

Academic Program Review Dec 2016 - Summary

Faculty of Science – Department of Biology

The reviewers were impressed by the level of participation and engagement by faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students. They noted that faculty and staff were clearly dedicated to the delivery of a high quality undergraduate program, and that they encountered a high level of enthusiasm, engagement and satisfaction among the undergraduate students. Research productivity and impact compared well with top Biology departments in Canada, and in several research areas they noted that the Department has a global reputation. The review emphasized the Department's unique strengths, including the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre, the Co-op program with a strong international component, and significant experiential learning opportunities. Their recommendations focused on how the Department could fully capitalize on these unique strengths, their research potential, and opportunities to align more closely with institutional priorities.

Recommendation: Undertake a strategic planning exercise and develop an Academic plan for the next 5-10 years. How can the opportunity presented by faculty retirements be used to achieve the Department's vision?

Recommendation: Capitalize on unique facilities, current research strengths, the Co-op culture, etc., and highlight linkages to areas of priority in UVic's Strategic Plan e.g. climate and health.

Recommendation: Rationalize the undergraduate program, with curriculum mapping against learning outcomes, integrate with TA needs, and link this with infrastructure needs (renovation of labs).

Recommendation: Implement a better, more transparent system for teaching assignments and course planning (2 years cycle) including an adjustment of assignments so all research faculty contribute to 1st and 2nd year courses.

Recommendation: Reduce times to completion for graduate students: all students should be required to develop a research proposal and this should be approved by their advisory committee before the end to their second semester.

Recommendation: Review the funding model for graduate students in terms of minimum stipends and use of scholarship money; post details of minimum funding levels on the Department website.

Recommendation: Faculty supervisors should be required to provide full details of intended Graduate student support in writing concurrently with the admission letter. Students should be asked to confirm their awareness of funding details.

Recommendation: Consider some form of assessment and academic credit for the Research Experience courses in the community initiative.

Recommendation: Improve and implement a communication plan at all levels, especially with graduate and undergraduate students.