

DATE: September 16, 2019

TO: Dean Dennis Nef, Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology

Dean Michelle Denbeste, College of Social Sciences

FROM: Chair Kathleen Dyer, Department of Child and Family Science



The faculty members of the Department of Child and Family Science hereby request consideration of a proposal to move from the Jordan College into the College of Social Sciences at Fresno State. APM 113 describes the process this way: "Proposals... shall be discussed among the affected units and reviewed through the consultative process within the colleges/schools; and then a formal proposal, if any, with supporting documentation, shall be forwarded to the Provost and the Academic Senate."

Therefore, after consulting with our former dean Sandy Witte, Interim Provost Harper last year, with Provost Jimenez-Sandoval recently, and internally deliberating for some time, we would like to open discussion and review within Jordan and COSS. We share here the reasons for our request and the points that we feel would need resolution for a formal proposal to be made. After you confer with each other and your respective faculties, we look forward to hearing from you and then deciding whether to send a formal proposal to Provost Jimenez-Sandoval and the Academic Senate.

This request does not reflect a complaint about or a conflict with the Jordan College. We are treated well, and we like and respect our colleagues in the Jordan College. We are proud of our contributions to our college, and we are grateful for the support we receive from it. Instead, this request reflects the natural process of disciplinary growth and development.

Our program, originally called Home Economics, has had a presence on this campus since its inception in 1911. Since academic divisions were created at Fresno State in 1956, we spent time in the Division of Fine and Practical Arts, then Applied Arts, and then the School of Professional Studies. We did not land with Agriculture until 1978, at which point the college was re-named "Agriculture and Home Economics." This may have been an appropriate disciplinary marriage at the time, given the alignment of home economics with farming.

However, after a decade, the college dropped "home economics" from its name, and we dropped "home economics" from our department name a few short years later, reflecting drastic changes in our discipline. Home Economics had been conceptualized as a collection of tasks that occurred on the family farm: cooking, sewing, balancing the books, and raising the children. However, this organizational structure no longer exists in the academy, just as most Americans no longer live on a family farm. Each of the component parts of the old home economics model developed into distinct disciplines, often leaving to become their own departments or to join other disciplines that they had come to resemble. Home economics as a discipline no longer exists.

Just as “home economics” no longer exists, our department no longer shares a connection to agriculture. We are no longer the applied science that strove to help farm families raise their children. At this point, our faculty are all social scientists who conduct research on a wide range of issues pertaining to children and families. We no longer have any inherent connection to the family farm, or to agriculture as a whole.

Reasons to Consider a Move

In light of these developments, we have identified the ways in which we feel we are no longer appropriately placed in the Jordan College:

Identity. We understand that the farm is essential to an agriculture program. As such, it is the centerpiece of the Jordan College and of discussions about the direction of the college. It *is* the identity of the Jordan College. We recognize that the farm is exactly that important. However, it is wholly and completely irrelevant to our program of study in Child and Family Science. We are the only department in the college for whom the farm is irrelevant to the training of our students. We note that we are not part of the college’s identity. Nor is our identity reflected anywhere in the Jordan College. This is really the heart of the matter.

This has implications in several areas that pertain to the well-being of our faculty and other faculty within the Jordan college, and several areas that pertain to the well-being of our students. What follows is a sampling of these implications.

A. For faculty (ours, and others within the Jordan College)

1. Opportunities for **professional collaboration** are minimal. We are the only department in the college that primarily and exclusively studies human subjects. We can find strained connections in a few areas (nutrition is one such) but anyone who is not involved in that very narrow band of topics (and that is most of us) are simply out of luck. We do not get to meet people in the regular course of our tenure track that we might possibly collaborate with professionally.
2. **Peer evaluations.** For peer evaluations during the probationary period, our tenure-track faculty use colleagues from other Jordan College departments who have no disciplinary expertise with which to evaluate our courses, and we have no disciplinary expertise to offer them on the occasions that we can reciprocate with peer evaluations for their classes. The APM requires that Course Content be evaluated as part of assessment of teaching effectiveness, and that student ratings are inappropriate for this area, so that peer evaluations are the only way to evaluate it. However, it is essentially impossible when evaluators do not have even a rudimentary understanding of each other’s content area. This is unfair to all involved, producing less useful peer evaluation than all of us need.
3. On **college committees**, we have little to contribute to topics that are unfamiliar to us, and we receive little meaningful feedback about issues in our department because other faculty in agriculture don’t know our discipline. This may not be true on every college

committee, but we think it is especially true on the Academic Programs Committee to review curriculum, the Personnel Committee, and the Research Committee.

