

Departmental Response to 2008 Program Review Department of Microbiology

The Microbiology Department faculty feels the Program Review Report accurately reflects the state of the department. The many positive activities and outcomes described are primarily the result of the faculty efforts with solid staff support. Even given the challenges of funding, space, and equipment needs the satisfaction of majors and graduates with the program appears high, and faculty are very productive in all areas of academic endeavor.

We concur with the recommendations articulated by the Program Review team particularly the need to maintain the full time faculty number at seven. Hopefully, funds will be available to replace a recently retired faculty member. Although student numbers have been declining in introductory general education courses, students majoring in microbiology continue to increase with attendant numbers of graduates each year. Teaching upper division courses that incorporate extensive laboratories places a significant demand on faculty. In addition, we have greatly expanded faculty mentored student research during the past five years, which is both time and resource intensive per student.

Increased upper division course offerings and increased enrollments in these courses means new strategies for staffing laboratories particularly given the necessity for safety and monitoring exacting methodologies. This requires having a qualified faculty member in each room when multiple laboratory sections are taught concurrently.

Expansion of course size and offerings would continue to increase the number of majors but the department is under space constraints. Success of graduates in gaining acceptance to professional and graduate schools, along with nearly 100% job placement has filled a number of upper division courses beyond capacity. With only four teaching laboratories available and because most laboratories must be taught in the Tuesday through Thursday time frame due to lab prep and student data collection constraints this limits scheduling. This situation appears very difficult to resolve under the current conditions and will require a creative reallocation of space or development of additional space to meet departmental needs.

There is also a need to change how teaching laboratory contact hours and faculty mentored student research contact hours are counted toward the total TCH for faculty loads. Currently the outdated allocation formula for faculty loads in these areas does not accurately reflect faculty efforts.

Continued enhancement of departmental budget is also needed due to increasing utilization of disposables and laboratory kits required both for safety and to better prepare students for employment. Improvement and updating of department teaching equipment holdings is needed to modernize laboratories, reduce equipment bottlenecks during laboratory sessions, and improve student research outcomes.

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