

Department of Biology

Departmental Assessment Executive Summary for Academic Year 2004-2005

Part 1

1) Briefly summarize the assessment progress made in your department during the past academic year.

Unfortunately, no progress has been made this past academic year due to several factors. First, during the fall of 2004 labor disputes led to a three week strike that stopped all activity in our full-time instructors' classrooms. Even in classrooms that continued instruction, the atmosphere was tense and unproductive. Upon returning to the classroom, a departmental decision was made to halt the evaluation of all assessment tools. The department felt that the three week break that students had experienced, followed by a two week holiday break, would potentially affect their learning process. We felt that any data collected from these students would be skewed and could not be compared with past and future data. Secondly, with the start of the spring 2005 semester, came the appointment of an administrator as our department chairperson. As a result of this appointment, the department lost all control over the hiring of adjuncts and the reviewing of adjunct performance in the classroom. We felt, without any input or knowledge of what was going on in these classrooms, it was unfair to continue to assess the learning of students in our classrooms, when again data would be incomplete and unusable. Further, the administration, despite objection from our department, allowed certain adjuncts to be exempt from issuing one of our most significant assessment tools, which is the exit exam. This practice continued for the summer session. Our department questions this choice and remains unclear as to why these choices were made. However, with the leadership in our department returned to the faculty, we plan to revive and improve our assessment process.

2) Do you see any need to change your departmental mission, goals or outcomes? If so, what changes will you make or have you made?

As a result of student responses about technological literacy on the CCSSE survey, we have chosen to add one department goal and one student outcome that will specifically address this concern. See revised Department Goals & Student Learning Outcomes.

3) Of your learning outcomes, which do you feel needs to be researched more fully?

Although early data points to outcome 4.1 as successful, the department would like to see further emphasis on providing guidance that promotes independent learning in the classroom. Proposed changes include, attending faculty workshops that promote techniques that focus on providing independent learning by students or the incorporation of clinical case studies in the classroom. Becoming an independent learner and having a degree of independence will provide our students with the ability to become life-long learners.

4) Do you have any suggestions about how the Assessment Committee can help you?

The assignment of regular goals for the department to meet has been helpful in keeping the process on track. We suggest that, in the future, we are provided at least one suggested assignment to complete each year.

Part 2

1) Using the student performance and opinion data, where do you see the greatest need for the improvement of student learning in your department?

Our department data, including that from both direct and indirect measures, indicates a significant discrepancy between student learning in adjunct classrooms as compared to full-time instructor classrooms.

2) What changes will be implemented in the classroom that will lead to improve student learning in this area?

Several changes in our assessment program have been proposed to deal with this issue. First, adjuncts, for the first time have been invited to participate in the assessment process. Their ideas, concerns, and input has been sought regarding our current assessment tools. Secondly, the department has developed generic syllabi to help aid adjuncts in constructing their course outlines and to ensure they stay on track in regards to course objectives. Thirdly, a new process of reviewing adjuncts early in the semester has been created by the administration. It is hoped that this early detection of problems can lead to their correction and an improved atmosphere in those classrooms for our students. In fact, our new hires have selected to incorporate this early review process in their own classrooms. Finally, the department will develop a survey for our adjuncts that will address their needs to help improve student learning within their classrooms.

3) What assessment measures will you use to gauge and document any changes to learning?

Please see attached "Proposed Implementation of Assessment Plan Fall 2005 – Spring 2006."

4) How can the Assessment Committee help you create, implement and complete this work?

The Assessment Committee can continue to keep us on track by providing questions for thought and suggesting new and alternative tools of assessing our students.