Adjusting Program Requirements to Allow Credit for CompBio Courses

This is regarding the PhD. course requirements. We have 7 areas (listed below), and require students to take 7 courses in at least 5 different areas with an upper bound of 2 in an area (an exception is PL/SE/HCI in which 3 courses are allowed with no more than two from each subgroup).

1. AI
2. PL/SE/HCI
3. Systems
4. Databases
5. Algs&Theory
6. Vision & Geometric Computing
7. Scientific Computing

CompBio courses until now have been offered as either AI or Theory. This creates a problem for AI and Theory students as they cannot use the CompBio class to satisfy requirements if they have already taken 2 courses in that area. Since both areas have an extensive offering, this is a serious problem.

Plan A:
This proposed change to the Ph.D. requirements will allow students to take up to 3 courses in any area. CompBio will continue to offer their courses as either AI or Theory for now. Thus a student could take (3,1,1,1,1) as their distribution or (2,2,1,1,1) or (1,1,1,1,1,2) or (1,1,1,1,1,1,1). The last 3 options are allowed under the current rules. This change will also make the requirements more uniform with respect to other research areas.

Plan B:
Currently we are listing computational biology courses as AI or Theory courses. This causes a real problem for students who want to take these classes and have already taken 2 courses in that area. To alleviate this concern, both the AI and Theory groups would like to permit students to take computational biology as a 3rd course in these areas. (Currently, PL/SE/HCI already allows students to take 3 courses, with no more than 2 from each subgroup.) The Computational Biology faculty, the AI faculty, and the Theory faculty are all strongly supportive of this change.

The proposed revision to policy is as follows:

"Courses in the Computational Biology area, CMSC 828N and 858E, currently count as part of the AI and Theory field committee areas. Ph.D. students will be allowed to take
up to 3 courses in AI or Theory if and only if one of the 3 courses is a Computational Biology course."