that while they are "generally supportive of reorganization" and the current alignment of programs, "the plan lacks specific details to ensure that the desire synergies can be achieved." They therefore prefer to pursue alternative plans under development by Faculty. And Faculty are concerned about the loss of connection with the nutrition program and dilution of the connections between ABE and Agriculture. In other words, this plan would arguably lessen collaboration and synergy rather than increasing them.

The plan mentions that this merger will facilitate streamlining of the curriculum. Yet, the curriculum is dictated by the academic programs that are included in the merger, and these programs would remain intact after the merger. Given that the plan fails to mention any specific redundancies, it is difficult to see just where streamlining is possible and practicable (or necessary).

#### C. Impact on Faculty lines and Faculty workload (including redistribution of work)

The most serious impact on Faculty lines is likely to be the natural result of a school formed from units of different sizes, and put under pressure by the chancellor to identify a single “top-ten” program. There are no provisions in the plan to guarantee the continued existence of the “divisions” that would form this school. It is possible that, over time, attrition in the smaller units and prioritization of the larger department (the more obvious candidate for a “top-ten program”) would be a loss of faculty lines in the smaller units. The smaller unit could soon find itself unable to sustain graduate and undergraduate programs and be relegated to a service unit with even fewer Faculty than it had before the merger.

There is also the issues discussed above concerning the plan’s promotion and tenure process; see Section I.5 of this review.

#### D. Impact on students and the ability to maintain the curriculum

As noted just above, the merger may have a deleterious effect on the existence of some programs, and it may also hinder the ability of Faculty to maintain current curricula. Precisely because of concerns of this type, i.e., the potential of one department being swallowed in slow motion by a larger one in a merger, the CBA specifies that Program Change Plans should explain how Faculty would be afforded the “ability to maintain curricula, particularly in the case of mergers.” Yet, again, there is nothing in this plan on the matter of “the ability to maintain curricula.”

According to the plan, as a result of the merger outlined by the plan, “[Students] will have exposure to a wider range of faculty and will have opportunities to engage in cross disciplinary research, curriculum, and co-curricular activities.” But the plan provides no specifics, and combining these departments and programs into one school would not in itself expose students to more Faculty or to interdisciplinary research.

#### E. Financial costs

This plan, as all the other plans released so far, fails to provide any specifics on savings. The school under discussion would replace four chairs with a single director. But as the plan itself recognizes, savings from the demotion of current chairs and directors “will be balanced against the salary costs associated with appointing an A/P Director on a 12 month appointment, plus any summer salary expenditures committed for division coordinators.” For all this plan reveals, then, formation of this school could cost more rather than less than current arrangements.

#### F. Comparison of similar programs at peer institutions

This plan, as the rest, makes no real effort at comparison to peers. We again find the boilerplate language noting that current schools work well at SIUC, which is true enough, but there is no effort to show that programs in our current College of Agriculture would perform better once departments of demoted to divisions and the College of Agriculture is demoted to a school within a broader college.

The plan states that the administration is “not aware of an academic school or department that is structured identically to the proposed School of Agricultural Sciences” but goes on to list five universities that “share such disciplinary focus (some organized administratively as Schools, some as departments).” But of the five universities listed, three organize agriculture departments within colleges of agriculture much like our current College of Agriculture (Clemson, Fresno State, Oregon State) and one, Xavier, appears to offer only a limited agricultural program within its “Land, Farming and Community” program. Only one (Louisiana Tech) gathers agriculture programs into a school within a college. Thus the administration’s own chosen peer institutions provide more support for our current college structure than the school structure the administration is pushing, despite Faculty resistance, as a replacement.

#### G. Possible consequences to the University’s Carnegie status

The Plan states: “The proposed change will have no direct / explicit impact on the University’s Carnegie Status. However, one of the goals of the campus-wide re-organization plan (see point B) is to invigorate, enhance and expand Faculty research and creative activity by increasing synergy and collaboration. This includes the goal of expanding extramural grant / contract activity and increasing Ph.D. production. The reorganization plan will contribute to the broader institutional goal of increasing the University’s Carnegie Status to R1 (Highest Research Activity).”

