



October 31, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing in support of proposals requesting approval for the name change of the "Department of Human Development" to the "Department of Human Development and Family Science." This name change, along with the parallel change in the titles of the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees offered by our department, is proposed to accurately describe the department's programs and activities and to be in line with similar departments across the country.

The immediate impetus for this move is the fact that many other departments like this one at major universities have changed the name of their units recently (e.g., University of Missouri, Ohio State University, University of Georgia, University of Texas at Austin, Oklahoma State University, Oregon State University, and the University of Arkansas). A recent article (Hans, J., Whither famology? Department name trends across four decades, *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 2014, 63, 323-332) reported that of 217 academic departments, only four were called "Human Development." Furthermore, of academic departments at research universities with very high research activity, the most popular department name is "Human Development and Family Science." The trajectory of names over time clearly shows that adoption of "Human Development and Family Science" is increasing. The National Council on Family Relations, the primary professional organization for family scholarship, formally adopted "family science" as the preferred term to identify the field. It is important for the field that its identity be included in the name of academic units, particularly in a time of attention being paid to recruitment and enrollment, which is largely initiated by word searches on the internet. The current department name, because it does not have "family science" in the title, renders the scholarship and teaching of those in the family area invisible. This is particularly unhelpful for the Marriage and Family Therapy graduate programs and for the Family Studies graduate program. Changing the name of the department to Human Development and Family Science would also give visibility to the breadth of career options available to undergraduates who work with families.

The department's leadership conducted a survey of faculty members and graduate students in the department in the fall of 2015. The large majority of respondents (85%, the same percentage of faculty and graduate students) in an anonymous survey favored the department name and degree title changes.

The changing of the department name and degree titles requires no outside accrediting board to establish its legitimacy. The changes will not alter the university's mission or curricular offerings. The changes are executable within the department's currently authorized funds and no additional resources will be requested.

Sincerely yours,

*Anisa Zvonkovic*

Anisa M. Zvonkovic, Ph.D.  
Professor and Head

**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA  
PROPOSAL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE  
COVER SHEET**

1. Institution Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University		
2. Nature of Proposed Change (i.e., to establish, reorganize, or terminate/close an institutional unit). Please indicate the change here. Attach a detailed description of the change as a separate document. Attach copies of the institution's current and resultant organizational charts. Change the name of the Department of Human Development to Department of Human Development and Family Science.		
3. Purpose of Proposed Change. Please indicate the reason(s) for the change here. Attach a detailed description of the rationale for the change on a separate page. The proposed name keeps pace with the curricular and research emphasis of the department, faculty expertise, and an inclusive social science that better represents the department's instructional, research, and outreach and engagement focus.		
4. Type of Proposed Change (check one).		
SIMPLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	COMPLEX <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please explain how the change fits with the institution's mission, curriculum, and funding on a separate page.	Please complete and submit Part I Supplemental Information and Part II Information for Non-exempt off-campus site.	
5. Does this proposed change involve the establishment of an off-campus instructional site?		
NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>		
If yes, does the proposal fit the criteria for a partially-exempt, non-exempt, or fully-exempt instructional site?		
PARTIALLY-EXEMPT <input type="checkbox"/> If partially-exempt, please attach documentation to support this status.	NON-EXEMPT <input type="checkbox"/> If non-exempt, please complete and submit Part II and Part III of this form.	FULLY-EXEMPT <input type="checkbox"/> If fully-exempt, please attach documentation to support this status.
6. Date of Approval by Board of Visitors. (MM/DD/YYYY)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Check box if BOV approval is not needed.		
7. Proposed Effective Date of Organizational Change. 08/01/2017		

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature  
  
Executive Vice President and Provost  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
  
540-231-6122  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**  
**Proposal to Rename the Department of Human Development**

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# **Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

## **Proposal to Rename the Department of Human Development**

### **Supplemental Justification**

#### **Institution**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

#### **Proposed Change**

Virginia Tech seeks approval to rename the Department of Human Development to Department of Human Development and Family Science.

