

Biology Core Curriculum

Assessment Update 2009

The Biology Core Curriculum (Biocore) is actively engaged in assessment. The program is continually looking for ways to improve the quality of instruction and student learning through the data gathered through assessment of student learning.

- For instance, Biocore faculty and staff recently wrote and received a grant through the Provost's office to begin a longitudinal study of genetics education. Through this project, the program is developing a genetics concept assessment instrument, and is evaluating student learning gains through pre- / post-tests, focus groups and clinical interviews.
- Biocore has also welcomed six graduate and two postdoctoral student teaching fellows working under DELTA and WPST (Wisconsin Program for Scientific Teaching).¹ These “future faculty” work with faculty/staff instructors in the program, and have helped develop instructional materials associated with difficult teaching/learning challenges. They have thoroughly assessed their interventions, and, in several cases, published their work in respected journals for dissemination.
- Finally, the program receives feedback from former students. Notably, at Biocore's 40th Anniversary celebration in May 2008, the program received many emails from former students/alumni relating how much they valued their experiences in Biocore, noting in particular the importance of the research intensive, writing intensive curriculum.

The program is eager to share information about what it has learned about assessment with others, and is happy to let others know about the commitment to innovation and teaching excellence that is essential to the Biocore experience.

¹ The Delta Program is a research, teaching and learning community for faculty, academic staff, post-docs, and graduate students that will help current and future faculty succeed in the changing landscape of science, engineering, and math higher education. For more information about DELTA, see <http://www.delta.wisc.edu/>. For more information about the WPST, see <http://scientificteaching.wisc.edu/>.