

## Departmental Name Change Justification

Current Name: Department of Zoology

Proposed Name: Department of Integrative Biology

### Context

Encouraged by COS leadership to increase collaboration among the COS life science departments and to simplify the administration of undergraduate majors while giving all students department homes, the Departments of Biochemistry & Biophysics, Microbiology, and Zoology conceived of the School of Life Sciences (SLS) structure. The abbreviated Category I proposal for the SLS aimed to create this collaborative structure with minimal added complexity that would be associated with changing the names or makeups of any majors or departments. In response to a request of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Council to adopt a name that contained the word “biology”, the Zoology Department – which within the SLS would be responsible for administering the Biology Major–selected “Department of Integrative Biology” as a name that was an excellent reflection of its department identity.

### Rationale

The department is aware that with many life science units on campus and the breadth of research in those units, there is no name including the word “biology” that will perfectly differentiate this department from all others. Nevertheless, there are many reasons why ‘Integrative Biology’ is an ideal new name for our group of faculty, relating both to the current trajectories of biological sciences research and the context of the department in the broader OSU life sciences landscape. We, the faculty of the Zoology Department at OSU, believe that this name change offers an outstanding opportunity to improve the visibility of our department’s achievements in research and instruction in a fashion that harmonizes them with national trends and with other life sciences units on campus. We put forth three major arguments in support of this name change:

1. **‘Integrative Biology’ is broadly recognizable as a modern phrase reflecting the scope of expertise covered by our department.** There has been a nationwide shift to ‘Integrative Biology’ or ‘Biology’ for the names of groups such as ours. ‘Integrative Biology’ has appeared as a new departmental name at other similar and renowned universities (for example, UC Berkeley and UT Austin). These departments do not include all of the life sciences research and instruction on these campuses; for example, UT Austin’s Integrative Biology does not include Microbiology, Molecular Biology or Cell Biology. These Integrative Biology units house faculty studying biological questions and systems currently under investigation in our department, including physiology, ecology, and evolution. Another strong illustration of the value of this change is the precedent set by the national professional society *The Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology* (Link: <http://www.sicb.org/index.php3>). SICB holds a large annual meeting that many of our faculty and students attend and it runs the journal *Integrative and Comparative Biology*. Prior to 1996, the name of this society was *American Society of Zoologists*. According to its website, SICB changed its name “to reflect the scientific breadth, integrative approaches, and interests of its membership across all disciplines of biology.” This is what we aim to achieve with our proposed name change.

By contrast the term ‘Zoology’ is, simply put, antiquated. Though there is a rich history of strong departments with the name ‘Zoology’ in the United States and other parts of the Western world, the current drive for research that transcends taxonomic boundaries makes the term ‘Zoology’ out of step with modern research at the leading edge of biological investigation. As more and more life science units with the name ‘Zoology’ disappear, our department will become more and more out of alignment with current trends in the life sciences. ‘Integrative Biology’ would be the opposite – an easy-to-understand and instantly recognizable name that accurately reflects the types of research and instruction ongoing in the department.

2. **‘Integrative Biology’ accurately reflects our department’s identity and our vision for ongoing and future activities in research and instruction.** A central theme that stitches together the diverse group of faculty in our department is a shared value in promoting research that integrates knowledge and understanding across levels and scales of biological organization, especially from organism to population to ecosystem. We are interested in the intersections and integration of biological processes across these levels; indeed we view this vertical integration as central to our identity. Just as the Department of Microbiology defines itself around the study of microbial life forms and processes, Biochemistry & Biophysics around molecular level studies of life, Botany and Plant Pathology around fundamental aspects of plant biology, Fisheries and Wildlife around management and conservation biology of Oregon’s fish and wildlife resources, and Animal Sciences around domestic livestock and companion animals, we wish to place a more appropriate label on our identity with our name change. The ideal label for us is ‘Integrative’ as is underscored by the vision statement on our website that we adopted 15 years ago: *“The Department of Zoology promotes discovery and learning at all levels of biological organization (... organismal, population, community, and ecosystem). Our integrative focus reflects the importance of strong disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in research and teaching.”* It is for this reason (and see point 1 above) that the name Integrative Biology is appropriate even though we do not represent all of biology.
3. **‘Integrative Biology’ accurately reflects our department’s desire to better administer the Biology Major and serve the needs of our students.** One major instructional and curricular change, as outlined under the COS School of Life Sciences proposal currently in review, is administration of the Biology Major and we agree with the Faculty Senate Curriculum Council that it would make sense for the word ‘Biology’ to be in our department name. Our faculty group looks forward to promoting the integration of the diverse scientific and instructional expertises across the OSU life sciences landscape through administration of the Biology Major. We will seek curricular integration by encouraging participation of all OSU life sciences units.

This name change means:

- That one of the major life sciences units on campus, the Department of Zoology, will realize a long-overdue name change that is modern and recognizable, and accurately reflects the Department’s future vision and current scope of research and instruction.
- That the Department will play a role in promoting the integration of curricular and instructional efforts in the life sciences at OSU.

This name change does NOT mean:

- That the Department of Zoology wants to ‘take over’ life sciences research and/or instruction at OSU or that Zoology wants to lay the groundwork for future department mergers. We value and respect the strengths and important roles of the other life sciences departments on campus, especially in the delivery of courses in the Biology Major. We want OSU to realize improved relationships among the many excellent life sciences units and are willing to play our part in promoting positive interactions.