

**Biology Department
Action Recommendation Progress Report
May 2006**

Summary of progress made during 2005-2006 academic year in the Recommendations for Action compiled in the Biology Department's 2004-2005 Program Review.

Recommendations for Action:

1. **Rethink senior project options and consider implementing a non-empirical option.**
A variety of specific adjustments were made to improve the success of senior project completion including the following:
 - a. Closer tracking of students by faculty and the instructor of BIOL 379.
 - b. Changing the scheduling time of BIOL 379 Research Methods and Biostatistics to the Spring semester as a way to correct the problem of having an 'off semester' between the methodology course and BIOL 499.
 - c. Implementation of a project option consisting of writing a grant proposal outlining background, protocols, budget and likely outcomes of a research project.
 - d. Reduce the variety of projects by placing more limitations on students to select projects that more closely match research interests and activities of faculty.

2. **Consider converting the environmental management major into an environmental studies major.**
The Departmental faculty decided that the environmental management major needed to be overhauled and determined that modifications would be made immediately. Dr. Kat Weaver, Dan Merritt's replacement, was been hired for 2006-07 to help develop and implement an environmental studies major.

3. **Update course offerings to better reflect recent retirements, and the competencies of recently hired faculty.**
With the recent retirements of Professors Merritt and Good, the eventual retirement of Professor Neher and the hiring of new faculty, this is a goal that will receive greater focus during the 2006-2007 academic year.

4. **Rethink structure and presentation of science seminar.**
Dr. Nam Sinkoset, Department of Chemistry was responsible for Science Seminar during the 2005-06 academic year, and did an excellent job in tightening up the seminar format. No other modifications have been made as of yet.

5. **Incorporate Montana Magpie Ranch into home campus programs**
During summer 2005, four students participated in a Magpie Ranch field biology course, and several faculty and students spent part of the summer working on projects. For summer 2006, Drs. Neher, Good and Weaver will be working at the ranch with Dr. Weaver conducting research on pulmonate snails. In the future, Dr. Weaver is expected to play a key role in the implementation of future projects.

6. **Work closely the admissions to aid in the recruitment of the highest quality majors possible.**

Challenges remain in the recruitment of high quality majors, but the faculty are committed to be more involved in the recruitment process. Another area of concern is financial support and retention of quality students. One of our most talented students elected to transfer this upcoming year because her financial package was mis-calculated and she was required to pay an additional \$5000 to enroll in the Spring semester.

7. **Rethink course load expectations to reflect demands of student research support and the increased expectations for faculty research.**

Several of the Departmental faculty have applied for and received grants that qualify them for course-load reductions. During the 2006-2007 academic year the issue of load will be further studied.