



Russell Laboratories Administrative Service Center

Serving the Departments of Entomology, Forest & Wildlife Ecology, and Plant Pathology

14 November 2008

TO: Dean Molly Jahn
Assistant Dean Carol Hillmer

FROM: Murray Clayton, Chair, Department of Plant Pathology
Walt Goodman, Chair, Department of Entomology
Ray Guries, Chair, Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology

RE: Russell Administrative Service Center Update

The idea of a Russell Labs Center was formed in 2005 when Dean Elton Aberle met with chairs from Forest Ecology and Management and Wildlife Ecology to discuss the administrative and infrastructure needs, and staffing efficiencies, related to smaller departments. Aberle noted a campus perception, especially in the Chancellor's Office, that small units on the Madison Campus were considered "inefficient" and that CALS could possibly be penalized in future budget negotiations for maintaining/supporting small departments. Aberle wished to streamline and consolidate administrative services within and across units but understood that many – perhaps most - departments would not favor such an arrangement. However, some also recognized that streamlining would provide CALS units with a greater opportunity to design and build a so-called 'hub' rather than submit to any plan devised by central campus administration. At that time, Darrell Bazzell's office was actively promoting the idea of developing centralized administrative centers within colleges across the campus.

With strong encouragement from Dean Molly Jahn in early 2007, the chairs of the Departments of Entomology, Forest and Wildlife Ecology and Plant Pathology and the administrators of Russell Labs began meeting to outline a plan for an administrative hub. This plan was designed to incorporate the current joint Plant Pathology and Entomology Information Technology and Facilities operations into a comprehensive organizational structure that would also include administrative, financial and student services for all of Russell Labs. The basic premise from which we have planned is that efficiencies in staffing and resource use could be gained by shared services so that each department would not need to employ one-of-a-kind staff to meet department needs. By eliminating some redundancies, i.e. four University Services Associates (USAs) for phones and mail, four department administrators, at least four financial specialists, etc., we could share work loads, e.g., processing Travel Expense Reports (TERs), submitting grant proposals, managing Timetables, etc. and have backup staff to cover important functions such as financial services. We would also be able to employ and retain highly qualified staff in vital positions by virtue of concentrating resources on some areas, e.g. pre- and post-award

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management. In constructing this plan we were advised by CALS administration that neither new funds nor FTEs would be available for implementing any Center and there should be no plans for eliminating any staff. Thus, we would have to allocate resources in ways that addressed critical needs for faculty and programs without receiving additional funding.

The First DRAFT of a Russell Lab HUB Transition Plan was distributed on January 30, 2007. The plan included a timeline for beginning in 2007 with the expectation that the plan would be active by October 2008. However, the merger of the Departments of Forest Ecology and Management and Wildlife Ecology, and the departure/retirement of several administrative staff, e.g. Jim Butts, Sarah Potts, delayed some activities and it was not until late in 2007 that the initial steps were taken.

TimeLine:

February 2008 – The Administrative Department Manager (ADM) position is posted; Sheila Timme is hired into that position in March 2008.

April 2008 – The Financial Specialist Program Supervisor position is posted; Margaret Webster is hired into the position.

May 2008 – The Academic Department Supervisor position is posted; Ken Scott is hired into that position in June 2008.

By July 2008, well ahead of the target date of October 2008, the Organization Chart was realigned to include a staff of Manager/Supervisors. The Chart includes five support groups as follows: administrative, financial, information technology, facilities and student services. No individuals were terminated as a result of this realignment but several positions are currently vacant or are in the process of being filled.

ADMINISTRATION

The position of Academic Department Manager is served by Sheila Timme, former Department Supervisor in Forest and Wildlife Ecology. Formerly, each department had a Department Administrator (Jim Butts, Marilyn McDole, Sarah Potts and Sheila Timme) but only Sheila Timme remains. Her duties are focused primarily on administration of department personnel and affairs while leaving most financial affairs to others.

The position of Academic Department Supervisor is served by Ken Scott, former Supervisor at the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis. This is a new position and essentially replaces one of the Department Administrator positions.

The position of Financial Specialist Program Supervisor is served by Margaret Webster, former Financial Specialist 4 of the Department of Bacteriology. This also is a new position but Margaret continues to process grants and handle other duties in addition to managing the corps of financial specialists.

