GPSS Report
Biology
May 2008

On May 19, 2008 the University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate Special Assistant participated in a discussion with graduate students in the Department of Biology. There were eight students present. The purpose of this discussion was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of Biology students. This report summarizes students' feedback for consideration in the Graduate School Council's review of the Biology department.

The following comments are a combination of the short answer survey results from the Catalyst survey sent out to all students in the department and comments made at the discussion.

Program courses and requirements
- Lack of graduate student courses
- Students wish there was more flexibility with field work schedules when they are planning their coursework schedules.
- Hard to fill course schedules because there are not courses available each term.
- Students have to be self driven to find courses that fit requirement, especially electives in other departments.

Community
- There are some community challenges between the different divisions in the biology department. For example, the molecular biology students do not really interact with other biology students and this can cause rifts between some students.
- In general however most students think the community is fine and they are happy with the relationships they have made.

Funding
- Most students are happy with the funding they are offered.
- There are TA positions available.
- There are fellowships available.
- Some biology students TA in other departments.

Strengths of program
- Students are generally happy with the Biology department and the education they are receiving.
- It was mentioned that most students like that their dissertation committees are tailored to their individual strengths as a student.

Improvements

- In regards to the qualifying exam, there is a lack of feedback on what students can improve upon. Students would like a more formal feedback process.