

Department of Biology, Faculty Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2008

Present:

Shawn Ahmed, John Bruno, Christina Burch, Sabrina Burmeister, Jennifer Cobble, Greg Copenhaver, Jeff Dangel, Robert Duronio, Patricia Gensel, Sarah Grant, Tyson Hedrick, Alan Jones, Corbin Jones, William Kier, Joel Kingsolver, Jason Lieb, Ken Lohmann, Greg Matera, Steve Matson, Charles Mitchell, Robert Peet, David Pfennig, Patricia Pukkila, Jason Reed, Seth Reice, Steve Rogers, Ted Salmon, Jeff Sekelsky, Maria Servedio, Kevin Slep, Keith Sockman, Todd Vision, Peter White, Elaine Yeh

Not Present:

Albert Baldwin, Victoria Bautch, Kerry Bloom, Frank Conlon, Stephen Crews, Jean DeSaix, Mara Duncan, Bob Goldstein, Albert Harris, Joseph Kieber, Sarah Liljegren, Cathy Lohmann, William Marzluff, Ann Matthyse, Mark Peifer, Charles Peterson, Karin Pfennig, Lillie Searles, Darrel Stafford, Haven Wiley, Christopher Willett

I – Announcements

- Mara Duncan has arrived to start her position in the Department of Biology as Assistant Professor
- A historical exhibit by Bill Burke is on display in the main display case, put together with help from a graduate student in information and library science.
- Holden Thorpe asks that everyone be aware of the new drug discovery center in the School of Pharmacy. A reasonable intellectual property agreement has been negotiated. Point of contact is unknown at this moment.

II – Graduate Recruitment Update – Bob Duronio & Ken Lohmann

Report from Bob Duronio

A discussion and report on the newly instigated BBSP recruitment vehicle. Over 1100 paid applications have been received. 311 have entered via Biology. This represents a 31% increase over the number of applications Biology received last year. In comparison, Wash U. and Duke only had a 15% increase this year. The 31% increase represents a 33% increase in domestic applications and a 26% increase in foreign applications. 600 applications have been reviewed. 300 candidates have been invited over the six week interview period. The process is going well.

This weekend recruiting parties are being held at the Dangel's and Kieber's homes. This is a positive event. You are encouraged to attend the Saturday poster sessions in the AM and the lunch that follows. Current students present their research, faculty are invited to come, everyone is welcome.

To date, 60 offers of admission have been made. Those who receive offers have until the middle of April to decide if they want to come to UNC. More offers will be made. Some people's offers are on hold. BBSP intends to make 225 offers and additional offers to minorities to yield approximately 95 acceptances. On average, 40% accept nationwide.

The overall quality of applicants has increased this year. Faculty report they have been happy with the interviews so far. No rejections of offers have been received to date.

Steve Matson: Urges people to thank Mark Peifer for all the work he has done for the

BBSP program. Mark Peifer will be on leave in the spring of 2009 and we will “choose his successor”.

Report from Ken Lohmann

Graduate recruiting for the EEOB program: multiple portals of entry are available, namely Biology, BBSP and the Ecology curriculum. Via the Biology portal, six students have been admitted so far. This is the same pool number as in previous years.

March 6-8 a low key visiting weekend is being planned, organized by Sockman and Pfennig. The visiting weekend will entail activities and a get-together. Other candidates have already visited on an individual basis. No acceptances have been received to date.

General discussion of the program ensued.

III – Quantitative Biology Committee Report – Jeff Dangel

Introduction – Steve Matson: Waldrop, Carney, Marzluff initiated a conversation about Quantitative Biology approximately four years ago Steve Matson asked for an ad hoc committee to address four points

- 1) Why train in Computational Biology?
- 2) What are other universities doing?
- 3) Investigate a BS track in the undergrad major called QB: Quantitative Biology
- 4) Develop a hiring plan to increase visibility in Quantitative Biology

Jeff Dangel and the committee have prepared a report (Committee: Bloom, Burmeister, Dangel (chair), Jones, Lieb, Servedio, Vision, Yeh). The department intends to submit for approval, a formal request for a new major track in QB. Lots of support is noted from the Dean’s Office (B. Carney).

Report from Jeff Dangel

What is Quantitative Biology? To address this Kerry Bloom investigated the definition as provided by the Burroughs-Wellcome Foundation. (see 2-4-2008 report on QB). The goal is to tackle important questions using multiple quantitative techniques. Areas of investigation will span from atoms to ecosystems. Scales will guide the discussion. Research in the department will benefit by computation, simulations, etc. A number of courses are already in place at UNC including BioCalculus and Biological Physics (taught by Rich Superfine). Thus, cross-campus interest is already in place.

Corbin Jones investigated what other peer universities are doing (ex. Princeton). Very few universities have implemented anything at the undergraduate level. There are many Ph.D. programs but very few BS programs. BS programs do exist at UCLA, Case Western and UC Davis (minor). Often the program is hosted in departments of mathematics.

The goal is not to overwhelm students with requirements, but to have a palate of courses to choose electives from. To enable this, some courses had to be cut from the standard group to allow room for others. The committee did not want so many requirements as to preclude pre-med students from considering the track. Overall, QB will be one course more than the BS and two courses more than the BA.

To facilitate QB, the department will have to bring in more faculty. Advise to search for one or two faculty, one faculty at the mid to senior level. This senior person could operate at the inter-college level and serve as a liaison to the CCGS. Overall, five position will be sought from the college, three positions from the provost. Proposal is for six shared positions along with others.

A discussion took place regarding a bias towards quantitative genomics in the current

report. This focus is precipitated by available space in the genome sciences building. The current report is drafted to justify the appointments.

Steve Matson: People will submit to the QB committee points they wish to have added to the report.

IV –Graduate Studies in EEOB – David Pfennig

David Pfennig reports

Request for a change in the graduate requirements. The EEOB written requirement is currently a review paper. Proposal: change the written requirement into a research proposal with the feasibility meeting to take place by the end of the third year.

The written review paper was slowing people down on the way to the feasibility meeting. The proposed research proposal will lead into the feasibility meeting. The research proposal will be in the form of an NSF grant. The feasibility meeting involves an oral exam and questioning. The feasibility meeting is independent of the oral comprehensive exam which is given to test general knowledge.

Jeff Dangl: The order of the exams is important. They should not be able to pass the feasibility test on a written research proposal that later fails. The written should be taken first and once approved, the student can proceed with the oral feasibility test.

Vote to adopt new graduate requirement: Passed with one opposed vote.

All students who have not fulfilled their written requirements will now adopt the new policy. No students will be grandfathered.

V – Concluding Notes

Steve Matson: An unscheduled faculty meeting is likely to take place soon in order to discuss the current faculty search. This will not be in lieu of the next faculty meeting, but will be in addition to the next faculty meeting.

Joel Kingsolver: The last faculty candidate seminar will be tomorrow.