FINANCIAL

The greatest degree of consolidation and realignment has occurred in the financial and grants management area. In the past, there had not been much interdepartmental coordination but in the new organization, the Financial Supervisor heads up the grants management, accounting services, purchasing, analysis of data requirements, reporting and auditing, revenue producing activities and budget for revenues in excess of \$20 million. In this position, she coordinates the submittal of grants through an ever-changing electronic system; new faculty are brought on board with clearances in place and funding secured so they “can hit the ground running.” In our opinion, no small department would be able to support the expertise and specialization that she and her staff bring to the Center. The Senior Administrative Specialist, Laurie Luther is working through an ‘internship’ arrangement created by CALS Research Division, while Anita Hoffmann is a continuing Financial Specialist 3. We are currently recruiting for an Accountant and a Financial Specialist 2. Most recently the Unit Service Program Associate B has terminated and we will recruit to fill that position. Two Financial Specialist 4 positions are currently vacant; one of these vacancies was created when Margaret Webster assumed the position of Supervisor.

FACILITIES

A model for cooperation between departments was put in place in 2005 when Mike Schaeffer, a long-time instrument maker in Plant Pathology, was named instrument shop supervisor of Plant Pathology and Entomology. He also serves as building manager for Russell Labs. Tom Dettinger (formerly a maintenance mechanic) was promoted to instrument maker journey, and a new instrument maker position was filled by Matthew Moore in October 2005 (a retired academic staff technician was not replaced). Along with Lenice Covert (lab tech prep) in Plant Pathology, the group provides specialized technical services, fabrication of equipment, maintenance of growth rooms, and planning for minor remodeling.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Russell Labs Local Area Network was established in 1993 by the Departments of Plant Pathology and Entomology (Nutritional Sciences, originally a member, withdrew in December 2007) and is another example of early cooperation between departments. Barry DeZonia, the Forest and Wildlife Ecology IT specialist also collaborates here. A computer lab currently serves students in both Entomology and Plant Pathology, with expenses for servers, site licenses and supplies split equally. In 2005, Entomology, Forest Ecology and Management and Plant Pathology combined to support a server room in the basement of Russell Labs with equipment and maintenance costs shared by all programs. This shared space has worked well and already

needs to expand. Student hourly employees also have been hired to help with LAN management and service to employees, but the majority of work is done by Senior Information Processing Consultant, Barry DeZonia, IS Resource Technician, James Hoey and IS Network Technician, Cory Wiedenhoeft. The long-time Manager-Information Technology Specialist, Stuart Baker, retired in the summer of 2008 and a search is underway for his replacement

STUDENT SERVICES

Plant Pathology established a student services coordinator position in 1996. Cathy Davis Gray held the position for the past nine years; she departed recently and a search is underway for her replacement. Cathy coordinated recruitment, admissions and management of graduate students in Plant Pathology. With the formation of the 'hub', her role expanded to include similar duties for Entomology and some duties for Forest and Wildlife Ecology. Since her departure, Ken Scott, Laurie Ballentine and Helen Thompson are all responding to the day-to-day requests from faculty and students; their experience and expertise in the student program area has been a positive in the interim. We are currently recruiting for a person to be responsible for graduate student recruitment, admissions, and management as well as responsibilities for the Timetable, staff support to curriculum committees, and record keeping for all of the departments in Russell Labs. Most of these functions were handled by either faculty or classified staff in the other departments.

CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

We took the approach that the administrative center or 'hub' is a new business working within the framework of old models. We started with three distinct departments, all operating on their own but under the umbrella of college and university policies and procedures. Administratively, all had the same set of goals within the University mission (teaching, research and outreach) but each department tried to accomplish their mission in rather different ways. At least some of this variation can be attributed to historical differences in the formation and growth of departments, and to personalities that shaped the department cultures over time.

Both immediate needs as well as long range plans had to be addressed each day as decisions were made to reorganize how we provided services. Most discussions centered on questions of resource availability and service needs, i.e., how can we support the research, teaching and outreach with staff and budget available. This remains a moving target. Our first approximation to streamlining services and operations involved some staff relocation into central areas where new teams could work together. Such relocation created/revealed two problems: (1) perceptions on the part of some faculty that they were 'losing' services and (2) a realization that there were no spaces in Russell Labs currently configured to support a 'hub' – we would have to fragment services because they could not all exist in a central location. As support staff moved from one area to concentrate office operations to serve the larger group, some faculty became uneasy that their area did not have staff – or at least not at historic levels. With the impending move of the

main Forest and Wildlife Ecology office to the 2nd floor of Russell, all three department offices will finally be on one level; this should help with provision of services. But both of these problems existed from the beginning and continue today.

