

WSU Five-Year Program Review Self-Study 2017

Executive Summary

The Weber State University Department of Zoology serves diverse roles. Courses meet the life-science general-education requirements, are service courses for students pursuing careers in medicine, and serve science majors from all disciplines. They also facilitate students who major or minor in Zoology or a closely related program.

Although more focused assessment data are needed for many courses, available evidence indicates instruction is effective for student learning. Most courses include high-impact learning opportunities in laboratories or as part of lecture periods. Zoology courses also include emphasis on building career skills for students. Depending on the course, there is emphasis on laboratory methods, field methods, data analysis, scientific writing and presentation, and instructional methods. Independent study and professional research are major themes in the Department.

Academic advising is organized to provide career-oriented students with focused, up-to-date direction. Faculty members serve as pre-health-profession (pre-medical, pre-optometry, pre-chiropractic, pre-podiatry), pre-veterinary, wildlife and conservation biology, and graduate-school advisors. Much advising also occurs informally during classes and especially between faculty mentors and students with whom they conduct research. Graduating students indicate high satisfaction with educational opportunities and advising they received within the Department.

The Department has a history of maintaining high teaching standards. Several past and present faculty members have received awards for their teaching and set a very high standard for the entire department by their example. All faculty members are fully qualified within their respective disciplines and are experienced in the classroom. All also conduct research with students and are active and respected within their areas of expertise. All have been promoted to the fullest extent possible given the extent of their employment at WSU. Perhaps most importantly, all faculty members are dedicated to providing an excellent education for students.

Administrative support and department facilities are adequate for day-to-day operations. The Department includes a full complement of faculty members qualified to teach the standard curriculum. Classroom and teaching laboratory space is adequate. All faculty members also have an office and research laboratory space. Faculty members make full use of all available facilities and resources. They actively work to improve teaching and research facilities and equipment as time and budgetary constraints allow.

Department faculty members have established myriad links with external communities. These include collaborations with local-area primary and secondary schools, class and research activities associated with community organizations, and professional service by Zoology faculty members who serve a variety of volunteer roles with community organizations.

As recommended via the last program review, there has been consistent effort over the last five years to: shift course offerings strategically to meet student demand, maintain a diversity of upper-division offerings, support faculty interest in upper-division courses, support faculty interest in interdisciplinary efforts, support faculty interest in undergraduate research, and work with the Dean in support of long-term, strategic planning.

Overall, the Department remains highly successful and there is a spirit of accomplishment and competence among faculty members and students. There is also a strong desire to continue this success and, where possible, elevate it.