

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NAME CHANGE AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY:**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANT PATHOLOGY TO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANT PATHOLOGY AND MICROBIOLOGY**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to change the name of the Department of Plant Pathology to the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The name change will allow the College to market its research in plant pathology and microbiology and its undergraduate and graduate teaching programs in microbiology more effectively. The proposed name qualifies the microbiology pursued in the department as the study of microbes associated with plants in the widest sense and will not encroach on other departments' responsibilities that target different aspects of microbiology. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. There are no objections to the name change. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority of "educational excellence and impact."

**Background:**

- ◇ **Need for the proposed change.** The proposed name will more accurately describe the research and teaching activities of department faculty. All department faculty members are currently engaged in scholarly activities either directly examining microbes or their involvement in plant disease or associations with plants and their environments. The department anticipates growth of scholarly activities in areas outside the traditional plant pathology discipline, including a greater emphasis on environmental microbiology relevant to environmental quality, biofuels, and global change issues. There is a need to support nationwide efforts to secure the future of both plant pathology and microbiology as their importance becomes more apparent. Issues ranging from food safety concerns to emerging plant diseases, bioterrorism targeting the nation's food security through plant pathogens, and biofuels show the interconnectivity of plant pathology and microbiology.

Plant pathologists study plant-associated microbes and, therefore, are microbiologists. Plant pathology is a sub-discipline of the broader field of microbiology and all faculty in the department directly examine microbes involved in establishing plant disease or associated with plants or the plant environment; study plant responses to those microbes; conduct epidemiological, modeling, or monitoring studies of current and emerging plant pathogens; or conduct research that combines two or more of these activities.

In 2003, when the biological sciences were reorganized and two microbiology faculty joined the Department of Plant Pathology, the department became more active in teaching microbiology courses. At the same time, the Department of Plant Pathology began an effort to increase its presence in undergraduate teaching by becoming more actively involved in teaching microbiology courses. The Departments of Plant Pathology and Animal Science agreed to jointly administer the new undergraduate microbiology major in the then College of Agriculture when the major was created in 2003. Currently, 10 plant pathology faculty also participate in the inter-department graduate microbiology program.

Nine of the 17 Plant Pathology state-funded faculty are actively involved in teaching 12 microbiology courses. Plant Pathology faculty members taught an average of 48% of the student credit hours in microbiology courses during Fall 2005 – Spring 2007. During its most recent external review in 2005, the Department of Plant Pathology was commended for active participation in the undergraduate microbiology major and was encouraged to continue pursuing its goal of strengthening the department through active participation in both the undergraduate and graduate interdepartmental microbiology programs.

The discipline of plant pathology is rapidly evolving and the proposed name will reflect the breadth of topics encompassed by this field and by the discovery and learning taking place in the department. The field of plant pathology has increasingly focused on more fundamental aspects of the interactions between plants, vectors, and microbes, contributing to a knowledge base pertinent to many microbiology disciplines. This knowledge base will continue to contribute to many microbiology disciplines beyond traditional plant pathology. Students interested in such levels of biological inquiry are routinely recruited from interdepartmental graduate programs, including the Interdepartmental Microbiology Programs.

- ◇ Advantage of proposed name. The proposed name will increase the visibility of ISU's microbiology program and will facilitate recruitment of undergraduate majors in microbiology and graduate students in the microbiology and plant pathology programs. Microbiology is fundamental to many aspects of the bioeconomy and provides a tool to facilitate the release or transformation of plant components into simpler fundamental raw materials that are the building blocks for many bioeconomy end-products.
- ◇ Comparable name at other institutions. The proposed name parallels national trends in renaming traditional academic plant pathology departments to reflect a broadening of interests, scholarly activities, instructional needs, and management and which include the title microbiology or its derivatives. The following institutions include plant pathology and microbiology in their department or division names – Cornell University (Department of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology); University of Arizona (Division of Plant Pathology and Microbiology); University of California, Berkley (Plant and Microbial Biology); University of Missouri (Plant Microbiology and Pathology Program); and Texas A&M University (Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology).
- ◇ No new resources required. The proposed department name change will not require a change to the administrative structure. Additional office space, facilities, or other resources will not be required.
- ◇ Programs not affected. The proposed department name change will not affect current programs or require program configuration changes.
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed name change will become effective upon approval by the Board or Regents.