Russell Laboratories was completed in 1963 having been designed to accommodate four separate departments. There is no receiving area on the first floor that could serve as reception, parcel delivery or information. This was noted in the original draft document for the configuration of the hub (January 2007.) The layout of the four department offices remains as four separate suites of offices, no one of which is adequate to serve as an Administrative Service Center. As the financial operations staff need to work together on every aspect of pre-award and post-award management, our worlds usually collide often in the second floor foyer by the elevator, handing off paperwork and mail. This is a day-to-day reality.

Information Technology, likewise is distributed in several areas in the building with some servers in rooms on 4th floor and some in the basement; two IS Network specialists have offices on 4th floor and one specialist is on 1st floor. We are currently seeking space in the lower level for new servers for a new project on bio-fuels. Facilities management has space in the lower level and a shop in the Stock Pavilion, not a perfect plan but somewhat manageable. If we had the luxury to redesign our space, the shop would be located within the building. Fortunately, the student services office is centrally located on second floor and that accommodates the faculty, staff and students well.

The process of managing a new business using an old model leads to everyday nuisances. For example, the financial management of grants, payrolls, human resources and student services all operate via authorizations and passwords associated with access codes and sign on privileges overseen by the college (or higher). We continue to encounter resistance at several levels in trying to convince *all* university offices of the fact that we are *one* center working across *three* departments. The need to maintain separate codes for all departments, etc. creates a maze of required authorizations for all staff. Requests still lead to a string of forms to obtain authorizations for all three departments. It would be far better to have a single UDDS for most 'hub' transactions. We are working with the Business Office at CALS to transition to that single UDDS. In dealing with the many changes in creating the center, the CALS Business Office has been most helpful. They advocate for and encourage our staff to attend training sessions and seminars sponsored by Accounting Services and Research and Sponsored Programs. The Research Division has developed an 'internship' for our Senior Administrative Specialist in the pre-award area and this is serving our grants management area well.

On the other hand, the problems that continue at Research and Sponsored Programs have had a critical impact on our processing of grants and contracts. Delays in awards and contracts, issuing account numbers, processing invoices late all coupled with a total lack of communication has caused us more work through additional Cost Transfer Requests and Salary Cost Transfers. Our faculty and project managers come to us when projects are delayed but we are usually

powerless to help or to expedite requests to RSP. We are in resounding agreement that Research and Sponsored Programs is an area needing assistance from the new Chancellor.

Departments, by virtue of their role in the College, are readily identifiable and foster loyalty and esprit de corps. Faculty are members of one or more departments and serve the campus community through that association. Faculty and staff relate to their department through curricula, through programs in extension and outreach, and through their research projects. The center/hub has yet to generate such support or loyalty and this may explain some 'resistance' to consolidation and apparent loss of department identity. The idea that one department could share the "main office" with another department is simply not looked upon favorably. However, with the emergence of such consortiums as GLBRC, and the opening of the MMB, there is some interest among some faculty to increase collaborations on research projects. Sharing resources is not a new idea but it may be viewed more favorably as faculty enjoy more success from the benefits of consortia working across disciplines. State and Federal budget reductions may be the incentive to encouraging more departments to consider the efficiencies associated with shared resources.

The faculty, staff and students of Russell Labs are a diverse group. For the most part, our consolidation is on a steady course. It remains a work in progress -- if staff need to move their work station, or if there is a need to share duties, it is done with consideration to the mission of the departments and their staff. We have tried to solicit input and ideas to better help the process. There have been retirements, promotions within and folks who have left to take a promotion. There have been transfers to other departments and there are new hires; all these activities that occur in any department operations around campus. We are currently recruiting for two new faculty positions, two academic staff and three classified staff; the CALS Human Resources staff have been very supportive of our efforts to move forward with these searches.

Looking forward, opportunities and challenges lie ahead. We hope to recruit the talent we need to continue our support of the teaching, research, and extension missions in CALS. We support the work each day to mentor new faculty, staff and students, but the challenges lie in finding the grant funds to support our research labs and field work. And we need to we sustain the quality of our programs through continued funding from the state, federal agencies, corporations and private benefactors.

In summary, the challenge is not only our challenge but that of the campus, the college and all who interact with us each day. In a healthy work environment, staff members feel encouraged to make a difference and achieve success. If we are achieving our goals today in the workplace, it often is an indication that tomorrow will be even better.

Russell Labs Administrative Service Center
November 2008

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Department of Plant Pathology
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Sheila Timme
Academic Department Manager

