

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY

ZOOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING
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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN — MADISON

To: Herb Wang, Associate Dean for the Natural Science, L&S

From: Jaime L Reich, Student Services Coordinator, Department of Zoology

Date: September 18, 2000

Re: Program Assessment 1999-2000

During the 1999-2000 academic year, the Department of Zoology, with the aid of an external consultant, Dianne Gardner-Gletty, has implemented and executed a clearly delineated assessment plan. We have continued the inclusion of an alumni survey as an integral part of our department annual report mailing, incorporating incentive strategies for increased response rate. Also launched this year was a long-term study in which graduates are polled, through direct phone calls, at varied intervals following degree completion. This approach is designed to make a personal connection and increase the quality and rate of response in the feedback process. Further measures included expansion of the faculty activity reports to include additional information for evaluative, marketing, and recognition efforts. Redesign of course evaluation forms to be used this year in conjunction with new methods of data compilation and interpretation will increase awareness and usefulness of student feedback. Efforts are underway in the graduate program to design an exit interview to augment the assessment activities already in place, including a Graduate Student Informal Seminar, Graduate Program Committee, mentoring and professional development and progress reports. Each of these measures, described more fully below, represents an individual component of the departments' overall vision to improve, obtain, and utilize assessment data that will play a vital role in program enhancement and evolution.

Undergraduate Program:

Alumni Survey

Continued utilization of the 1998 survey results have resulted in a reorganization of the departmental web page to improve efficiency and user friendliness. New additions include a research, internship, and volunteer opportunities page as well as a newly developed Undergraduate Zoological Society page to provide professional school and career information and spotlight the work of those individuals underrepresented in the sciences.

The 2000 Alumni Survey has been designed and distributed to learn about the role of the department in securing employment and job satisfaction and to build an informational resource for current students and alumni. After much success in 1998, we again offered an incentive for early response to the 2000 survey.

Long-Term Study

The first round of the alumni phone survey has been conducted this year, involving phone contact with the graduates in their first year following degree completion. The main

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objectives of this first survey were to obtain information regarding how the alumni view their preparation and usefulness of their education in zoology. Though the responses varied widely in citing strengths and weaknesses, the results were majorly of a positive nature and shared some common themes. Many stated that their work in zoology has taught them to think critically, to be able to write scientifically, research thoroughly, and comprehend scientific papers. Another commonality was a shared longing for more guidance, especially with career information and resume building.

Faculty Activity Reports

The requirements of the activity reports have been expanded to include sections for immediately publishable current information for the web page, including messages for prospective graduate students, instructional improvements, and course goals as related to department goals. This has helped the department to keep a finger on the pulse of the faculty as related to teaching efforts and curriculum quality and appropriateness, and provided ready information for acknowledgement and recognition endeavors, consistent with the department's commitment to improvement in teaching and learning.

Course Evaluation Forms

There is a new method of utilization in place for course evaluation forms this year. Completed forms are reviewed and compiled into reports generated to reflect both numerical and written feedback from the students. They are submitted to the Instructional Programs Committee for consideration and action if necessary. The reports then go to the instructors who have appreciated a more efficient and concise form of viewing the student feedback.

Additionally, a new design of the evaluation form will provide more distinct and useful data to the instructors and the department.

Graduate Program:

Exit Interviews

The Zoology Department is currently without a steady graduate secretary appointment, and this has limited the amount of progress made in assessment of the graduate program. Over the course of the year the new student welcome packets have been revised and updated in response to informal assessment measures. And currently in the development stages of a graduate student exit interview which will be submitted to the Instructional Programs Committee for approval during the Fall 2000 semester.

Graduate Student Informal Seminar

Over the past year a graduate student informal seminar (GSIS), regularly attended by students from diverse labs across the department, has established itself as a forum for graduate students to discuss departmental activities and their own research. It has recommended graduate student members for all the major departmental committees,

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starting in the fall of 1999, and played an active role in three faculty recruitments over the past few months.

Graduate Program Committee

Renewed interest by graduate students in department wide issues and improvement of the graduate program in particular, has led to the formation of a new graduate program committee which has been meeting regularly since the Spring of 1999. The committee is composed of graduate students, faculty, and staff, and includes the department chair and the graduate secretary. This group has initiated a number of changes and improvements to the Graduate Program.

Mentoring and Professional Development

Graduate students have started an informal volunteer mentoring program for incoming graduate students and will be involved in the implementation of a professional development seminar, which is to start Fall 2000. The seminar will be required for all incoming students and include several sessions on scientific ethics.

A major concern revealed to the department in the recent assessment by Prof. Kluender was that graduate students in Zoology felt little sense of community. The GSIS, GPC, mentoring, and professional development seminar are all venues for the development of fellowship among the students.

Activity Reports

A process for collecting and evaluating research statements for each graduate student has been established as part of the annual report required of each faculty member. The Zoology Student Services Coordinator is making these statements available via links from each faculty member's web page.

Progress Reports

Graduate student progress reports have been revised (Fall, 1999), to be individualized and to be filled out during the required annual meeting of each graduate student with his/her graduate committee. These progress reports are reviewed annually by the Zoology Instructional Programs Committee, which then reports at a regular faculty meeting.

Future assessment exercises will include continuation of the measures listed above with attention focused on refining current procedures for efficiency and utility.