4. **Lack of leadership opportunities.** If any of us want to move into leadership positions in the Jordan College, this will 1) require that we acquire a knowledge base far outside of our training, 2) not necessarily look good on our resumes to anyone in our discipline, and 3) face the disapproval of our Jordan College colleagues who do not want us in leadership positions because we are not traditional agriculture. Therefore, we do not have opportunities for leadership that should be available to us, and our college must serve us indefinitely without ever benefitting from our contributions to leadership. (And we maintain that this is true, despite the recent counter-example of Kathie Reid-Bevington. She had a personal connection to Agriculture, not a professional one, that overrode some of these barriers, and we know that she still faced significant resistance and it was not especially easy for her to overcome these barriers.)
5. **Grant and Research Support** is lacking for our discipline. We recognize that well-intentioned attempts are made to accommodate us; these attempts are clearly work-arounds, not whole-hearted professional advocacy and assistance. We are shoe-horned into systems that are not designed to meet our needs. To get more sincere help is simply impossible from people who lack the appropriate expertise in, and focus on, our discipline.

B. For our students

1. **Leadership program.** While leadership is currently a high priority in higher education, our students have little to gain from the new Agricultural Leadership program. It is clearly directed at traditional agriculture. When our representative on the Academic Programs Committee suggested changes to course descriptions that would make these classes better suited for our students, she was told that they could go elsewhere for “that kind” of program, that this one is specifically for traditional ag. Furthermore, a leadership program in traditional program will not be considered meaningful on the resume of a Child and Family Science graduate.
2. **Honors program.** Our very best students do not have the opportunity for advanced study in our field because the honors cohorts include students with whom they have very little in common professionally. While others in the Jordan College may think we contribute to the breadth of their education, our students are not benefiting equally from their peers in this program. Our students just don't get enough out of it. One of our Honors students dropped out of the program, specifically because of this lack of connection. Others go along gamely, getting out of it what they can, but as we mentor their research, we see that they have not had the opportunity to be coached and mentored in the Jordan College honors program courses in ways that prepare them to collect and analyze data with human subjects. We suspect that this is because the methods of study are simply so different in our discipline as compared to agricultural disciplines.

3. **Career fairs** are full of employers that are irrelevant to our students. Our students are generally told that the career fair doesn't apply to them, or they go, only to find that there are only one or two employers that are relevant. They deserve better.

These points of mismatch do not reflect a lack of effort toward integration. Such efforts, we believe, are sincere and well-meaning. But they are unsuccessful because we simply are not a good fit in the Jordan College.

Evidence of a Good Fit with COSS

The tenured and tenure-track faculty of our department are all social scientists; we study human beings and the social systems within which they live and develop. Ours is, by its very nature, a multi-disciplinary area of scholarship, involving components of psychology, sociology, anthropology, gender studies, communication, and other disciplines as well. Not all of these disciplines are in the COSS, but many of them are. Transdisciplinary collaborations are standard fare for us, and those alliances can happen across vastly different disciplines, but they do all involve research with human subjects about social relationships. The COSS is where such work is centered on the Fresno State campus.

We are excited about the prospect of having more opportunity to work with other social scientists, to sit on committees with them, to peer review their classes and invite them into ours. This happens already, of course, to some degree. We sometimes attend the same professional conferences. Some research partnerships already exist between our faculty and COSS faculty. But these connections have been made either accidentally through personal relationships off-campus, or intentionally by seeking one another out. They are not promoted and supported institutionally through the mechanisms of collegial interaction at the college level. We look forward to meeting each other in the course of our work, to sharing on-campus opportunities to build connections and find common ground. We believe that the COSS faculty are "our people". The mission of the College of Social Sciences at Fresno State is to: "seek and impart knowledge of human social experience in all its diversity in order to educate students and benefit humanity" (<http://fresnostate.edu/socialsciences/about/index.html>). This is a mission that we share, every word of it, and without reservation.

We believe that we are well-positioned to offer several things to the College of Social Sciences. We are an incredibly vibrant faculty body. We are productive, with respect to our teaching, our scholarship, and our service. We are good colleagues, contributing by doing our jobs well, and by offering our time and talents for the well-being of our group. In our small group of 7 tenured/tenure-track faculty and 1 full-time lecturer, we count two recent recipients of the Provost's Award for Promising New Faculty who each earned early tenure and promotion. Two of us have published books within the past two years. This is but a small sampling of our exceptional scholarship. In very recent years, our faculty have served to bring the Healthy Campus Initiative to Fresno State, to lead a Task Force on Student Ratings that created a new system for student rating of classes, and to bring a conference on infant mental health to campus. One of us is a member of the Executive Council of the California Faculty Association. One has served for years

on the University's Academic Petitions Committee, one chairs the university committee on Academic Standards and Grading, and one is the current Chair of the University Chair's Council. Our service is exemplary; we have a lot to offer.

