

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

August 25, 2010

To: Chris Brown, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine
James Kirkpatrick, Dean, College of Natural Science
Marsha Rappley, Dean, College of Human Medicine
William Strampel, Dean, College of Osteopathic Medicine

From: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost

Re: Shared Basic Biomedical Science Departments

cc: President Simon, W. Esselman, J.R. Haywood, T. Sharkey,
J.I. Gray, J. Youatt, J. R. Hillard, T. Curry, J. Armstrong,
S. Pueppke, D. Byelich

As I have shared informally with each of you, I have become convinced that our current structure for administering the departments of Biochemistry, Microbiology, Pharmacology and Toxicology, and Physiology is insufficient and has limited these departments from achieving their full potential.



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The present structure has several limitations, all of which are rooted in the concept that individual faculty members have separate relationships with the various colleges, rather than the department, as a whole. As a result, it is often unclear to the individual faculty member what his/her responsibility is to the “lead college” and to what extent to the college of his/her primary appointment. This problem is made worse by the fact that in three of the four shared departments, only a minority of faculty members have their primary appointment in the college of their “lead dean.” In the case of Microbiology, the college of the “lead dean” actually has fewer ranked faculty than any of the other three colleges. Moreover, we have programs which on paper report to one college, while the department in which the program resides reports to another college and the director of the program has his primary appointment in yet a third college. While I applaud everyone’s efforts over many years to make this system work and to create a culture of collegiality, this administrative structure has seriously limited our collective ability to do strategic planning, to support new initiatives, and to reward success.

Michigan State University
430 Administration Building
East Lansing, MI 48824-1046

517-335-6550
Fax: 517-355-9601
provost.msu.edu

In line with President Simon's call for increased administrative effectiveness and efficiency, I am proposing a new model for administration of these units wherein each college would support a proportion of each department, rather than the time of individual faculty members. Such a change does not imply a disconnection from any of the colleges, but instead would more clearly state the primacy of the relationship of the faculty members to the department and, in turn, the relationship of the departments to the colleges. As part of these changes, I am proposing, that each department have an administrative reporting relationship to one of the colleges, and that all of the faculty members of each department have their primary appointment within that college. As is the case currently, faculty members may have additional appointments in other departments within or across colleges.

Department budgets would be developed by the four deans in consultation with the Office of the Provost, with contributions from the four colleges derived in proportion to the needs and responsibilities of the units to each of the colleges. IDC, like other credits for each department, would be distributed to each college in proportion to that college's financial support of the department. Each department will continue to be responsible for the teaching that it is currently doing in support of each of the four colleges. Initially, colleges will continue their current level of support (financial and otherwise) to each department. It is the assumption that colleges will not, in the future, decrease their financial support of the shared departments more than the college's overall decrease in financial support from the University.

It is my hope that this new configuration will benefit individual faculty members by clarifying reporting lines and performance expectations. It will benefit the departments by clarifying financial and other reporting requirements, making it easier for the University to assess and reward the success of each department in furthering University goals. It will benefit the colleges by making it clear what they are responsible for, and what resources they have at their disposal. It will benefit the individual, the department, and the colleges by allowing them a clear channel for advocating on behalf of their needs. And it will benefit the University by improving accountability of performance.

I have attempted to lay out the important parameters for this reorganization, but there are, no doubt, numerous details to be addressed in this transition. I am asking you to discuss these details with the faculty in the four departments and within your colleges, and develop a plan for implementation by the end of the fall semester.

Change of this magnitude will, no doubt, create challenges for us all. I anticipate the collegial spirit, which has characterized our Basic Science departments, as we address these issues.