



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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April 28, 2009

To: Phyllis M. Wise, Provost
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald J. Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean
James s. Antony, Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

RE: Review of the Department of Biology

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School 's recommendations on the Department of Biology programs review. More detailed comments on the Department can be found in the documents referred to below. The review included the following milestones and documentation:

- Department of Biology self-study (April 18, 2008)
- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (May 6, 2008)
- Site Visit (May 19-20, 2008)
- Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Report (May 2008)
- Review Committee report (June 20, 2008)
- Department of Biology response to the report (October 16, 2008)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (March 5, 2009)

The review committee consisted of:

Dennis L. Hartmann, Professor, UW Department of Atmospheric Sciences (Committee Chair)
Wick C. Haxton, Professor, UW Department of Physics
Elizabeth Thompson, Professor, UW Department of Statistics
Andrew A. Biewener, Professor and Chair, Department of Organismic and Evolutionary
Biology, Harvard University
Kathleen K. Smith, Professor, Department of Biology, Duke University

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations of the review to the full Council at its meeting on March 5, 2009. After its discussion, the Council recommended continuing status for the Department's program, with the next review in 2017-2018 academic year. The Council noted the review revealed a strong department following a successful merger in 2003 of the Departments of Zoology and Botany and the Biology undergraduate program.

Degrees Offered

- B.S., M.S., and Ph.D.

Program Strengths

- The department has a large and very high quality undergraduate program that is highly cost effective, with close to 500 graduates each year.
- The academic unit has a thriving graduate program; it is highly competitive for the best faculty and graduate students nationally.
- Biology has excellent leadership, an effective formal faculty governance structure, and good faculty, staff and student morale. It has generated substantial funding from endowments and federal research grants.
- The department has a strong record on working to increase diversity of faculty and students, especially in undergraduate education. Biology courses that were developed for students from underrepresented minority groups is one example of the department's diversity effort.
- Biology is a strong contributor to interdisciplinary programs at the UW Seattle.

Challenges and Risks

- A challenge that Biology faces is maintaining the quality of the undergraduate program given the increasing student demand for the program and impending budget cuts for the University as a whole.
- Future department leadership is of concern considering the uneven faculty age distribution, the large number of anticipated faculty retirements in the next 5-10 years compared to the number of mid-level faculty that are poised to assume leadership.
- Startup packages for new faculty hires have become increasingly costly; severe salary compression leaves junior and mid-level faculty vulnerable to competitive offers.
- Biology has a thriving graduate program but few graduate courses are offered, in particular, there are no core biology courses. The department has already suffered a significant loss of teaching assistant slots due to budget cuts.
- The department's current space and facilities are inadequate for its research and teaching mission.

Areas of Concurrence

- The department concurred with several of the review committee findings and has begun to implement a number of the committee's recommendations.

Council Recommendations

- The department should continue its faculty recruitment efforts, specifically 2-3 faculty per year for the next 5 years.
- Faculty salary inequities should be addressed in response to the issue of faculty retention.
- The department should continue with its plans for a new building, which is crucial for maintaining its excellence.
- The department is urged to consider developing a limited number of core graduate program biology courses.

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

c: Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Werner Stuetzle, Divisional Dean for Natural Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
John D. Sahr, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Ray Huey, Professor and Chair, Department of Biology
Biology Review Committee
Graduate School Council
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
Jacob Faleschini, President, Graduate and Professional Student Senate