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April 15, 2021

Dan Feldman, Professor of Neurobiology (Proposal Committee Chair)
Hillel Adesnik, Associate Professor of Neurobiology
Tyrone Hayes, Professor, Integrative Biology
Steve Hinshaw, Professor, Psychology
Rich Ivry, Professor, Psychology
Daniela Kaufer, Professor, Integrative Biology
Markita Landry, Assistant Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Chunlei Liu, Associate Professor, Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences
Ellen Lumpkin, Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology
Oliver O'Reilly, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Associate Dean for Graduate
Education in the Division of Computing, Data Science, and Society
Bruno Olshausen, Professor of Vision Science, Optometry and Neuroscience
David Presti, Teaching Professor of Neurobiology
Rowland Taylor, Professor of Optometry and Vision Science
Frederic Theunissen, Professor, Psychology

RE: Invitation and Charge to Proposal Committee for the formation of a Department of Neuroscience

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to invite this committee to submit a proposal for the formation of a Department of Neuroscience at the University of California, Berkeley, within the College of Letters & Science (L&S) Division of Biological Sciences. This proposal would ultimately be reviewed by appropriate committees of the Academic Senate and by campus leadership to make a decision as to whether to proceed with establishing the department. It is my hope that the formation of this department will promote and advance the frontiers of neuroscience and lead to synergistic interactions and collaborations between other units, such as Molecular & Cell Biology (MCB), Psychology, and the School of Optometry, where faculty have shared goals.

In my view, a proposal should address the following issues and questions:

- Academic departments should, first and foremost, be student-serving. What is the student demand for neuroscience programs at the undergraduate level? What does a neuroscience "major map" of courses look like? How would existing graduate programs at the Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute (HWNI) be administered if a neuroscience department were to be established?

- Berkeley is committed to excellence and should only establish units that can be global leaders. What are the prospects that Berkeley can be in the top-five programs in

Charge to Proposal Committee for the
formation of a Department of Neuroscience
April 15, 2021 - Page 2 of 4

neuroscience and how will this be achieved?

- Berkeley's newest academic department should embed diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice (DEIBJ) into the foundation of its creation and innovation. How would a Department of Neuroscience ensure and measure success with a DEIBJ lens? How are the perspectives of underrepresented groups (e.g., by race, gender, disability, LGBTQ+) included and considered in the proposal development process?

- What resources will be required for the department to succeed and will this be viable in the current campus budget crisis? Please detail a realistic plan for faculty FTE, departmental staffing, temporary academic support (TAS) budget, space, and equipment.

  With respect to faculty FTE, please keep in mind that the campus has struggled budgetarily to maintain 1,500 state-funded FTE over the course of this century, a number that is far below what the campus needs overall. Hence, most, if not all, the state-funded faculty FTE for this new department will need to come from existing units (i.e., via transfer of existing FTE) rather than via net new additions to the campus or the Division of Biological Sciences. In addition to state-funded FTE, what might be the new department's capacity to grow via philanthropically-supported FTE or via other non-state funding?

  Likewise, other resources will principally need to be reallocated from existing academic units and the HWNI. To the extent resources beyond that will be required, their principal source will need to be from other than existing campus funds. What might be the new department's capacity to obtain other funding via philanthropy and other sources?

- Existing academic departments, undergraduate majors, and graduate groups (e.g., Cognitive Science, MCB, Psychology, Vision Science, and Bioengineering) should only be strengthened—rather than weakened—by a new department. How would this be achieved?

- A new academic department that draws faculty from existing departments should reduce barriers to collaboration and encourage multidisciplinary work across departmental lines. What structures and incentives do you propose for the Department of Neuroscience to achieve this?

- A new academic department should "grow the pie" far more than it "redivides the pie." How would a neuroscience department bring in new external resources and create virtuous cycles for funding in all departments—without leaving any unit on campus subcritical?

- The biosciences reorganization into MCB and Integrative Biology was premised on the idea of scale, rather than organ or classification, as the organizing principle for biology departments at Berkeley. A Department of Neuroscience represents a significant new direction in how departments in the biological sciences could be organized. Please comment on the plausible outcomes for the biological sciences broadly in creating this new department.
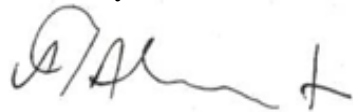
Charge to Proposal Committee for the
formation of a Department of Neuroscience
April 15, 2021 - Page 3 of 4

I envision the review process to proceed as follows:

1. The faculty committee drafts and submits a proposal for review to the:

    o   L&S Executive Committee (EC)
    o   Dean of Biological Sciences
    o   Executive Dean of L&S (EDLS)
    o   Vice Provost for Faculty (VPF)
    o   Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA)
    o   Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education (VCUE)
    o   Vice Provost for Academic Planning (VPAP)
    o   Vice Provost for Graduate Studies (VPGS)

2. The VCUE reviews the proposal and identifies any substantive changes that would be needed for accreditation

3. The VPF would refer the proposal to the Academic Senate's Divisional Council (DIVCO) for review by the:

    o   Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations (BIR)
    o   Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA)
    o   Graduate Council (GC)
    o   Undergraduate Council (UGC)
    o   Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate (DECC)

4. DIVCO reviews input from the Senate committees and provides a recommendation to the VPF

5. The VPF reviews the collective feedback from the Academic Senate and campus leaders and makes a final decision in consultation with the Chancellor and Provost

Establishing an academic department is a rare and special event. The most recent department to be established at Berkeley was the Department of Film and Media in 2010. I invite your review of the proposal that was submitted as one model for the proposal structure.

The committee will be convened and organized by the chair, Dan Feldman. We invite you to submit your proposal at your earliest convenience and hopefully by June 30, 2021. My office, the VPF, the OPA, and Senate leadership are available to answer questions you may have about the process or other connected matters.

Sincerely,

A. Paul Alivisatos

Charge to Proposal Committee for the
formation of a Department of Neuroscience
April 15, 2021 - Page 4 of 4

cc: Carol Christ, Chancellor
Lisa Alvarez-Cohen, Vice Provost for Academic Planning
Michael Botchan, Dean, Biological Sciences Division
Janet Broughton, Executive Dean, College of Letters & Science
Serena Chen, Chair, Department of Psychology
Ronald C. Cohen, Vice Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
David Drubin, Chair, Department of Molecular and Cell Biology
Robert Dudley, Chair, Department of Integrative Biology
John Flanagan, Dean, School of Optometry
Lisa García Bedolla, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
Ben Hermalin, Vice Provost for the Faculty
Ehud Isacoff, Director, Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute
Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Randy Howard Katz, Vice Chancellor for Research
Catherine P. Koshland, Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education
Andrea Lambert, Chief of Staff to the Provost
Raka Ray, Dean, Social Sciences Division
Chris Yetter, Senior Advisor to the Provost