

Motion to separate the Department of Biology and Chemistry into two departments, the Department of Chemistry and the Department of Biology.

Whereas, autonomous Chemistry and Biology departments would reflect the strengths of these disciplines and the sciences at Radford University; and

Whereas, an autonomous Department of Chemistry will aid in the overall goal of the Chemistry Program, the College of Science and Technology, and the 7-17 Strategic Plan to gain accreditation by the American Chemical Society; and

Whereas, separate and autonomous Departments of Chemistry and Biology will aid in the recruitment and retention of qualified chemistry and biology students, and

Whereas, it is the unanimous desire of the faculty within the Department of Biology and Chemistry to revert to separate department status, and

Whereas, monetary savings realized by the merger of the two departments can be maintained under the two-department model by sharing administrative costs.

Resolved, The Faculty Senate of Radford University hereby supports the separation of the Department of Biology and Chemistry into separate departments and recommends to the administration and the Board of Visitors that both the Biology and Chemistry programs receive departmental status.

Rationale:

- The current configuration of the Department of Biology and Chemistry is very unusual, and exists in none of our peer institutions. Only two schools in Virginia currently have this department structure, Christopher Newport University, which is a small (less than 5000 students), liberal arts institution with a Department of Biology, Chemistry and Environmental Sciences, and Liberty University in Lynchburg, a private, religious college. Most telling, in an exhaustive review of 649 universities with Chemistry Departments accredited by the American Chemistry Society, none were found to have this specific configuration. Seventy percent of these programs exist as Departments of Chemistry, 19% as Departments Chemistry and Biochemistry, and 5% as Departments of Chemistry and Physics. Only 6% of accredited programs were combined into natural sciences departments with several other disciplines, including Biology, and usually these were found at smaller institutions. It is important to note that Departments of Chemistry usually changed their name to better reflect the nature of faculty research and that these Departments are completely independent of Biology Departments.
- Typically, the combination of these two programs signals that both are weak and cannot be sustained on their own. Maintaining this system could result in:

- Difficulty recruiting and maintaining high quality students for both programs.
 - Difficulty in obtaining extra-mural funding by researchers in both programs.
 - Diminishment in status for degrees our students earn in either program and lower credibility for letters of recommendation which we write for our students.
 - Additional difficulties in obtaining accreditation for the Chemistry program (which our peer institutions with chemistry programs all have).
 - Difficulty attracting and maintaining highly qualified colleagues.
- In the opinion of the faculty of both departments, the joint department does not in any way help to “position us for the future”. It is interesting to note, that among our peer institutions that offer biochemistry programs, six of them have Chemistry and Biochemistry Departments that are completely independent of the Biology Departments. A common configuration among smaller schools with biochemistry programs is to configure them as interdisciplinary programs jointly managed by otherwise separate departments of biology and chemistry.

Budgetary Impacts:

- In the short-term this change will be budget-neutral. Currently, the merged department has a chair who is a biologist, and a coordinator for the chemistry program, who manages course scheduling and the budget for the chemistry program. Neither of these two people is being compensated for the additional duties and responsibilities that they assumed with the merger. There is one shared department secretary. Biology and Chemistry faculty currently maintain separate committee structures (e.g., personnel, curriculum, awards, etc.). We are suggesting that we continue to share administrative costs until such time as the financial crisis is over, with a common chair (with a joint appointment in both departments) and secretary, while formally re-establishing our separate department identities.
- Once the current budgetary crisis is past, a new chair can be selected for the Chemistry Department, for an additional stipend of \$8,000 per year. In addition, the cost of an adjunct faculty member to support the one-half release time typically given to department chairs would be approximately \$6,600, per semester. The departments can continue to share a secretary, until such time when either or both departments become too large for this to be feasible. This is the same as a past arrangement between the Chemistry and Math departments, which at one time shared a secretary.