#### **Background**

The department of Human Development was established in 1981 when it was separated from the former Department of Management, Housing, and Family Development; at that time, the department name was Family and Child Development. However, that name did not reflect the lifespan focus of the department which included not only child development but also adolescent and adult development, so in 1999, the department was renamed to Human Development. Even though the typical name of similar programs at other universities was Human Development-Family Studies, the faculty could not agree on that name and settled instead on Human Development.

#### **Purpose of Proposed Change**

Another name change is being initiated to reflect more accurately the full range of courses, training, and research in the department. Although the current name highlights the coursework, training, and research on all stages of the lifespan (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age), it omits recognition of another important long-standing focus in the department, family science. Family science is a professional identity for many faculty members, particularly those in the family studies and marriage and family therapy program areas. The current department is a strong interdisciplinary unit that offers degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels, each of which includes both human development and family science courses. The faculty overwhelmingly support a departmental name change that better represents the integration between developmental and family sciences, which reflects the work the faculty do as a unit. The name change will enhance the visibility and scope of faculty work with prospective students, the public, and colleagues within and outside the University. It is more consistent with faculty training and expertise than the current name.

#### **Rationale**

The impetus for changing the department name is to join a national movement that recognizes the integration of life span human development and family science and seeks to unify this multidisciplinary field via name recognition. The fact that many other departments at peer institutions have recently changed the name of their units to Human Development and Family Science (e.g., University of Missouri, Ohio State University, University of Georgia, University of Illinois, University of Texas at Austin, Oklahoma State University, Oregon State University, and

the University of Arkansas) highlights the trend to include family science as a label for organizational units and degrees. A recent article<sup>1</sup> reported that of 217 academic departments, only 4 were called “Human Development.” Furthermore, of academic departments at research universities with very high research activity, only Virginia Tech’s department is called “Human Development.” The most popular department name among research universities is “Human Development and Family Science.” The trajectory of names over time clearly shows that “Human Development and Family Science” is increasingly used as the department name for similar programs. The National Council on Family Relations, the primary professional organization for family scholarship, formally adopted family science as the preferred term to identify the field.<sup>2</sup> It is important for the field of family science that its identity be included in the name of the academic unit, particularly in a time of attention being paid to stronger recruitment in order to increase enrollment. Prospective students often begin their search for a program of interest by conducting word searches on the internet. The current name, because it does not include “family science,” render the scholarship and teaching of those in the family area invisible and may prevent prospective students from finding Virginia Tech as an institution to which they could apply. The current absence of family science in the department name is particularly problematic for the graduate areas of marriage and family therapy and family studies. It also hampers visibility of the types of career options available to undergraduates who are prepared to work with families after completing the bachelor’s degree in this department.

The department head conducted an anonymous survey of department faculty members and graduate students in the fall of 2015. The large majority of respondents (85% of both faculty and graduate students) favored this name change.

### **Curriculum**

This change is in the department name only and will not affect the organizational structure of the department or the College. The department will continue to offer the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in Human Development with no changes to the curricula of these degrees. Proposals are being submitted concurrently to change the graduate degree titles to the M.S. and Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science.

### **Faculty**

Changing the department name does not require any changes in the number or responsibilities of faculty.

### **Administration**

Changing the department name does not require any changes in the number or responsibilities of administrators.

### **Space**

Changing the department name does not have any effect on departmental space.

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<sup>1</sup> Hans, J. D. (2014). Whither famology? Department name trends across four decades. *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 63, 323-332.

<sup>2</sup> Cushman, D. (2014, Fall). The future of family science. *NCFR Report*, 59(3), 5.

[https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/downloads/news/report\\_news\\_section\\_fall\\_2014\\_rev\\_9-30-14\\_0.pdf](https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/downloads/news/report_news_section_fall_2014_rev_9-30-14_0.pdf)

**Resources**

No additional state resources will be required to implement the change; funds in the department account at the Virginia Tech Foundation will be utilized. An estimated \$1500 will be allocated for the costs associated with changing and publicizing the name change, primarily for signage, promotional items, and updated electronic materials (letterhead template and website revision).

**Notification**

Current students will be notified in the following ways: (1) email to all enrolled students; (2) announcement and explanation on the webpage and the Facebook group for HD students; (3) working with the university communications offices, including the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Director of Marketing and Communication and university-level communications, and with the Undergraduate Admissions office and the Graduate School for notifying the public and potential students.