

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A PROGRAM NAME CHANGE AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
INTERDEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE MAJOR IN PLANT PHYSIOLOGY TO
INTERDEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE MAJOR IN PLANT BIOLOGY**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to change the name of the interdepartmental graduate major (M.S. and Ph.D.) in plant physiology to the interdepartmental graduate major (M.S. and Ph.D.) in plant biology.

Executive Summary: The name “plant physiology” is no longer reflective of the diversity and complexity of the participating faculty research programs. ISU has been recognized nationally for its strength in plant biology research, but it does not have an official plant biology graduate program. The proposed name will not have any negative effect on students. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan objective (1.1) to “offer high-quality programs through ongoing program improvement for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and non-degree students and special school students.”

Background:

- ◆ **Description of program.** The interdepartmental plant physiology major (IPPM) coordinates graduate education and research in the areas of plant biochemistry, plant molecular biology, and plant physiology. Graduate study in IPPM is offered through seven participating departments – agronomy, biochemistry, biophysics and molecular biology, chemical and biological engineering, ecology, evolution and organismal biology, genetics development and cell biology, horticulture, and plant pathology. The major provides students with a foundation in the functional aspects of basic plant biology within a highly interactive, interdisciplinary group, while encouraging them to design a truly interdisciplinary research program.
- ◆ **History of IPPM.** IPPM was established in 1987 to provide rigorous, broad-based graduate education in basic plant physiology and plant molecular biology. The experimental approaches represented in the major span the range of complexity from molecular studies to cellular, organismal, and ecological levels. Currently, the program has 37 faculty members from three colleges – Liberal Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Engineering.
- ◆ **Reasons for proposed name change.**
 - The American Society for Plant Physiologists (ASPP), a scientific society with which many IPPM faculty are associated, changed its name to American Society for Plant Biologists (ASPB) in 2000. During an external review process of the IPPM in 2002, the reviewers recommended a name change from plant physiology to plant biology to represent the faculty research programs and advance of the science more accurately.
 - The proposed name will enhance graduate applications and increase enrollment in the program.

- Similar interdepartmental graduate programs in plant biology exist in peer institutions, including the University of California-Davis, Cornell University, and the University of Minnesota.
- Although UNI has a biology graduate program and SUI has a biological science graduate program, the state of Iowa has no graduate program in plant biology.
- The most active plant scientists engaged in research and graduate training at ISU are members of the IPPM program. Plant science research is a recognized strength of ISU graduate programs in the life sciences. In 2007, the ISU Plant Science graduate program was ranked #6 in the nation by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on the basis of faculty productivity.

- ◇ Curriculum modification. In November 2007, the faculty approved a curriculum that maintains the rigor of the previous IPPM curriculum and includes nine additional plant biology related courses to provide more options for current and future graduate students in this major. In addition, IPPM has increased the diversity of the faculty by recruiting six new faculty members in more diverse areas of plant biology.

- ◇ Date of implementation. If approved by the Board, the proposed name change will become effective immediately, but it will not affect currently enrolled students.