

Department of Biology
Faculty Meeting
December 7, 2005

Minutes

In attendance:

Faculty: Sockman, Matthyse, Burmeister, Burch, Goldstein, Harris, Matson, Vision, Kier, Wiley, Bautch, Mitchell, Bruno, Kingsolver, Willett, Lieb, Gensel, Duronio, Rogers, Sekelsky, Peifer, Reed, Hogan, Ahmed, Pukkila, K. Lohmann, Reice

Student representatives: Jessica Sawyer, Emily Fisher, Mindy Roberts, Tatiana Vasquez

I. Announcements

Campus parking this Saturday, 10 December, will be difficult due to football games. If you need to park on Saturday because you are giving a final, tell Steve so he can get you approved.

Recent Accomplishments by Department Members: Pat Pukkila was elected to AAAS. Maria Servedio received a course-development award for Biol 054H. Karin Pfennig received an NSF grant. Steve Rogers received grants from the March of Dimes and the American Heart Association. Christina Burch got a paper accepted in Nature. Sabrina Burmeister was interviewed by several media outlets for her recent PloS-Biology paper. Undergraduate major Kate Harris received a Rhodes Scholarship. Student of Kerry Bloom was recently interviewed during Chanel 11 News coverage of the Undergraduate Research Symposium in Raleigh.

People teaching Biol 11 and core courses need to give Denise Burgner copies of A, B, C, and D/F exams along with the answer key as part of assessment of how well students are learning. Would like to have exams by January 1st.

Coker 201 renovation is on track. They are currently finishing the ATN additions to the room. Room has new speakers and lights. Projection will be improved dramatically.

Phased retirement is undergoing big changes. Legislation this past year ended the current program, but University employees have been given an exemption and can still enter the program in 2006 and 2007. After 2007, it is not clear that participation in this program will be possible.

Job Search: We currently have approximately 150 applicants for the two positions in genetic/cell model organisms.

Graduate Recruitment: At this early juncture in this year's graduate recruitment we have 223 applications for graduate program. This represents a 10% increase over total applications submitted last year. Many of these applications are not yet complete.

Pat Pukkila announced that the ACC is hosting (at Clemson this year) an undergraduate research conference in all disciplines. If you have a student that might want to participate, see Pat.

II. New policies & procedures for MCDB graduate students – Vicki Bauth

After a survey of graduate students and meetings by the graduate studies committee, a draft of proposed changes to the MCDB graduate program was put together and passed around to the faculty at this meeting. These are the major changes, as outlined in the handout:

1. Institute 3 rotations/academic year, which will shorten the rotations.
2. Require a short research presentation (poster or talk) at the end of each rotation.
3. Require 4 courses: 2 didactic courses from at least 2 subgroups, at least one journal club/seminar course, and one other from any category.
4. The Written Preliminary Exam will consist of standardized modules set up by a single faculty subcommittee.
5. The Written Preliminary Exam will be administered in the summer after the first year.
6. The first thesis committee meeting must be convened by April 1 of year 2.
7. The oral preliminary exam must be completed by July 31 of year 3.
8. The PI will NOT be the chair of the Qualifying Preliminary Exam; another committee member will be chosen for this role.
9. Require at least one first (or co-first) author paper be accepted in a peer-reviewed journal prior to setting a thesis defense date.
10. Faculty and students will be educated about the expectations for rotations, and better advising will be provided for course selection and timing.

Floor opened for discussion:

Pat Gensel suggested need for mechanism for students to take exams before due-date.

Steve Matson indicated that this plan is slightly more prescriptive than before and will incur a small implementation cost to the department.

Joel Kingsolver wanted to know how the program would affect students straddling the MCDB-EEOB divide in their graduate program. This issue will be discussed by the Graduate Studies committee.

Vicki Bautch said that current first year students would have option of doing new or old exam format. The three-rotation plan would be implemented next year. May add a statement that encourages at-large members of committee be from outside the UNC community.

Vicki Bautch moved that, with minor corrections incorporated, we vote to pass changes to this program, starting in full force in July 2006. During interim we would be flexible. Motion was seconded by several attendees and passed unanimously.

III. Other business

Vicki Bautch described a new training program -- funded by the NIH roadmap initiative - - for graduate students and post docs who are interested in translational research (research at the interface of basic and clinical). Course would occur at medical school, has no cost to participate, lasts one month, and includes lectures, mentored lab time, and a small grant writing project. There will be multiple iterations of the course. The first will be open only to UNC students. With subsequent iterations, it will open more broadly. For students to enroll in this course, they will need a letter of permission from mentor.

IV. Adjournment of regular meeting

V. Meeting of tenured faculty -- closed session.