

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Department Merger
Date: August 30, 2001

Recommended Action:

Approve the University of Iowa's request to merge the departments of Industrial Engineering (IE) and Mechanical Engineering (ME) to form the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (MIE) in the College of Engineering.

Executive Summary:

The College of Engineering wishes to merge the departments of Industrial Engineering and Mechanical Engineering to form the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering in the College of Engineering. The merger is for administrative purposes only. Academic aspects of the current departments will remain unchanged – the degree-granting academic programs will remain in their present form as will accreditation in both the IE and ME programs. At ABET-accredited institutions (Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.), it is not unusual for IE and ME programs to be housed in the same department. The consolidation will strengthen the current departments as well as the College.

The plan retains the unique strengths of each discipline through well-established academic programs and faculty-led research, while inspiring new interdisciplinary opportunities in curriculum and research. Given the faculty profiles of the two units, there are several likely growth areas for the combined unit that will increase research collaboration and foster increased externally-funded research. There are benefits to be gained by combining some courses including a more efficient use of faculty time and more interdisciplinary classroom activity. In industry, industrial engineers and mechanical engineers regularly work together on teams. Integrating the students will better prepare them for the multidisciplinary, team-based work environment found in industry. The IE department has a small faculty and both departments have interim departmental executive officers. The new unit will have one departmental executive officer and a single faculty, which will afford financial gains that can be used for new faculty hires in strategic research and teaching areas. In addition to reduced administrative costs, the combined unit will present a more attractive career-advancing opportunity to prospective Departmental Executive Officer candidates.

There are no new program implications in this requested action.


Robert J. Barak