These goals are laudable, but this section of the plan is devoid of information, evidence, or argument. It would be much closer to reality to state that there is no reason to believe that this merger will have any positive impact on the University’s Carnegie Status. A carefully drafted plan would have addressed the actual consequences of this merger.

### **CONCLUSION**

The majority of Faculty assigned to the proposed school, Faculty who understand the fields and units in question, have voted against this plan, and presented substantive arguments against it. None of their arguments is answered by anything in the materials provided the FA, FS, and GC.

The administration is therefore asking members of the FS and GC to reject the votes and arguments made by the majority of Faculty in the proposed school, despite the fact that no effort has been made to address any of their arguments, at least in the materials provided. The choice to us seems clear: this plan, at least in its current form, must be rejected.

The plan also shares the serious problems shared by most plans in the chancellor's restructuring scheme.

- The plan would run afoul of university policies and the CBA, particularly regarding promotion and tenure;
- The plan would diminish Faculty's role in shared governance at the unit level, particularly in the selection of a unit leader;
- The plan leaves many unanswered questions and fails to provide specific evidence that it will produce positive results;
- The plan fails to protect the smaller "divisions" and their curricula.

Many of these problems are likely due to the haste with which the plans were developed, and the lack of Faculty involvement in their drafting. The chancellor's restructuring plans employ a cookie-cutter approach in which the same plan is applied to every unit on campus, whether it fits or not. We are told little or nothing specific about potential costs, impact on recruitment or retention, or the effect of proposed plans on academic programs and their continued viability. The plans are not so much specific proposals for actions as general templates for hypothetical program mergers. They simply do not make an argument for merger of these units in particular, as they fail to take into account the specific characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of the units involved.

Faculty who are not in the habit of supporting major initiatives without specific argument or evidence may well find it hard to support such plans. Given the negative Faculty votes in this case, and the unanswered arguments against this plan, we see no justification for approving this plan in its current form.



ATTACHEMET: FACULTY VIEW ON MOVING HUMAN  
NUTRITION PROGRAM TO SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
(FROM HUMAN SCIENCES PLAN)

April 13, 2018

To whom it may concern:

There are several reasons why we believe it is prudent for Human Nutrition and Dietetics to stay within the College of Agricultural Sciences. They are:

1. Human Nutrition Major has been highly productive and successful in the College of Agricultural Sciences at SIU. Most tenure-track faculty have secured agriculture-related grant funding that resulted in successful collaborations and published research, and ultimately led to their tenure.
2. The majority of what Agriculture does is related to Food Production and Human Nutrition.
3. Strong collaborative Human Nutrition Teaching, Research, Advising and Outreach programs have been developed over the past 25 years in the College of Agriculture at SIU. The way advising is set up for HND within the college has contributed to the higher retention rates.
4. Current and future movement of Human Nutrition Majors at Flagship Universities have been into Colleges of Agriculture, not out. Over 50% of Land Grant Universities have Human Nutrition majors in their Colleges of Agriculture.
5. The College of Agricultural Sciences at SIU has spent years successfully incorporating Human Nutrition into its teaching, research, advising and outreach programs. They especially know how to successfully recruit, retain and support students and faculty for rewarding careers.
6. Agriculture Alumni and Industry clientele are gravely concerned about moving the Human Nutrition Major out of the College of Agricultural Sciences.
7. The College of Agricultural Sciences has an active advisory board consisting of industry clientele and stakeholders, as well as COAS alumni. It is a major disservice to the college and the advisory board for the University to move the Human Nutrition major to a new startup College that has a limited chance of succeeding.
8. Collaborations are based on relationships, not where you are located or what college you are housed in. HND faculty already have strong collaborative relationships with a number of faculty and staff in other colleges, programs, and services on campus including Kinesiology, Health Education, Quantitative Methods, Sociology, Saluki Athletics, University Housing, Student Health Services, Sustainability, and even Plant and Service Operations.
9. Most importantly, the majority of Human Nutrition faculty voted to remain in the College of Agriculture at SIU.

In closing, we appreciate you taking the time to read this document and consider our concerns. We believe the opinions and evidence presented explains why we have chosen to not support the move to the proposed College of Health and Human Sciences at this time.

Respectfully,

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