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# NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## EIU FORMS SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

CHARLESTON -- Eastern Illinois University is moving forward with plans to form a new administrative unit from the current departments of botany and zoology and associated programs.

College of Sciences Dean Lida Wall said botany and zoology will be consolidated into a newly formed School of Biological Sciences, which also will house the undergraduate programs in environmental biology and biological sciences with teacher certification, and the graduate programs in biological sciences and biological sciences education.

"Our intent is to provide students with a comprehensive, cohesive view of the biological sciences while preserving the strengths of botany and zoology and associated programs housed in the new School of Biological Sciences," Wall said.

The new structure will place the undergraduate programs in line with the graduate programs in botany, zoology and environmental biology which were merged to form the master of science degree in biological sciences in 1993. Last year, the bachelor of science degrees in botany and zoology with teacher certification were consolidated into the bachelor of science degree in biological sciences with teacher certification. "This reorganization also brings us in line with nearly all other universities, where botany and zoology reorganized into biology departments decades ago to take

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advantage of the integrated nature of the discipline," Wall noted.

Wall said the restructuring is designed to help students understand the integrated nature of biological sciences early in their studies; to encourage students to take advantage of additional career paths; to provide students with an unambiguous central location for obtaining information; to improve communication among departments, faculty and programs; and to streamline the administrative structure. "Continuation of the existing, costly administrative structure was not deemed an efficient way to expend limited resources nor to serve students. Focusing resources on existing areas of strength to achieve excellence in teaching, research and creative activities was considered to be the judicious choice.

"I anticipate that the new unit will have the potential to become a premier unit within the state when comparing similar institutions. There are numerous outstanding faculty within the departments and programs who can, by working together, promote a very visible School of Biological Sciences," Wall said.

She added, "Both botany and zoology and the other programs merging into the School of Biological Sciences have many accomplishments in teaching, research and service of which they and Eastern can be justifiably proud. These valued activities and accomplishments of the faculty will form the base of the new school that will be a major part of the college both in terms of size and intellectual vigor and interest."

In addition to furthering students' understanding of the integrated nature of biological sciences early in their careers, the School of Biological Sciences will allow current and future students to interact with faculty having expertise in a wide variety of areas covering the biological

department chairs. It has been made available for public review and comment.

Full implementation of the reorganization will take place over the next nine months, with the new administrative structure operational by July 1998. The restructuring plan currently is being revised according to written comments submitted by faculty and will be redistributed to faculty and the interim provost and vice president for academic affairs for final approval. A national search for a chair of the new school also is under way, said Wall, adding that the current department chairs will have the option of applying for the position or returning to faculty ranks.

University facilitators Jeanne Simpson and Bill Weber will begin working with faculty next week to discuss curricular issues and committee structures of the new school.