

Comments on a Proposal for a Ph.D. Program in Biology at IUPUI

This proposal concerns the conversion of an existing Purdue University PhD program to one that is based and administered entirely at IUPUI. The proposal builds on strong and successful program of training PhD students on the Indianapolis campus (IUPUI).

The proposed curriculum is rigorous, sensible, and demonstrably effective. The program is research intensive and is complemented by 90 credit hours of registration, including 24 credit hours of advanced course work. The course offerings are broad and provide a sound training in modern biology. The requirement that students present two separate one-hour seminars on research topics is an example of the strong training that will be given to candidates for the PhD degree.

The requirements for admission to the program are in keeping with standard practice at our nation's top research universities. A basic grounding in modern science is expected, but there is sufficient flexibility in the program to allow for so students who wish to pursue a career in the biological sciences but may have some deficiencies in their disciplinary background.

Provisions have been made to provide stipends for the degree candidates and it is noted that the present level of support may be slightly under the average for other institutions of this quality.

The faculty present a well thought out plan of study and the advising program is consistent with other programs that train top quality PhDs. Using the Graduate Committee as an Examination Committee is a very good practice so that faculty remain intimately involved with students during the course of their degree.

I have no substantive criticisms of the proposed program. It has functioned very well for twenty years and the courses, plan of study, mentoring, and supervision are all demonstrably effective.

The principal issue seems to be whether this program should continue with its present, albeit curious, administrative structure. Specifically, whether the program should be credited to the Purdue West Lafayette campus or gain local institutional control in Indianapolis? It would seem that local control, meaning both local authority and responsibility for the program, is essential if the University wishes to garner additional resources, take advantage of other local centers such as the Center for Regenerative Biology and Medicine, and strengthen ties with more local faculty and the professional schools. Without local authority and independence, granting agencies may view this program as a satellite operation and be less inclined to provide significant resources. In short, the strongest PhD programs are those controlled and operated by the faculty who are directly involved and committed to the program's success.