Proposal to Establish the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences and Discontinue the Department of Animal Sciences and the Department of Dairy Science

The faculty in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) voted at the 3 December 2019 CALS Academic Planning Council (APC) meeting to establish the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences by merging the former Department of Animal Sciences and the Department of Dairy Science. Prior to the December CALS APC meeting, on 15 November 2019, both the Dairy Science Executive Committee and the Animal Sciences Executive Committee voted to discontinue their respective departments contingent upon establishing the new Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences. The University Academic Planning Council approved the new department and the discontinuations at its 16 January 2020 meeting. Full documentation is available on the UAPC January 2020 meeting website (https://apir.wisc.edu/academic-planning/uapc-meeting-information/january-16-2020/).

The Departments of Animal Sciences and Dairy Science have had an interdependent relationship that spanned decades, including sharing the Animal Sciences Building, cross-listing and co-teaching many core courses, and collaborating on research projects and outreach programs. Most other land-grant universities combined their departments of dairy, livestock, poultry, and meat science many years ago. Due to Wisconsin’s large dairy industry, the Department of Dairy Science remained independent of the Department of Animal Sciences, which was created a quarter-century ago when the Department of Meat and Animal Science merged with the Department of Poultry Science. The distinction between Dairy Science and Animal Sciences is largely historical, however, and the CALS faculty has determined the research, instruction, and outreach missions will be stronger and more efficient through a new, merged department.

The discussion of a merger began in April 2018 when CALS Dean Kathryn VandenBosch asked the departments to consider a merger following an internal college self-study. The stated impetus for the merger discussion was the strong relationship between the two departments’ missions and the goal of positioning the fields of study for the future. Neither department was considered at-risk due to low student enrollment or dwindling faculty numbers, but both lacked critical mass in key disciplines, offered several low-enrollment courses, lacked depth in administrative staff, and struggled to maintain expensive animal operations.

The departments have been acting as one since the initial votes in January 2019 to proceed with an intent to merge, including having merged department meetings; reorganization of administrative, human resources, and financial support services; and the continued co-occupation of the Animal Sciences Building. With approval, the merger will continue with the new Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences being formalized 1 July 2020. This will include moving all faculty and staff appointments, the tenure home for faculty, and the 101 budgeting for fiscal year 2021. All academic programs will move to the new department for Fall 2020 and the former Animal Sciences and Dairy Science subject listings will move to the new department for Summer 2021. By 30 June 2021, the discontinuation of the former departments will be complete with the movement of all Foundation and Trust accounts and other budgeting aspects to the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences.