

# University of Houston

## Department of Biochemical and Biophysical Sciences

### Inter-Departmental Memorandum

To Rosalie Maddocks  
Chair, Undergraduate Council

From H. Gray, Jr.

Subject Merger of Departments of Biochemical and Biophysical  
Sciences and Biology

Date 06/14/93

The faculty of this department received on June 10, 1993 the Change Request for a full merger of the departments of Biology and Biochemical and Biophysical Sciences and the accompanying memo from Dean John Bear to Dr. Ezell describing the rationale for changing the proposal from a School of Life Sciences model with distinct departments to a single department. We also found out that this document had been considered by the Academic Operations and Standards Committee, apparently the preceding day, and approved. The Change Request itself was not communicated to the Council at large until the packets for the Undergraduate Council meeting of June 16, 1993 arrived in the campus mail. This Council member received his above mentioned packet on June 11, 1993.

This hurried consideration of such an important proposal, which is very significantly at variance with the reorganization that Dean Bear indicated in his memo of May 12, 1993 (copy attached), is unacceptable. Dr. Quintero indicated that he was contacted approximately two hours before his subcommittee meeting with a request to consider this proposal as an agenda item and that it was represented to him by Dr. Bear that all was in order concerning the departments involved; the faculty of BCHS obviously dispute this statement. Although some were not comfortable with the degree of haste involved, the members of the Academic Operations and Standards Committee approved the request on the basis of the manner in which it was presented to them. No members of either concerned department were advised that this item was on the committee's agenda.

This Change Request is the first formal proposal related to any reorganization between the two departments in question. The persons most affected, namely the faculty, staff and students of these departments, have been given no opportunity to respond, no study of the consequences have been made and the change of the proposed model from that of a school to a single department has been made largely on the basis of expediency as per Dr. Bear's June 8<sup>th</sup> memo.

It may be argued that the consequences for undergraduate education of this proposal are insignificant, or that the needed changes can be proposed piecemeal to the Council after the merger, so that on this basis the Council has no reason to entertain doubts about the proposal at this time. This is argued not to be the case. The most significant aspect is that, with all BCHS and Biology personnel in a single large department, there will undoubtedly be hotly disputed issues such as the requirement for biochemistry in the Biology degree, the offerings of "classical" Biology courses which some in Biochemical and Biophysical Sciences believe should be curtailed and a requirement for all undergraduate majors to take the calculus-based physics series, which a number of BCHS faculty and some Biology faculty favor. Such issues will have severe ramifications for the pre-health sciences programs in which a majority of the over 1300 Biology undergraduates are enrolled. There definitely should be some advance planning and some consensus reached on some of these issues before the departments are subjected to an administration-imposed merger.

Even if this argument about the relevance of the proposed action to undergraduate education is not found convincing, it is strongly urged that the proposal, in its present form, be rejected on the

basis that it did come before the Council as an action item and that no attempt has been made to allow due process for the persons strongly affected by such an action.

A copy of the BCHS faculty response to Dr. Ezell, detailing the reasons why it is strongly felt that the current proposal is unacceptable, is appended.