

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

AP-026-190

Program Review – Biological Sciences (BS and MS)

Academic Programs Committee

Date: xx/xx/2020

Executive Committee  
Received and Forwarded

Date: 05/13/2020

Academic Senate

Date: 08/05/2020  
First Reading  
09/23/2020  
Second Reading

**BACKGROUND:**

The Department of Biological Sciences prepared a Program Review Response to the external reviewers, who consisted of Professor and Chair Helen Regan from the Department of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology, University of California Riverside and Professor and Chair Robert Zeller from the Department of Biology of San Diego State University. The external reviewers visited the Department on April 15-16, 2019. The reviewers prepared a detailed report, to which the Chair and tenure track faculty of the Department prepared thorough responses. The AP Committee has reviewed both responses of the external reviewers and the Department of Biological Sciences.

**RESOURCES CONSULTED:**

Dr. Angel Valdez, Chair of the Biological Sciences Department  
Dr. Alison Baski, Dean of the College of Science

**DISCUSSION:**

Before the visit of the external review team, the Department of Biological Sciences prepared a well-written and comprehensive self-study document and other supplemental information for review. The reviewers commented on the current positive state of the Department and acknowledged the overcoming of past difficulties, such as the development of written goals for the various majors including an assessment plan for both the undergraduate and graduate program, and remaining challenges. While the overall tone of the evaluation is very positive, the reviewers emphasized continuous challenges the Department needs to address to continue excelling in their teaching and research mission. One of the main concerns was about the absence of a clear long-term vision by the Department. The reviewers underscored that compromises need to be recognized and implemented to address future challenges adequately. Additionally, the reviewers strongly recommended collaboration between the chair and the dean to develop plans and expectations that address increased faculty research activities, including the identification of resources to bring graduate students into labs full-time. Overall, the reviewers strongly advised to develop a 5-7 year aspirational strategic plan and a department vision to be adequately equipped, handling the growing enrollment numbers as well as accommodating research activities of faculty. For the strategic plan the following areas should be included: long-term hiring plans and justifications, curriculum goals, graduate program goals, and research goals. A short-term action plan item was to revise the current vision statement.

The Department of Biological Sciences provided a detailed point-by-point response to the recommendations proposed by the external reviewers. In response to the short-term goals, the department has been working on revisions of the vision statement.

The Department faculty and the chair agree to work on additional strategies in collaboration with the Dean to further increase faculty research engagement. While the College of Science does not currently ensure a full 3 WTUs for faculty research or research supervision (as suggested by reviewers to use the CSU assigned time Code 22, employed in the College of Sciences at SDSU for assigned research time), the

Department and College agree to further investigate other funding resources and faculty-student research programs (e.g., McNair, Project Hatchery, RISE). In addition, the Department plans to reach out to the new grant manager of the foundation and request she give a talk during a Department meeting to explain how faculty can better receive guidance regarding grant expenditures and other post-award issues.

The Department also agrees with the reviewers about access to full-time work in the lab for graduate students. The department notes that all graduate students who request a TA position can work as teaching associates. Thus, internal employment is available to graduate students, making them less likely to need outside employment.

Overall, the Department and Dean agree on the importance of a long-term strategic agenda that corresponds with the teaching and research mission of the department while accommodating the increase in student enrollment.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Academic Programs Committee commends the Department of Biological Sciences on their work, both in the operations of their BS and MS programs and in the preparation of a detailed and thoughtful review response that addresses the vital concerns of this cycle's self-study review as well as incorporating improvements suggested in the previous performance review.