What We Expect

In making this request, we expect that, on the one hand, not much will change. We expect that we will retain our office space and our classroom allocations. In that sense, our day-to-day functioning will remain exactly as it is. On the other hand, we expect that some small changes will be meaningful ones. We will share a common identity with our college, something that we have not yet experienced. Shared identity will have benefits for both our faculty and students.

Students will benefit in a few ways. We expect that we will identify opportunities for cross-listing of classes and other forms of course-sharing that will broaden our students' educational opportunities. Our students will benefit by expanded course offerings available to them, and we believe that other COSS students will benefit by the opportunity to take some of our classes as well. All students involved will benefit by a new kind of diversity in classes that they share with other related programs of study. We expect that some of our best students will participate in the COSS Honors Program, and will contribute to those cohorts and benefit from exposure to such closely-related disciplines.

As for faculty, we expect to sit on committees with other social scientists, and therefore expand our professional contacts with people who do work similar to our own. As a result, we expect to build new and fruitful professional collaborations, ones that cannot be anticipated exactly because we don't yet know the possibilities. Once we expand our network within the COSS, we expect to have our classes peer reviewed by other social scientists, and to offer peer reviews in return, and we expect those connections to related social sciences to be fruitful for all involved. In the long term, we expect some of our faculty members will eventually grow into leadership roles in the COSS that had not been available to them in the Jordan College, allowing us to make more systemic contributions to our university.

Issues to be Resolved

Assuming that faculty office spaces (for full-time and part-time faculty), department space (such as our research lab space), and classroom allocations remain unchanged, we anticipate some issues will need to be addressed:

- A. We just hired a new assistant professor, Megan Pronovost. The commitments made in her offer letter would have to be met.
- B. Similarly, if any of our faculty are granted a sabbatical during the review cycle this year, we hope that the permission for the sabbatical would be transferrable to the new college.

- C. We currently share a two department staff (an ASC Lori Ann Walters, and an ASA Juan Herrera) with the Department of Food Science and Nutrition. While the system for sharing has been working fine so far, and we are very happy with the people who fill these roles, it may not work if we are no longer in the same college. Therefore, we would expect that one would have to remain attached to us (Lori Ann Walters is currently paid by our department, so she is the logical one to move with us) and one would stay with the Jordan College to serve the Department of Food Science and Nutrition. We hope both would be able to stay, but with somewhat modified roles; both are extraordinarily competent and easy to work with. The details would have to be worked out.
- D. We currently share space with the Department of Food Science and Nutrition. This includes a shared departmental office, a conference room (FFS 112), and a faculty work room (FFS 215). The workroom includes a copy machine as well as other shared resources (a shredding contract, copy paper, etc.). Sharing these resources has worked for several years, and we see no reason that it would have to change. But we may need to clearly state which college has responsibility for expenses related to maintaining these resources, as well as priority for use if there is ever conflict about them.
- E. We currently share space with the Fashion Merchandising program, which has since moved to the Craig School of Business. FFS 306 is a small classroom/lab space. It contains some sensitive textiles lab equipment and so is not centrally allocated; we retain control over the use of this space. We use it to teach our Writing class, and for workshopping in the research labs that our faculty teach. The Fashion Merchandising program uses it for textile labs. We request the right to retain the sharing agreement that we currently have.
- F. Our exceptional students are currently applying to be part of the next cohort of honors students in the Jordan College Honors Program. We request that any students accepted into that program would be allowed to move into the COSS Honors Program should this move happen during their tenure.
- G. We request some clarity about how advising will be transferred to COSS. Currently, we have an advisor (Tahler Caldera) who is assigned to our students; we rely on her to do all of the GE and program advising for our students. She will remain in the Jordan College Advising and Career Development Center, so we hope for some plan to be in place to transfer the care of our students to the COSS Advising Center.
- H. One of our faculty members, Dr. Jessica McKenzie, received a grant from her professional organization (SRCD) and monies from the CSU Chancellor's Office that she is planning to use for an extensive overseas data collection trip. That money is currently being curated by the Jordan College, but it was granted specifically to Dr. McKenzie for her research. We expect that there will

be no problems with her use of that money even if she needs to use it during our transition to the COSS.

- I. Another of our faculty members, Dr. Andrea Roach, has been granted ARI funds that she is currently using for research. Should she need a no-cost extension into next year to complete her project, we hope that those funds will not be retracted if we move to COSS.
- J. Another of our faculty members, Dr. Amber Hammons, has an account in Foundation for returned indirect funds for the PI. We assume that this will follow her, even if she moved to COSS.

cc: Povost Saul Jimenez-Sandoval