

## **A perspective on lessons from the BES re-organization**

In 2010 most departments in CELS separated graduate education from the domain of individual departments and re-organized into four specializations – CMB, EES, EVES and IEB. Since then the number has grown to five with the addition of SAFS. Collectively, these specializations are housed within the broad Biological and Environmental Sciences graduate degree program, which grants M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. The reasons for the combination under the BES umbrella were multiple and share parallels with the departmental reorganization we are facing in 2013.

During meeting of the Dean's Faculty Advisory Board it has become apparent that the similar departmental reorganization concerns exist that were expressed prior to the BES merger. Loss of independence, control over curricular matters and concerns about being marginalized, were all issues that BES faculty grappled with in 2010, and in the early post-BES days. As a participant in two BES specializations with very different histories (CMB & IEB) and member of the Advisory Board, I have been asked to draft a document on the process of reorganization and what was learned through the BES process.

From an academic perspective there is little reason to consider the BES reorganization anything but a success. Not every specialization group made a smooth transition, but over 2 years into the change I have seen nearly all of the pre-BES concerns fade away. The two groups I participate in started in stark contrast. IEB is a collection of PIs from numerous departments without a majority. From the beginning the focus was on constructing a program that combined our collective strengths. The CMB graduate program was already in existence prior to reorganization and expanded to include non-Department of Cell and Molecular Biology faculty upon reorganization. This made for a decidedly different arrangement/dynamic. People new to the group were interested in changes that reflected the broader research areas while those from the CMB department were concerned about making substantial changes to an already established and successful program. Despite these conflicting views, over time we have collectively made significant changes to the academic requirements (inasmuch as classes can be "required" in each specialization) for students in the group, organized a weekly student seminar and are discussing a first year group-taught class to introduce new graduate students to the breadth of the research topics within CMB.

As we go forward with departmental reorganization, it is critical to consider what outstanding issues there are from the move to BES and how we can avoid making the same mistakes again. Many of the lessons for the last few years are incorporated into the following document on considerations for reorganization. Primary among these are administrative support and marketing/advertising resources for the new programs. These issues have to be thoroughly considered before we reorganize academic units within CELS. However, the BES process should give us reason for optimism. The larger, more inclusive, groups have provided fertile ground for reconsidering how we train students in increasingly multi-disciplinary fields. The flexibility of affiliation allows for broader participation across specialization lines and expanded groups mean less committee work for individuals. After two full years, wrinkles remain that need smoothing, but the change has been positive for both the faculty involved and the students being trained.

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