

# Notice of Intent to Rename an Academic Program, Department, or College

**Name of unit:** Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Department of Biomedical Sciences

**Proposed new name of unit:** Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Department of Translational Medicine and Physiology

**Justification for proposed name change:** Two independent factors contributed the initiative to rename the department of Biomedical Sciences. First, it came to our attention that the term “Basic Sciences” was being proposed as a name for an integrated graduate program in the College of Veterinary Medicine (currently Veterinary Sciences). We, as a faculty, were not opposed to the proposal to apply this name to the graduate program but recognized that, when adopted, the new name (Biomedical Sciences) could cause confusion as to the affiliation of the graduate program, which belongs to the College of Veterinary Medicine, not to the Department of Biomedical Sciences. As Biomedical Sciences is a very general name, it is a good choice for a graduate program that aspires to integrate several different life science disciplines. On the other hand, it does not define or describe our department very well. This led to the second factor influencing this proposal for a departmental name change.

In an effort to better define our department, the faculty undertook an internal discussion to articulate the central themes of the scholarship in the department and, very importantly, our aspirations for the future. That is, what distinguishes the department of Biomedical Sciences from similar units at WSU and what direction do we want to pursue going forward that will distinguish us as a department, further the mission of the College of Medicine, and add maximal value to WSU. It was noted that the department is not defined by any scientific discipline and currently contains scientists working in areas of neuroscience, cancer biology, immunology, and reproduction. We have faculty conducting research at the level of cell and molecular biology and at the level of organ systems and whole animals. We have faculty using cell culture systems, model systems such as *Drosophila* and *C. elegans*, animal models and translational work in humans. Since there is no single research area that describes the department and no single system in which the faculty work, we sought to identify other common threads and attributes. After much discussion it seems that the concept of research translation to clinical application was a current attribute, and a key aspiration, of research in the department. The aspirational aspect was emphasized as the faculty felt that being the first, and currently only, foundational research department in the new College of Medicine, that our research should acknowledge our roots in medicine, and we should aspire to translate our work from the bench to the bedside. Thus, the descriptor “Translational Medicine” was adopted.

Likewise, the actual work of faculty could largely be captured by the broad term “Physiology”. Even with translation in mind, much of the research produced by the department adds to the body of basic research in the medical sciences. We wanted to capture this reality in our name as well. These words were then assembled into our proposed name and agreed upon by a vote of the faculty.

The thought process that informs our discussion of the department name also influences other planning work in the department. We are currently having a conversation about a future graduate program and what unique features it may incorporate to add value and diversity to WSU offerings. Again, the goal of translation was prioritized. We have discussed the idea of including clinicians in some capacity on thesis committees, to inform graduate student projects as to their relevance to medicine and their translational potential. We have also discussed possible short apprenticeships for graduate students in clinical settings relevant to their project area. These types of activities anchor the graduate program to the goal of emphasizing translational research and preparing graduate students for careers in the medical life science sector. Such a program is much more aligned with our proposed new name than our current name and provides an example of why we are invested in the name change for our department.

**Describe process used to arrive at new name, including consultations with faculty and other potentially affected units:** As described above, the department faculty brain-stormed terms that would define or characterize the work of the department, both current and future. The terms and phrases proposed were put together in various combinations and discussed. The best names were listed, and faculty were asked to vote on the one they thought best described the department. The majority vote was for the name “Translational Medicine and Physiology”. The department chair of Biomedical Sciences discussed the voted upon name with the other department chairs in the College of Medicine and with the Dean, who also agreed with and approved the proposed name.

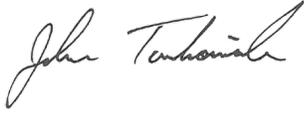
**List any and all objections raised during consultations to proposed new name and provide responses to each. If none, enter "None":** There were no objections raised to the proposed name by anyone within department or by any of the other department chairs. The process of choosing the new name was a thoughtful and inclusive one.

**Desired effective date (semester, calendar year)** Our original proposed timeline for the effective date of the change was to be January 1, 2021. As this date has passed, we would like to change the name as soon as possible in 2021.

**Name of person submitting this Notice:** This proposal was originally submitted by Marcos Frank, in his role as chair of Biomedical Sciences. This updated proposal is being submitted by Ken Roberts, the new chair of Biomedical Sciences.

**Date submitted:** 01.26.21

**Electronic signature of dean of sponsoring college**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Tomkowiak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John Tomkowiak, MD, MOL  
Founding Dean

**Date signed:** 01.26.21

Submit completed form to Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President at  
[provost.deg.changes@wsu.edu](mailto:provost.deg.changes@wsu.edu) .