



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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Date: May 14, 2021

To: Provost and Vice Chancellor, Patricia Kleine

From: MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE

Subject: APC report regarding program review of the Department of Biology

The Academic Policies Committee (APC) appreciates the time and effort of Chair, Paula Kleintjes Neff of the Department of Biology, the members of the Internal Review Committee (Scott Clark, Sanchita Hati, Chris Ahrendt) and the external reviewer (Dr. Michael Kelrick) for the review of the Department of Biology. The internal review committee and external reviewer reports provided the committee useful information to assist us in forming our recommendations. While the APC recommendations are generally summarized on the attached spreadsheet, APC is providing additional details in the form of this letter.

COMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Biology is to be commended for the following:

1. Development of its Strategic Plan 2020-2025.
2. Development of Regent's Application for Teaching Excellence.
3. The continued high-level of participation and quality instruction in the LE program.
4. The department's continued commitments to High Impact Practices (HIPs) inside and outside of the classroom for undergraduate students.
5. The department's commitment to securing extramural/intramural funding to support faculty and undergraduate student scholarly activity and professional development.
6. The department's development of an Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion statement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop a Five-year Staffing Plan. The Department of Biology expects imminent faculty turnover due to retirement (at least five retirements are anticipated between 2021-2023). According to both internal and external reviewers, careful planning should be done to replace retirees as soon as possible. It is crucial that these losses in FTE be replaced in a timely manner because of the potential detriments to service to the university, course offerings, and student experiential learning. The department is offering fewer specialized courses due to the lack of FTE; faculty are experiencing greater workloads (committee work, class preps/contact hours, larger class sizes). The department should prioritize "Strategic Plan Goal #1, strategy #1 (Identify projected department needs and hire new faculty). The department's plan should clearly identify academic program priorities including the proper balance between instruction, scholarship, and service. The plan should include specifics on how future job descriptions will provide for an interdisciplinary biology program by fostering cross-disciplinarity in their curriculum, their research, and their partnerships. The purpose of this planning exercise is to indicate what the university can expect in terms of course availability, scholarship, and service activities in the future. The exercise also makes it clear to all individuals (both internal and external constituents) that different levels of staffing will result in different levels of service to the program, university, and community.

EXCELLENCE: Our measure, our motto, our goal.

Academic Policies Committee

University Senate

Summary Recommendation:

The Department of Biology is doing a great job in providing a distinctive, rigorous, and highly regarded undergraduate program. For the program to continue in these efforts, the APC recommends these immediate actions:

- Restore existing lab manager position to 100% and consider hiring an additional lab manager position when the new science building is completed
- The department's DPC appropriately evaluate the contributions of the internal equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) working group to ensure this commitment does not attenuate tenure-track faculty progression in academia
- Continue to explore ways to enhance EDI initiatives within the department via student recruitment, embedding in coursework, and/or professional development

APC strongly supports the recommendation from all the other review levels to “continue in present form” considering the recommendations made above. The APC also determined that the program review form additional recommendation items: 4, 14, 17, 18 be left blank as these items are more suited for departmental and/or College of Arts and Sciences deliberation.

Cc.

Dr. Paula Kleintjes Neff, Chair, Department of Biology

Dr. Mary Hoffman, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs