

Justifications for proposal to change the name of the Zoology Graduate Program to Integrative Biology

- 1) **The proposed name, Integrative Biology, more accurately reflects the activities of the program faculty and the training offered.** Our proposed name change is prompted by the need to change our name to something that better reflects the scope of teaching and research in our department, which is based on key basic and applied biological questions rather than exclusively animal-based research and teaching. The name Zoology strictly refers to animal biology, yet a growing number of Zoology faculty focus little (or not at all) on animals. Faculty research and graduate training in the department include the study of plants, plant communities, nutrient cycling, soil, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, and forest fire ecology in addition to topics in animal biology. Of the 20 faculty members in our department, only half focus on the study of animal biology *sensu stricto*. The remaining faculty members focus broadly on ecosystems and ecology. Changing the department name to Integrative Biology would more accurately represent the activities of our faculty and the training offered by our program to graduate students.
- 2) **The proposed name, Integrative Biology, more accurately reflects the program curriculum.** Graduate seminars and 300+ level courses in the department no longer focus exclusively on animal biology but incorporate and in some cases emphasize plant biology, soil, nutrient cycling, and other non-animal related topics in biology. Such courses include General Ecology, Ecological Techniques, Plant-Insect Interactions, Ecosystem Analysis, Theoretical Ecology, Ecology of Rivers and Streams, and Landscape Ecology. Changing the name of our department to Integrative Biology would better align the existing curriculum with the name of the program.
- 3) **Changing the program name from Zoology to Integrative Biology will strengthen our ability to recruit top students and benefit current students.** By changing the name of our graduate program to match that of our department, we will be able to more clearly communicate to prospective and current students that our department has a graduate program that matches our department's mission and focus and commitment to training students in modern biology. As it currently stands, the difference in names between our department (Integrative Biology) and our graduate program (Zoology) causes a great deal of confusion for prospective students. Our graduate coordinator and faculty receive questions from prospective students about how they can earn an Integrative Biology degree (rather than Zoology). In addition, our graduate program is also not included in national rankings where the name "Zoology" is no longer listed. Concerns have been raised by existing graduate students who do not study animals over the fact that the degree that will appear on their transcript is Zoology. Specifically, the students worry that the Zoology degree will weaken their ability to compete for positions in their true area of study (e.g., the study of plants, soils, or forest fire ecology). In support of this concern, our students have had reviewers of their grant proposal question whether the student is in the right department, and some students do not list their departmental name in their contact information because of the confusion it causes with colleagues and stakeholders. Furthermore, concerns have been raised by faculty members of the Zoology department over losing strong graduate students due to a mismatch between the name of the degree and the actual training. It is likely that students are less enthusiastic about receiving a graduate degree in Zoology when their career goals lie in the study of plants, soil, or forest fire ecology. Changing the name of the department would rectify mismatches between a student's future career goals and the degree obtained and increase our ability to recruit top-notch students.

- 4) **Changing the program name from Zoology to Integrative Biology will strengthen graduate student recruitment in molecular areas of biology.** Students interested in molecular aspects of biology do not often seek a degree in Zoology and applicants to this part of our program are few and typically of lower quality (in terms of academic performance and past research experience). Faculty who study molecular aspects of biology in our department generally do not train graduate students through Zoology (rather they train students through campus training programs such as Cellular and Molecular Biology or Neuroscience). Roughly half of the tenured faculty who have trained many graduate students have done so through programs other than Zoology, and this is not simply a function of funding. Changing the name of our program to Integrative Biology would increase the quantity and quality of students interested in different aspects of biology (e.g., molecular, cellular, ecological, evolutionary questions) and enhance our recruitment efforts in this area.
- 5) **Changing the program name from Zoology to Integrative Biology is consistent with changes at peer institutions.** The majority of Zoology programs at peer institutions of the University of Wisconsin have been renamed to reflect changes in the discipline. For example, the UC-Berkeley Zoology program is now named Integrative Biology, the University of Washington program is now Biology, and the Zoology program at Duke University is now Biology. Changing the program name from Zoology to Integrative Biology would thus be consistent with national trends, and should ensure that students find our department when prospecting for graduate programs.
- 6) **The term “Zoology” is often misunderstood.** The term “Zoology” is no longer well known to students or the general public. Often individuals believe Zoology refers to the study of zoos and the Zoology Department receives requests from students interested in receiving training that will prepare them for work in zoos. Changing the name to Integrative Biology will reduce confusion and attract students interested in the actual training offered by our program.
- 7) **Current students support the name change.** Our current graduate students in the department strongly support changing the name of the graduate program from Zoology to Biology (or Biological Sciences). Results of a recent survey show that 97% (38 out of 39 respondents (out of 50 students enrolled at the time)) supported the proposed name change. We also identified two students who felt that “Zoology” did not reflect their academic identity and switched programs but not advisors. This issue would be resolved with a programmatic name change.
- 8) **Outside reviewers support the name change.** As part of the 2016 review of our graduate programs, the outside review committee noted that “faculty and graduate students consider themselves to be biologists, not zoologists...There was [] strong agreement among the graduate students that we interviewed that a name change would be beneficial. For most students, a doctorate in zoology does not accurately describe their research and the name change would help with future job searches. Overall, the committee felt that the departmental name change to Integrative Biology is a good idea and will better reflect the ongoing research activities in the department.”